



BY-LAWS AND COVENANT

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GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH IN OVERBROOK

Overbrook, Kansas

HOW GCC CAME TO BE

Grace Community Church in Overbrook came into existence on January 1, 2005. Prior to that time the church had been called the First Christian Church of Overbrook, Kansas. The name was changed in an effort to better define who the church was doctrinally and to exemplify the desire to be simply a non-denominational Bible church proclaiming the truth of God's word.

First Christian Church, on the other hand, began with a Bible Study of new and committed believers seeking God's will for their collective lives. Six families met in Bible Study for three years. After serious consultation and prayer, God's Spirit led them to form the body of Christians called First Christian Church. The very first service as a congregation was held on April 13, 1975 with over 50 in attendance.

The church met in a house that was located on the current property of six acres. Once the group grew to about 70 people, they added to the garage areas of the house and moved the worship service into the garage. The church continued to grow to over 100 in attendance, and exactly one year after the first service was held, the current Administration Center was dedicated.

Steady growth again caused the group of believers to reassess the situation of needed space and in 1988 a Christian Education Center was completed.

God continued to pour out His Grace and Spirit upon the First Christian Church of Overbrook and once again in mid-1995 the church entered into its third building program. In late 1996, a 450+ seat Worship Center and Activity Room were completed. In the Fall of 2004, it was again determined that the current facility was not large enough, and the construction of a new 1,000 seat Worship Center was begun. That facility was dedicated in September, 2005.

It is truly marvelous how God has and continues to work in Grace Community Church in Overbrook, and is now drawing people from surrounding communities. People are committing their lives and growing in the Lord Jesus far beyond anyone's expectations! To God be the Glory!

Those families that were involved in the original Bible Study were the Larry Coffman family, the Cliff Fischer family, the Bob Gloss family, the Jim White family, the Lee Flowers family and Joann O'Brien.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH?

Obviously we cannot accurately predict the future of Grace Community Church in Overbrook, Kansas. We do know that the people who originally chartered the church had in their hearts a desire to have all that God had for them, and they also wanted to help others to have the kind of fulfilling relationship with God, that would truly add meaning, purpose and direction to their lives also. With that in mind, we make the following statements:

- I. We will set no limits on the size this church may grow to in the future. We expect it to be a fairly large church. We will not knowingly do anything that limits the number of people God can reach through our ministry. We expect to be a church of hundreds of people who will meet on the property that God has provided for us.
- II. We will set no limits on the geographic boundaries of our ministry. Wherever there are people in need who are interested in becoming involved in our ministry, we will seek to help and support them.
- III. We are convinced that to effectively reach the lost and disciple the saved we do so by addressing today's concerns. We are committed to applying the timeless truths of God's Word to these concerns as the ultimate and only solution. We will continually strive to be effective "change agents" in the world in which we live. We will not be faddish or trendy but will seek to impact the world by living out our lives as a testimony to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- IV. Our dream is, as a church, to do what God has called us to do. He has given us a task to accomplish. We want to do His work effectively, to reach the goals He has laid out before us. His approval is all that matters. Our only measure of success is for God to count us as an effective messenger of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- V. The focus of Grace Community Church is international and worldwide. We will help in the starting of new churches in other countries; to train, equip, support and send missionaries. We will train, equip, support and send men and women into the marketplace to be effective servants of the lord and Ambassadors for Christ.
- VI. Grace Community Church will minister to the total person. We will launch various ministries such as: Youth, Children, Senior Adult, Recreation, Support Groups for virtually any need we find. We will offer a complete Pastoral Care and Counseling Service, Career Assessment and Redirection, and Money Management just to name a few.

THE PURPOSES OF GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Primary Purpose

The primary purpose of Grace Community Church is to glorify the Lord our God.¹ This is accomplished in three ways:

1. By cultivating the habit of including the Lord God in every segment of our church life.
2. By refusing to expect or accept any of the glory that belongs to God.
3. By maintaining a priority relationship with Him that is more important than any other on earth.

Specific Purpose

The specific purpose of this church is, and shall be, to worship God by the preaching of the Word to the edification, instruction and discipline of its congregants and other believers; the winning of the unsaved to Christ; helping young Christians develop their spiritual lives; instructing children in the Word of God; and furthering the cause of Christ on the mission fields at home and abroad.

Biblical Purpose

The Biblical purpose is to glorify God by fulfilling the Great Commandment² and the Great Commission³.

1. To be active in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the people of our community and to be involved in the world evangelism⁴.
2. To help each other develop toward a full Christian maturity and train believers for effective ministry. To promote personal, spiritual growth and discipleship through Bible teaching
3. To participate in our worship services and maintain personal devotional habits⁵.

¹ **1 Corinthians 10:31:** "Whether, then you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

² **Matthew 22:36-40:** "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

³ **Matthew 28:18-20:** "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 am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

⁴ **Acts 1:8:** "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."

⁵ **John 4:24:** "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

4. To serve our church and our community unselfishly, meeting the physical emotional and spiritual needs of those with whom we have contact^{6, 7, 8}.
5. To encourage, support and pray for each other as members of the family of God. To fellowship and share our lives together^{9, 10, 11, 12, 13}.
6. Our specific ministries seek to benefit people by providing opportunities for spiritual, physical, intellectual, social and cultural development¹⁴.

STRATEGIES TO ACCOMPLISH OUR PURPOSE

The Church may adapt to any past, present or future-developed mode of instruction that would not dishonor the Name of Christ and would effectively accomplish the objectives set out above. To accomplish these goals, the Church will:

1. Conduct regular worship services in which the Lord Jesus Christ is worshiped, and the gospel of the Kingdom of God as revealed in and through the Lord and the written Word, the Bible, is preached and taught with boldness and the power of God;
2. Regularly administer the ordinances of believer's baptism and Holy Communion;

⁶ **Galatians 5:13:** "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love."

⁷ **1 Thessalonians 5:11:** "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

⁸ **1 Peter 4:10-11:** "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."

⁹ **John 13:24-35:** "Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, 'Ask him which one he means.' Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. 'What you are about to do, do quickly,' Jesus told him, but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night. When he was gone, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'"

¹⁰ **Acts 2:44-47:** "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."

¹¹ **Romans 15:5-7:** "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. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

¹² **Hebrews 10:23-25:** "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

¹³ **1 John 1:7:** "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

¹⁴ **Luke 2:52:** "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

3. Teach people how to enter into and mature in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, using the Bible, the inerrant, Holy Spirit-inspired written Word of God, as the foundation for that teaching;
4. Equip believers in Jesus by any appropriate and useful methods for the work of service as soldiers and ambassadors for Christ in the world;
5. Ordain ministers of the gospel;
6. Encourage, organize and assist people to meet in small groups in homes, meeting rooms, or other accommodations for the purpose of fellowship, encouragement, edification, training, prayer and study of the Bible, and to aid people in developing meaningful interpersonal relationships as brothers and sisters in Christ, and experience the love of God as manifested within the Body of Christ through such fellowship;
7. Send members of the Church and others to all parts of the world as missionaries for the Lord Jesus Christ, and provide financial and other support to them; and further provide financial and other support to churches, individuals, and other groups who are teaching and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world; and
8. Provide people who have physical material and spiritual needs with such assistance as is appropriate and available.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO THE STRATEGIES

1. All people matter to God, therefore, they must matter to us.
2. Lost people need to be sought out and found.
3. The time necessary for an un-churched person to respond with a life commitment to Christ must be patiently respected and allowed during which time such persons would be intentionally disciplined.
4. Because the number of un-churched people is so great we will never be satisfied with present growth but will always strive for greater church growth.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Scriptures

We believe that the entire Bible is inspired of God and that holy men of God “*were moved by the Holy Spirit*” to write the very words of Scripture. We believe that this divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the sacred writings – historical, poetical, doctrinal and prophetic – as appeared in the original manuscripts. We believe that the whole Bible (66 books) in the originals is, therefore, without error. We believe that all Scriptures center around the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work in His first and second coming. We also

believe that all the Scriptures were designed for our practical instruction^{15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27}.

The Godhead

We believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – and that these three are one God, having precisely the same nature, attributes,

¹⁵ **Mark 12:26, 36:** “Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: ‘The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’”

¹⁶ **Mark 13:11:** “Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.”

¹⁷ **Luke 24:27, 44:** “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. He said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’”

¹⁸ **John 5:39:** “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me . . .”

¹⁹ **Acts 1:15-17:** “In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) and said, “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus—he was one of our number and shared in this ministry.”

²⁰ **Acts 17:2-3, 18-28:** “As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. ‘This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,’ he said. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, ‘What is this babbler trying to say?’ Others remarked, ‘He seems to be advocating foreign gods.’ They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, ‘May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean.’ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: ‘Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’”

²¹ **Acts 26:22-23:** “But I have had God’s help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

²² **Acts 28:23:** “They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.”

²³ **Romans 15:4:** “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

²⁴ **1 Corinthians 2:13:** “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”

²⁵ **1 Corinthians 10:11:** “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.”

²⁶ **2 Timothy 3:16:** “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness . . .”

²⁷ **2 Peter 1:21:** “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.”

and perfections, and worthy of precisely the same homage, confidence and obedience^{28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36}.

Angels, Fallen and Unfallen

We believe that God created an innumerable company of sinless, spiritual beings, known as angels; that Satan, “Lucifer, son of the morning,” the highest in rank, sinned through pride; that a great company of the angels followed him in moral fall, some of whom became demons and are active as his agents and associates in carrying out his unholy purposes, while others who fell are “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”^{37, 38, 39}

We believe that Satan is the originator of sin, and that, under the permission of God, he, through subtlety, led our first parents into transgression, thereby accomplishing their moral

²⁸ **Genesis 1:2, 27:** “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

²⁹ **Deuteronomy 6:4:** “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

³⁰ **Matthew 28:18-19:** “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 . . .’”

³¹ **Mark 12:29:** “The most important one, answered Jesus, is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’”

³² **John 1:1, 14:** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

³³ **Acts 5:3-4:** “Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.’”

³⁴ **2 Corinthians 13:14:** “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

³⁵ **Hebrews 1:1-13:** “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father’? Or again, ‘I will be his Father, and he will be my Son’? And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him.’ In speaking of the angels he says, ‘He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire.’ But about the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever,

and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.’ He also says, ‘In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.’ To which of the angels did God ever say, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’?”

³⁶ **Revelation 7:11-12:** “All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: ‘Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!’”

³⁷ **Ezekiel 28:11-19:** “The word of the Lord came to me: ‘Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries.

So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.’”

³⁸ **1 Timothy 3:6:** “He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.”

³⁹ **2 Peter 2:4:** “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment . . .”

fall and subjecting them and their posterity to his own power; that he is the enemy of God and the people of God, opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; and that he who in the beginning said, "I will be like the most High," in his warfare appears as an angel of light, even counterfeiting the works of God by fostering religious movements and systems of doctrine, which systems in every case are characterized by a denial of the efficacy of the blood of Christ and of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone.^{40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46}

We believe that Satan was judged at the cross, though not then executed and that he, a usurper, now rules as the "god of this world," that, at the second coming of Christ, Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss for a thousand years, and after the thousand years he will be loosed for a little season and then "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone," where he "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."^{47, 48}

⁴⁰ **Genesis 3:1-19:** "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."' 'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.' And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?' The man said, 'The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.' So the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity

between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.' To the woman he said, 'I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.' To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, "You must not eat of it," 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.'"

⁴¹ **Romans 5:12-14:** "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—for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come."

⁴² **2 Corinthians 4:3-4:** "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

⁴³ **2 Corinthians 11:13-15:** "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve."

⁴⁴ **Ephesians 6:10-12:** "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

⁴⁵ **2 Thessalonians 2:4:** "He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."

⁴⁶ **1 Timothy 4:1-3:** "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth."

⁴⁷ **Colossians 2:15:** "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

⁴⁸ **Revelation 20:1-3, 10:** "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

We believe that an even greater number of angels kept their holy estate and are before the throne of God, from where they are sent forth as ministering spirits to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.^{49, 50, 51}

Mankind, Created and Fallen

We believe that mankind was originally created in the image and after the likeness of God, and thereafter fell through sin, consequently losing spiritual life, becoming dead in trespasses and sins and subject to the power of the devil. We also believe that this spiritual death, or total depravity of human nature, has been transmitted to the entire human race, the Man Christ Jesus alone being excepted; and hence that every child of Adam is born into the world with a nature which not only possesses no spark of divine life, but is essentially and unchangeably evil apart from divine grace.^{52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64}

⁴⁹ **Luke 15:10:** "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

⁵⁰ **Hebrews 1:14:** "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

⁵¹ **Revelation 7:11-12:** "All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: 'Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!'"

⁵² **Genesis 1:26:** "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'"

⁵³ **Genesis 2:17:** "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."

⁵⁴ **Genesis 6:5:** "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."

⁵⁵ **Psalms 14:1-3:** "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one."

⁵⁶ **Psalms 51:5:** "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."

⁵⁷ **Jeremiah 17:9:** "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

⁵⁸ **John 3:6:** "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

⁵⁹ **John 5:40:** "yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

⁶⁰ **John 6:53:** "Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.'"

⁶¹ **Romans 3:10-19:** "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. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.'"

⁶² **Romans 8:6-7:** "The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so."

⁶³ **Ephesians 2:1-3:** "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."

⁶⁴ **1 John 3:8:** "He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."

The First Advent

We believe that the eternal Son of God came into this world that He might manifest God to men, fulfill prophecy, and become the Redeemer of a lost world. To this end He was born of the virgin, and received a human body and a sinless human nature.^{65, 66, 67, 68}

We believe that, on the human side, He became and remained a perfect man; however, sinless throughout His life; yet He retained His absolute deity, being at the same time very God and very man, and that His earth-life sometimes functioned within the sphere of that which was human and sometimes within the sphere of that which was divine.^{69, 70, 71}

We believe that in fulfillment of prophecy He came first to Israel as her Messiah-King, and that, being rejected by that nation, He, according to the eternal counsels of God, gave His life as a ransom for all.^{72, 73, 74}

We believe that, in infinite love for the lost, He voluntarily accepted His Father's will and became the divinely-provided sacrificial Lamb and thereby took away the sin of the world, being the holy judgments against sin that the righteousness of God must impose. His death

⁶⁵ **Luke 1:30-35:** "But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.' 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'"

⁶⁶ **John 1:18:** "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

⁶⁷ **John 3:16:** "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."

⁶⁸ **Hebrews 4:15:** "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin."

⁶⁹ **Luke 2:40:** "And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him."

⁷⁰ **John 1:1-2:** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."

⁷¹ **Philippians 2:5-8:** "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!"

⁷² **John 1:11:** "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him."

⁷³ **Acts 2:22-24:** "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

⁷⁴ **1 Timothy 2:6:** "who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time."

was therefore substitutionary in the most absolute sense – the just for the unjust – and by His death He became the Savior of the lost.^{75, 76, 77, 78, 79}

We believe that, according to the Scriptures, He miraculously arose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He had lived and died; and that His resurrection body is the pattern of that body which ultimately will be given to all believers.^{80, 81}

We believe that when He ascended from the earth, He was accepted by His Father and that His acceptance is a final assurance to us that His redeeming work was perfectly accomplished.⁸²

We believe that He became Head over all things to the church, which is His body, and in His current ministry He never ceases to intercede and advocate for the saved.^{83, 84, 85}

Salvation Only Through Christ

We believe that, owing to universal death through sin, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless born again; and that no degree of reformation however great, no attainments in morality however high, no culture however impressive, no baptism or other ordinance however administered, can help the sinner to take even one step toward heaven. A new nature imparted from above, a new life implanted by the Holy Spirit through the Word, is absolutely essential to salvation, and only those thus saved are children of God. We believe, also, that our redemption has been accomplished solely by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made to be sin and was made a curse for us, dying in our place; and that no feeling,

⁷⁵ **John 1:29:** “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

⁷⁶ **Romans 3:25-26:** “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 those who have faith in Jesus.”

⁷⁷ **2 Corinthians 5:14:** “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.”

⁷⁸ **Hebrews 10:5-14:** “Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.’ Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God.’ First he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them’ (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, ‘Here I am, I have come to do your will.’ He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”

⁷⁹ **1 Peter 3:18:** “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit . . .”

⁸⁰ **John 20:20:** “After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.”

⁸¹ **Philippians 3:20-21:** “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

⁸² **Hebrews 1:3:** “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”

⁸³ **Ephesians 1:22-23:** “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

⁸⁴ **Hebrews 7:25:** “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”

⁸⁵ **1 John 2:1:** “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”

no good resolutions, no sincere efforts, no submission to the rules and regulations of any church can result in salvation.^{86, 87, 88, 89, 90}

We believe that the new birth of the believer comes only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that no other acts, such as confession, baptism, prayer or faithful service, are to be added to believing as a condition of salvation.^{91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100}

The Extent of Salvation

We believe that when an unregenerate person exercises saving faith in Christ, which is illustrated and described as such in the New Testament, he passes immediately out of spiritual death into spiritual life, and from the old creation into the new, being justified freely by grace, accepted before the Father as Christ, His Son, is accepted, loved as Christ is loved, having his place and portion linked to Him and one with Him forever. Though the saved one may have occasion to grow in the realization of his blessings and to know a fuller measure of divine power through the yielding of his life more fully to God, he is, as soon as he is saved,

⁸⁶ **2 Corinthians 5:21:** "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

⁸⁷ **Galatians 3:13:** "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'"

⁸⁸ **Matthew 28:19:** "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 . . ."

⁸⁹ **Mark 1:9-11:** "At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'"

⁹⁰ **John 4:24:** "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

⁹¹ **John 1:12:** "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"

⁹² **John 3:16, 18, 36:** "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. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

⁹³ **John 5:24:** "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

⁹⁴ **John 6:29:** "Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'"

⁹⁵ **Acts 13:39:** "Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses."

⁹⁶ **Acts 16:31:** "They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.'"

⁹⁷ **Romans 1:16-17:** "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

⁹⁸ **Romans 3:22, 26:** "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference. He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

⁹⁹ **Romans 4:5:** "However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness."

¹⁰⁰ **Romans 10:4:** "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes."

in possession of every spiritual blessing and absolutely complete in Christ.^{101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108}

Sanctification

We believe that sanctification, which is a setting-apart unto God, is threefold. It is already complete for every saved person because his position toward God is the same as Christ's position. Since the believer is in Christ, he is set apart unto God in the measure in which Christ is set apart unto God. We believe, however, that he still struggles with habit patterns and vestiges from his former sin nature, which cannot be eradicated in this life. Therefore, while the standing of the Christian in Christ is perfect, his present state is no more perfect than his experience in daily life. There is, therefore, a progressive sanctification wherein the Christian is to "grow in grace," and to "be changed" by the unhindered power of the Spirit. We believe also that the child of God will yet be fully sanctified in his state as he is now sanctified in his standing in Christ when he shall see his Lord and shall be "like Him."^{109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116}

We believe that he is called with a holy calling, to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and so to live in the power of the indwelling Spirit that he will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. But the flesh with its fallen Adamic nature, which in this life is never eradicated, being with us to the end of our earthly pilgrimage, needs to be kept by the Spirit constantly in subjection

¹⁰¹ **John 5:4:** "Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed."

¹⁰² **John 17:23:** "I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

¹⁰³ **Romans 4:1:** "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?"

¹⁰⁴ **1 Corinthians 3:21-22:** "So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours."

¹⁰⁵ **Ephesians 1:3:** "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

¹⁰⁶ **Colossians 2:10:** "... and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority."

¹⁰⁷ **1 John 4:17:** "In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him."

¹⁰⁸ **1 John 5:11-12:** "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

¹⁰⁹ **John 17:17:** "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

¹¹⁰ **2 Corinthians 3:16-18:** "But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

¹¹¹ **2 Corinthians 7:1:** "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."

¹¹² **Ephesians 4:24:** "... and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

¹¹³ **Ephesians 5:25-27:** "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

¹¹⁴ **1 Thessalonians 5:23:** "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

¹¹⁵ **Hebrews 10:10, 14:** "And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ... because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."

¹¹⁶ **Hebrews 12:10:** "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness."

to Christ, or it will surely manifest its presence in our lives to the dishonor of our Lord.^{117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124}

¹¹⁷ **Romans 6:11-13:** “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.”

¹¹⁸ **Romans 8:2, 4, 12-13:** “. . . because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. . . . in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live . . .”

¹¹⁹ **Galatians 5:16-23:** “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit kingdom of God. 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.”

¹¹⁹ **Ephesians 4:22-24:** “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

¹¹⁹ **Colossians 2:1-10:** “I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”

¹¹⁹ **1 Peter 1:14-16:** “As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

¹¹⁹ **1 John 1:4-7:** “We write this to make our³ joy complete. This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”

¹¹⁹ **1 John 3:5-9:** “But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.”

¹²⁰ **Ephesians 4:22-24:** “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

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¹²⁴ **1 John 3:5-9:** “But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.”

Eternal Security

We believe that if anyone receives Christ, he has become a child of God¹²⁵, that the Holy Spirit seals us into the Day of Redemption¹²⁶, and that the Holy Spirit washes, regenerates, and renews us¹²⁷.

We believe that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation¹²⁸, and that nothing can separate him from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord¹²⁹, for there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus¹³⁰.

We believe the words of Jesus in John 10:27-28, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give them eternal life; and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

We believe the promise of Jesus in John 6:37, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out.” “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the Day of Christ Jesus.”¹³¹

We are also aware that Jesus said in Matthew. 7:21-22, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’, will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that Day, Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in your name and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?” And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

We believe that it is important to “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves, or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed you fail the test?”¹³²

We are warned in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, “...that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God...” and that “...such were some of you: but you were washed, you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

¹²⁵ John 1:12: But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name .

¹²⁶ Ephesians. 1:13-14; 4:30: In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God’s own* possession, to the praise of His glory. . . Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

¹²⁷ Titus 3:5: He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

¹²⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:17: Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

¹²⁹ Romans 8:38-39: For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹³⁰ Romans 8:1: Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

¹³¹ Philippians 1:6: *For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

¹³² 2 Corinthians 13:5: Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?

The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the blessed Trinity, though omnipresent from all eternity, took up His abode in the world in a unique manner on the day of Pentecost according to the divine promise. We believe He dwells in every believer, and by His baptism unites all to Christ in one body, and that He, as the Indwelling One, is the source of all power and all acceptable worship and service. We believe that He never departs from the universal church, not from the feeblest of the saints, but is ever present to testify of Christ; seeking to occupy believers with Him and not with themselves nor with their experiences. We believe that His abode in the world in this special sense will cease when Christ comes to receive His own at the completion of the church.^{133, 134, 135, 136, 137}

We believe that, in this age, certain well-defined ministries are committed to the Holy Spirit, and that it is the duty of every Christian to understand them and to be adjusted to them in his own life and experience. These ministries are the restraining of evil in the world to the measure of the divine will; the convicting of the world respecting sin, righteousness, and judgment; the regenerating of all believers; the indwelling and anointing of all who are saved, thereby sealing them unto the day of redemption; the baptizing into the one body of Christ all who are saved; and the continued filling for power, teaching and service of those among the saved who are yielded to Him and who are subject to His will.^{138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145}

¹³³ **John 14:16-17:** "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 sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

¹³⁴ **John 16:7-15:** "But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 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. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 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. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you."

¹³⁵ **1 Corinthians 6:19:** "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;"

¹³⁶ **Ephesians 2:22:** "And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

¹³⁷ **2 Thessalonians 2:7:** "For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way."

¹³⁸ **John 3:6:** "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

¹³⁹ **John 16:7-11:** "But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 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."

¹⁴⁰ **Romans 8:9:** "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."

¹⁴¹ **1 Corinthians 12:13:** "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."

¹⁴² **Ephesians 4:30:** "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

¹⁴³ **Ephesians 5:18:** "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."

¹⁴⁴ **2 Thessalonians 2:7:** "For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way."

¹⁴⁵ **1 John 2:20-27:** "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—even eternal life. I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him."

The Church, a Unity of Believers

We believe that all who are united to the risen and ascended Son of God are members of the church, the body and bride of Christ, which began at Pentecost and remains completely distinct from Israel. Its members are constituted as such regardless of membership or non-membership in the organized churches of earth. We believe that by the same Spirit all believers in this age are baptized into, and thus become, one body that is Christ's, whether Jews or Gentiles, and having become members one of another, are under solemn duty to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all racial prejudices or sectarian differences, and loving one another with a pure heart fervently.^{146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152}

¹⁴⁶ **Matthew 16:16-18:** "Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

¹⁴⁷ **Acts 2:42-47:** "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."

¹⁴⁸ **Romans 12:5:** ". . . so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

¹⁴⁹ **1 Corinthians 12:12-27:** "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with 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. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

¹⁵⁰ **Ephesians 1:20-23:** ". . . which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

¹⁵¹ **Ephesians 4:3-10:** "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. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: 'When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.' (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)"

¹⁵² **Colossians 3:14-15:** "And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful."

The Ordinances

We believe that believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only ordinances of the church and that they are a testimony for the church in this age.^{153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158}

Communion. We observe the Memorial View, namely the elements served merely represent the Body and the Blood of Christ. This ordinance is open to all who have made a profession of faith in Christ.

Baptism. While alternate modes of believer's baptism will not exclude someone from membership, we strongly encourage those persons to consider that mode which we practice and which we believe not only captures the death burial and resurrection of Christ, but that mode which we believe was practiced by the New Testament church which is Baptism by Immersion.

The Christian's Service

We believe that divine, enabling gifts for service are bestowed by the Spirit upon all who are saved. While there is a diversity of gifts, each believer is energized by the same Spirit, and each is called to his own divinely appointed service as the spirit sovereignty determines. In the apostolic church there were certain gifted individuals – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers – who were appointed by God for the perfecting of the saints unto their work of the ministry. We believe also that today individuals are especially called and gifted by God, and that it is to the fulfilling of His will and to His eternal glory that these shall be sustained and encouraged in their service for God.^{159, 160, 161}

¹⁵³ **Matthew 28:19:** "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."

¹⁵⁴ **Luke 22:19-20:** "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'"

¹⁵⁵ **Acts 10:47-48:** "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days."

¹⁵⁶ **Acts 16:32-33:** "Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized."

¹⁵⁷ **Acts 18:7-8:** "Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized."

¹⁵⁸ **1 Corinthians 11:26:** "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

¹⁵⁹ **Romans 12:6-8:** "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."

¹⁶⁰ **1 Corinthians 12:4-11:** "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines."

¹⁶¹ **Ephesians 4:11-13:** "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."

We believe that, wholly apart from salvation benefits which are bestowed equally upon all who believe, rewards are promised according to the faithfulness of each believer in his service for his Lord, and that these rewards will be bestowed at the judgment seat of Christ after He comes to receive His own to Himself.^{162, 163, 164}

The Great Commission

We believe that it is the explicit message of our Lord Jesus Christ to those whom He has saved that they are sent forth by Him into all the world even as He was sent forth of His Father into the world. We believe that, after they are saved, they are divinely reckoned to be related to this world as strangers and pilgrims, ambassadors and witnesses, and that their primary purpose in life should be to make Christ known to the whole world.^{165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170}

The End Times

While there are many ideas and interpretations regarding how the end times will transpire leading up to the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, we believe that the Scriptures tell us enough to be assured that Christ will return, those who have trusted the Lord Jesus will enter into the glory of being eternally in the presence of God, and those who have rejected the Lord in this life will enter into judgment and separation from God that will

¹⁶² **1 Corinthians 3:9-15:** "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."

¹⁶³ **1 Corinthians 9:18-27:** "What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it. Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

¹⁶⁴ **2 Corinthians 5:10:** "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

¹⁶⁵ **Matthew 28:19:** "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."

¹⁶⁶ **Mark 16:15:** "He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.'"

¹⁶⁷ **John 17:18:** "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."

¹⁶⁸ **Acts 1:8:** "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."

¹⁶⁹ **2 Corinthians 5:18-20:** "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

¹⁷⁰ **1 Peter 2:12:** "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."

never end. We rest in the full assurance that the specific details and timing of these events are known only by the Godhead.^{171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177}

The Eternal State

We believe that at death the spirits and souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation pass immediately into His presence and remain there in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the glorified body when Christ comes for His own. At that time those souls of the unbelieving remain after death conscious of condemnation and in misery until the final judgment of the great white throne at the close of the millennium, when soul and body alike shall be reunited and ultimately cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated, but

¹⁷¹ **Isaiah 11:9:** “They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

¹⁷² **Ezekiel 37:21-28:** “and say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offenses, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God. My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.’”

¹⁷³ **Matthew 24:15-25, 46:** “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time. It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.”

¹⁷⁴ **Acts 15:16-18:** “‘After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name’, says the Lord, who does these things that have been known for ages.”

¹⁷⁵ **Romans 8:19-23:** “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

¹⁷⁶ **Romans 11:25-27:** “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

¹⁷⁷ **Revelation 20:1-3:** “And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.”

to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.^{178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184}

Human Sexuality

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality,

¹⁷⁸ **Luke 16:19-26:** “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’”

¹⁷⁹ **Luke 23:42:** “Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’”

¹⁸⁰ **2 Corinthians 5:6:** “Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.”

¹⁸¹ **Philippians 1:23:** “I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;”

¹⁸² **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9:** “. . . and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power . . .”

¹⁸³ **Jude 1:6-7:** “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.”

¹⁸⁴ **Revelation 20:11-14:** “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.”

lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, pre-marital sex and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex.^{185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191}

Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a biological man, a biological woman, and Himself, Grace Community Church will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, the pastors, elders, ministers and staff of GCC shall only solemnize, officiate, participate or attend wedding ceremonies or marriages between one biological man and one biological woman. Finally, the facilities and property of Grace Community Church shall only host weddings between one biological man and one biological woman.

¹⁸⁵ **Genesis 19:5, 13:** "They called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.' . . . because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it."

¹⁸⁶ **Leviticus 18:1-30:** "The Lord said to Moses, Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'I am the Lord your God. You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the Lord. No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the Lord. Do not dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her. Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonor your father. Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere. Do not have sexual relations with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would dishonor you. Do not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father's wife, born to your father; she is your sister. Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative. Do not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative. Do not dishonor your father's brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt. Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; do not have relations with her. Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonor your brother. Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. Do not have sexual relations with either her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter; they are her close relatives. That is wickedness. Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living. Do not approach a woman to have sexual relations during the uncleanness of her monthly period. Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her. Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable. Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion. Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.

Everyone who does any of these detestable things—such persons must be cut off from their people. Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the Lord your God."

¹⁸⁷ **Romans 1:26-31:** "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless."

¹⁸⁸ **1 Corinthians 5:1:** "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife."

¹⁸⁹ **1 Corinthians 6:10:** "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."

¹⁹⁰ **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8:** "Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit."

¹⁹¹ **Hebrews 13:4:** "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."

It is GCC's belief that sexuality is a gift from God, and that it is to be expressed only in the context of a marriage between one biological man and one biological woman.¹⁹²

GCC acknowledges that all are broken with regard to our sexuality. GCC welcomes all who are willing to be continually conformed to the likeness of Christ into the church family¹⁹³.

GCC rejects homophobic behavior or any behavior that in any way dehumanizes any person for any reason.¹⁹⁴

We believe that only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman.^{195, 196, 197}

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 and

¹⁹² **Genesis 1:27; 2:24; Mark 10:6; 1 Timothy 3:2-3:** "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created the. . . . For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." . . . But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate. . . . An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money."

¹⁹³ **Romans 10:9-10; John 3:16-18; Ephesians 2:7-10; Romans 8:29; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Cor. 15:48-49; 2 Cor. 3:16-18; 1 John 1:9-10:** "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. . . . For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. . . . For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; . . . Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? . . . As is the earth, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly. . . . but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. . . . If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."

¹⁹⁴ **Psalms 139:14; John 3:17; Romans 12:19; Col. 3:13; 1 Pet. 3:9:** "I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. . . . For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. . . . Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. . . . bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. . . . But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;"

¹⁹⁵ **Matthew 19:4-6:** "And He answered and said, 'Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.'"

¹⁹⁶ **Romans 7:2:** "For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage."

¹⁹⁷ **1 Corinthians 7:10:** "To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband."

the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home and men are to be the leaders (pastors and elders) of Grace Community Church.^{198, 199, 200, 201, 202}

¹⁹⁸ **Ephesians 5:22-23:** “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.”

¹⁹⁹ **Galatians 3:28:** “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

²⁰⁰ **Colossians 3:18:** “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”

²⁰¹ **1 Timothy 2:8-15:** “I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.”

²⁰² **1 Timothy 3:4-5, 12:** “He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.”

The Sanctity of Human Life

We believe that humans are created in the image of God. We believe that the life of each human being from one's conception, foreknown by God from before the foundation of the world, to one's death, occurring at a time appointed by God, is sacred and precious in the eyes of God. We believe that God hates hands that shed innocent blood,²⁰³ and that we as Christians must stand up against the murder of the unborn anywhere such atrocities occur. We believe that the life of the unborn child should be loved, respected, and protected by the local church. Believing that Scripture clearly speaks of the sanctity of human life, this church by vote has declared itself to be a pro-life congregation.^{204, 205, 206, 207}

Missions

We believe that God has given the church a great commission to proclaim the gospel to all nations so that there might be a great multitude from every nation, tribe, ethnic group, and language group who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. As ambassadors of Christ we must use all available means to go to the foreign nations and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.^{208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213}

Giving

We believe that every Christian, as a steward of that portion of God's wealth entrusted to him, should give to support his local church financially. We believe that God has established the principle of giving whereby Christians should give regularly and cheerfully to the support of the Church, the relief of those in need, and the spread of the gospel. We believe that a

²⁰³ **Proverbs 6:16-19:** "There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers."

²⁰⁴ **Jeremiah 1:5:** "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

²⁰⁵ **Psalms 139:13-16:** "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

²⁰⁶ **Psalms 51:5:** "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."

²⁰⁷ See footnote 217

²⁰⁸ **Matthew 28:19-20:** "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 am with you always, to the very end of the age."

²⁰⁹ **Mark 16:15:** "He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.'"

²¹⁰ **Luke 24:46-48:** "He told them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'"

²¹¹ **John 20:21:** "Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'"

²¹² **Acts 1:8:** "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."

²¹³ **2 Corinthians 5:20:** "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

Christian relinquishes all rights to direct the use of the tithe or offering once the gift has been made.^{214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222}

The Congregation

Believing that the ministry of the body of Christ is strengthened and more effective when all its members function together, we agree that the governing body of the Grace Community Church in Overbrook shall be the congregation as a whole.

Membership. We believe that all who have professed Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord thus experiencing the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit are to be recognized everywhere as members of Christ's Body and the church at large. Membership at Grace Community Church is joyfully offered to anyone who will both publicly profess their faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ, has experienced believer's baptism²²³ and expresses their desire to unite with this congregation in the fulfilling of its mission.

We believe the local church body is always strengthened by those members who express and demonstrate a continuing desire to follow the examples set forth in Scripture as to how to live out their Christian Life.

Therefore using the New Testament Church as our paradigm we expect each member to:

1. Demonstrate their willingness to participate in worship with the church on a regular basis.
2. To faithfully pray for the mission of the church.

²¹⁴ **Genesis 14:18-20:** "Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.' Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything."

²¹⁵ **Proverbs 3:9-10:** "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."

²¹⁶ **Acts 4:34-37:** "There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet."

²¹⁷ **1 Corinthians 16:2:** "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."

²¹⁸ **2 Corinthians 9:6-7:** "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

²¹⁹ **Galatians 6:6:** "Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor."

²²⁰ **Ephesians 4:28:** "He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need."

²²¹ **1 Timothy 5:17-18:** "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'"

²²² **1 John 3:17:** "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?"

²²³ See The Ordinances, Baptism, pg. 23.

3. To faithfully serve in and through the church for the accomplishment of its mission.
4. To faithfully give their tithes and offerings to the Lord through the church.

The congregation shall meet the Second Sunday of June and December in order to make decisions which affect their life together. The chairperson of the congregation will convene the meeting and conduct it according to Robert's Rules of Order, Revised. Proxy or absentee voting is not permitted. A simple majority will govern any decision; however, it is recommended that in any concern under discussion a sincere effort be made to encompass minority opinion into any decision which is reached. The Church is one institution which proclaims the value of all people in the eyes of God, and decisions made by this congregation should reflect that same concern for all involved in the decision-making process. While the normal times for a congregational meeting are listed, special meetings may be called by the chairperson of the congregation with the provision that sincere effort is made to contact all members of the congregation at least once week in advance.

Responsibilities of Congregation as the Governing Body

While the congregation as a whole is the governing body for the Grace Community Church in Overbrook, we recognize the need for special persons and groups within that congregation to do much of the work of the church. For this reason, each year the congregation will evaluate it according to the special gifts God has given individuals in the congregation. The Apostle Paul's concept of the Body of Christ which contains unique members with special gifts is particularly useful at his point. Such gifts are listed in the following Scripture references: (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4:10-11)

From this evaluation, the nominating task force will nominate a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a recording secretary, and a treasurer. The nominating task force will be selected by the congregational cabinet and shall consist of one Elder, two members of the congregational cabinet and two members of the Diaconate who are not task force chairpersons. Their nominations will be placed before the congregation no later than the last Sunday in October. Election of these specially gifted people will be held at the December congregational meeting.

OFFICES OF THE CHURCH

Senior Pastor

The senior pastor is the person who is responsible for initiating much of the programming in the life of the congregation. For this reason, he (or his designate) is considered to be an ex officio member of any group in the church. Likewise, his job is one which should be carefully defined between him and the congregation. The process for his selection follows:

1. In the absence of a senior pastor, the congregation should be called together to do a self-evaluation.
2. From this self-evaluation should emerge a set of goals and a job description for a senior pastor.
3. A pulpit selection committee will be comprised of the chairperson, one task force chairperson, two members of the Diaconate (not in task force chair positions), and three members of the congregation at large. With the exception of the chairperson, all pulpit selection committee members will be selected by the congregational cabinet.
4. The candidates will be considered one at a time. Then, when the pulpit selection committee feels that it has a viable candidate, it will invite that candidate for an interview with the congregation.
5. At this interview, a determination may be made as to whether to call the candidate or not.

Other Pastoral Staff

From time to time, it may be necessary to add ministers to the pastoral staff. At that time, it will be the responsibility of the senior pastor to carry out the interview and selection process, and then make his recommendations to the cabinet for their review and confirmation. It is the sole responsibility of the senior pastor to make any final personnel decisions with regard to the pastoral staff.

The role and responsibilities of the members of the pastoral staff will be defined by the needs of the church and designated by the senior pastor.

The Board of Elders

Two words in the New Testament are used to describe the function of the elder in the church: *episkopos* – “one who is a superintendent or overseer” and *presbuteros* – “one who steers or guides the ship”.²²⁴

²²⁴ **1 Timothy 3:2-3:** “Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.”

The “elders” of the New Testament church were the “pastors”, “overseers” and the leaders who “have charge” of the flock. They were also the regular teachers of the congregation, whose duty it was to expound the Scriptures and administer the ordinances.^{225, 226, 227, 228, 229}

The role of the Elders at Grace Community Church is to oversee all the policies of the church and guide the direction of the church in such a way that it fulfills our purpose, to glorify Christ in all things, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”²³⁰

The Elders are to protect the integrity of the church in regard to the teaching and overall ministry, ensuring that it conforms to scriptural commands and principles. The best effort of the Elders in fulfilling these responsibilities is to pray and seek the face and Word of the Lord for wisdom and direction. “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”²³¹ Elders will be recommended by the Pastoral staff and confirmed by the congregation. The Pastoral staff shall serve on the board of Elders as first among equals.

The Diaconate

The word “diaconate” is defined as a group or board of deacons. In the early church the word “deacon” was translated from the Greek word “*diskonos*” which is a servant. The men chosen as deacons were not called deacons but rather the word deacon described their tasks.

Peter reminded his hearers on the day of Pentecost of the prophecy of Joel, Chapter 2, Verse 29; “And also on my menservants and on my maidservants I will pour out my Spirit on those days.” Paul reminds us in his letter to those believers in Rome, Chapter 16, Verse 1, that Phoebe was a sister and servant of the church. This implies that Phoebe was a deaconess.

Since the word deacon describes the work of a servant, both men and women qualify. Our official title for the people chosen as servants will be the diaconate. In the early church, servants were chosen who were people of faith, filled with the Holy Spirit. The qualifications for these servants are recorded in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

²²⁵ **Ephesians 4:11-13:** “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.”

²²⁶ **Acts 20:28:** “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”

²²⁷ **Hebrews 13:7:** “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”

²²⁸ **1 Thessalonians 5:12:** “Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.”

²²⁹ **Titus 1:9:** “He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”

²³⁰ **1 Corinthians 10:31:** “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

²³¹ **Psalms 127:1:** “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.”

- (a) The diaconate are to be chosen on the basis of their spiritual maturity and are to serve with the pastor and staff in performing such tasks as:
1. Leading the church in the achievement of its mission;
 2. Proclaiming the gospel to believers and non-believers as well; and
 3. Caring for the church's members and other persons in the community

These three tasks are not intended to be the extent of the responsibilities of the diaconate, but by design are broad in definition.

- (b) The diaconate is to be elected from a ballot of qualified persons that have been recommended by the pastoral staff of the church. Those recommended must receive two-thirds vote from the congregation to be confirmed. This vote will take place at the December congregational meeting.
- (c) As the ministry needs of the congregation increase with growth, it may be necessary to add members to the Diaconate. This may be done anytime during the year. The confirmation of these individuals under these special circumstances will follow the same procedure as outlined in paragraph (b).
- (d) Those nominated by the pastoral staff must meet and be in agreement with the qualifications expected of them by the Senior Pastor prior to the election.
- (e) It is expected that anyone in a leadership position shall lead by example; therefore, any conduct or behavior that is contradictory to the core values and doctrine of this body as outlined in Scripture will be dealt with appropriately.
- (f) From among its members, the Diaconate will select one individual, who is not the chair of a permanent task force or an elected congregational officer, to serve as Chairperson of the Diaconate to organize and lead other members of the body in carrying out the functions of the Diaconate and to call and chair meetings of the body when necessary.
- (g) Additional responsibilities of the Diaconate as a whole are the coordination of revivals and general church evangelism.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Church Council

The church council shall serve the church by leading in planning as well as assisting in coordinating, conducting, and evaluating all ministries of the church. The church council will be comprised of the Pastoral staff, Elders and the Diaconate.

Any matter agreed upon by the council which calls for action not already approved shall be referred to the church cabinet for approval and then to the congregation for congregational approval, if necessary.

Congregational Cabinet

Recognizing that day to day decisions must be made to best carry out the long- range goals set by the congregation, a congregational cabinet is formed to have the responsibility to make those day to day decisions. The congregational cabinet is made up of the following members: Pastoral staff, Elders, Chairperson of the Diaconate, chairperson, vice-chairperson, treasurer, recording secretary, and the chairperson of each task force. Chairpersons (and co-chairpersons) of all appointed permanent task forces will become members of the congregational cabinet when appointed by the chairperson. The congregational cabinet will meet regularly at a time and date designated by the chairperson with the consensus of the cabinet. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson with the provision that sincere effort is made to contact all members at least one day in advance. All members of the congregation are invited to attend any of the congregational cabinet meetings. The voting members consist of all members of the cabinet. Eighty percent of the voting members present must agree to govern any decision.

In general, the responsibilities of the congregational cabinet shall be:

1. To approve the budget that will be submitted to the full congregation for approval.
2. To be available to advise on any issue presented by the church council, the pastoral staff, or members of the cabinet.
3. To be responsible for planning and carrying out the overall ministry programs of the church in accordance with the spiritual growth goals of the congregation and church council as we together seek the will of God and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.
4. The congregational cabinet as a whole will be responsible for the fiscal oversight of all accounts listed as part of the approved budget of the congregation.

Specific areas of responsibilities for the congregational cabinet members are as follows:

Chairperson

The chairperson shall convene the congregational meetings and the congregational cabinet meetings, shall preside over these meetings and take responsibility for general oversight of the business of the church. The chairperson shall report to the congregation on an as-needed basis. The report will be given at the conclusion of a Sunday morning worship service. Additional reports may be given if the chairperson or cabinet deem it necessary.

Vice-Chairperson

The vice-chairperson shall preside and carry out the functions of the chairperson in the absence of the chairperson.

Recording Secretary

The recording secretary shall keep notes at all congregational meetings and congregational cabinet meetings. Written copies of these notes, formal typed minutes of all congregational and cabinet meetings, and all written task force reports will be kept on file at the church office. The formal minutes and task force reports will be posted by the Sunday following a congregational meeting or a congregational cabinet meeting for the benefit of those in the congregation who were unable to attend the meeting.

Treasurer

The treasurer is responsible for the collection of all monies given to the church and the disbursement of church funds to duly authorized recipients. The treasurer, in conjunction with the business administrator, will be responsible for the accounting of all of the church's financial transactions using commonly accepted accounting procedures and reporting on those transactions to the church cabinet and congregation when necessary. The treasurer, along with the business administrator, shall convene before October, a budget task force comprised of the senior pastor, the chairperson, the treasurer, the business administrator and other persons or task force chairs to develop a church budget for the coming year. The projected budget is subject to discussion and approval at the November meeting of the congregational cabinet, and discussion and approval at the December congregational meeting.

Non-Pastoral Staff

From time to time it may be necessary for the church to hire additional paid non-pastoral staff positions (i.e. janitors, secretaries, business managers, project leaders, worship leaders,

counselors, etc.) to carry out and assist the pastoral staff in performing responsibilities required by the church. Such staff positions may be appointed by the chairperson with the advice and consent of the church cabinet and senior pastor at any time during the year based on the church's needs and budgetary constraints. The responsibilities assigned to each of these positions will be defined by a job description, approved by the church cabinet, which accurately reflects the responsibilities of the position.

Pastor's Relation Committee

A Pastor's relation committee shall be the cabinet chairperson, chairperson of the diaconate and one member at large from the congregation. The cabinet chairperson shall appoint the member at large.

The responsibilities of this committee shall be to meet with any pastor who wishes to meet to deal with any grievance they may have. If there are rumors that need to be dealt with, the committee has the obligation to contact the source of that rumor to discuss what proof they may have to make such an accusation.

If there is a problem concerning any Pastor's work habits or personal habits that may hinder the pastor's effectiveness the committee will call that Pastor in to discuss the problem.

All issues discussed in meetings of this committee will be considered confidential.

Task Forces

The purpose of each task force is to meet the needs of the Body of Christ so that we may all grow together "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ"²³² and to reach the unsaved. Each task force role is essential in order to achieve the full ministry goals of the church. The chairperson, with the advice and consent of the cabinet and the senior pastor, will appoint a chairperson (and co-chairperson, if necessary) for each task force as needed. A minimum of one member of the Diaconate will be selected and appointed as a member of each task force. Each task force may establish their own meeting schedule but regular meetings are essential to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of each task force. Each task force will develop and maintain a mission statement and policy statements for the implementation of the responsibilities assigned to the task force and present those before the cabinet for approval. Task forces should develop, in conjunction with the treasurer, individual budgets for their activities and report on the activities of the task force through a written report at each cabinet and congregational meeting. All programs or events will always be implemented in consultation with the senior pastor and board of Elders. Additional task force groups may be organized or current task forces modified or combined as the chairperson determines need. Such actions should take place in consultation with the cabinet and senior pastor.

²³² 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen."

Building and Grounds Task Force

The purpose of this task force is to oversee any approved construction as well as ongoing facility maintenance and security for the church. Although this task force will not be directly responsible for performing the work, this task force would make arrangements for repairs and see that all tasks were performed appropriately. It is recognized that situations may arise that require immediate response and corrective action, but all other construction and/or major repairs or modifications must have cabinet and/or congregational approval. The chairperson of this task force will be responsible for the oversight of the buildings and grounds accounts listed as part of the approved budget of the congregation.

Specific areas of the church's ministry assigned to this task force are:

1. Coordination of routine maintenance activities
2. Coordination and supervision of approved construction and renovation projects
3. Coordination of utilities (i.e., electricity, gas, water, sewer, trash disposal, lawn maintenance, snow removal, etc.)
4. Oversight of custodian work schedules and duties
5. Oversight and coordination of general storage areas, maintenance areas and utility areas of the church
6. Oversight and coordination of the purchase and storage of general kitchen supplies
7. Implementation of church policies related to building access and building use
8. Coordination and direction of building security. This would include the appointment of the Security Teams Coordinator and oversight and training associated with the General Security Team, the Fire and Weather Security Team and the Medical Security Team

Children and Family Ministries Task Force

Like the Christian Education Task Force, the Children and Family Ministries Task Force is to enable the children of the congregation, birth through sixth grade, to know and live with God the Father as He is seen through Jesus Christ and to provide a means by which they can grow from now through eternity in the knowledge and love of God. The Children and Family Ministries Task Force should provide a means for children to learn about Jesus Christ and to learn to experience their faith. It should encourage children to nurture each other in the faith by the living example of loving concern for one another.

The chairperson of the Children and Family Ministries Task Force will be responsible for oversight of the Children's Church supplies, all children's activities, equipment and study materials accounts listed as part of the approved budget of the congregation. Specific areas of the church's ministry assigned to this task force are:

1. Coordination of the children's nursery
2. Coordination of the toddler's nursery
3. Coordination of the toddler and older kids Children's Church activities
4. Coordination of Friends and other events associated with that ministry
5. Coordination of Fall Festival
6. Coordination of Vacation Bible School
7. Coordination of all babysitting activities for church events
8. Coordination of Sunday evening events for children
9. Provide leadership and support for Women of Worth

Christian Education Task Force

The purpose of the Christian Education Task Force is to enable the entire congregation to know and live with God the Father as He is seen through Jesus Christ and to provide a means by which the congregation can grow from now through eternity in the knowledge and love of God. Specific areas of growth are the following: knowledge of the contents of the written Word of God, the Bible, knowledge of historical documents or events in the life of the Church, knowledge of the present and how our faith intersects it. The Christian Education Task Force should provide a means for people to experience their faith. It should encourage congregational members to nurture each other in the faith by the living example of loving concern for one another.

The Christian Education Task Force chairperson should facilitate this work by recruiting teachers, ordering curricular materials and overseeing other special areas of educational activities. The chairperson of the Christian Education Task Force will be responsible for oversight of the Sunday school supplies, equipment, Bible study materials, educational seminars and media accounts listed as part of the approved budget of the congregation. Specific areas of the church's ministry assigned to this task force are:

1. Coordination of Spiritual growth ministries such as Bible studies, support groups and other special studies
2. Coordination of educational training, retreats and conferences both inside and outside the church
3. Maintenance and support of the church library and media center
4. Coordination of Sunday School activities

Evangelism Task Force

The Evangelism Task Force is committed to the active calling of people to respond to the message of grace and commit oneself to God in Jesus Christ. The Evangelism Task Force's primary purpose is to promote efforts within the church to proclaim the message of good news.

Hospitality Task Force

It shall be the responsibility of this committee to care for the needs of the membership and to plan special events in the life of the church. This task force should employ ways to keep in touch with the congregation so all needs are met. This should include anything that will enhance the fellowship of the church. The chairperson of this task force will be responsible for the oversight of the hospitality and special events accounts listed as part of the approved budget of the congregation. Specific responsibilities assigned to this task force are:

1. Coordination of Sunday breakfasts
2. Coordination in providing church meals
3. Coordination of parking activities
4. Coordination of greeters and ushers
5. Visitor visitation
6. Church information booth
7. Bussing ministry
8. Pastor appreciation
9. New member meals

Men's Ministries Task Force

Like the Women's Ministries Task Force, the Men's Ministries Task Force seeks to provide ways in which the men of the congregation can have fellowship with one another, rejoice with one another, support one another, and share with one another on matters of mutual concern.

The Men's Ministries Task Force chairperson facilitates such sharing by making the congregation aware of the concerns or joys of individual members, organizing all activities which fulfill the needs of men. The chairperson of this task force will be responsible for the oversight of the men's ministry accounts listed as part of the approved budget of the congregation. Specific areas of the church's ministry assigned to this task force are:

1. Coordination of the church's summer picnic
2. Coordination of Men's Night Out
3. Coordination of the summer golf tournament
4. Coordination of the 3rd of July celebration
5. Coordination of the men's prayer breakfasts
6. Coordination of other special activities associated with the men of the congregation

Missions Task Force

It shall be the responsibility of the Missions Task Force to supervise and coordinate the ministries of the congregation to the world in which we live. Specifically, the Missions Task

Force will publicize and wisely allocate monies given for missions purposes and coordinate church activities associated with missions. The chairperson of this task force will be responsible for the oversight of the local, regional and international missions accounts listed as part of the approved budget of the congregation. The church treasurer and a designated member of the pastoral staff will serve on this task force. Specific areas of the church's ministry assigned to this task force are:

1. Coordination of the church's food pantry
2. Coordination of the church's coat closet
3. Coordination in the providing of special meals to the Topeka Rescue Mission
4. Coordination in the providing of snacks in conjunction with services sponsored by the church at the Topeka Rescue Mission
5. Coordination in providing funds for local, regional and international missions activities.

Special Events Task Force

The Special Events Task Force has the responsibility of the planning and implementation of scheduled special events which may be held at or sponsored by the church. Special events are generally defined as those where an external group or individual is invited to present their message for the benefit of the church and community and where no other task force assumes the responsibility for the coordination of the event.

Women's Ministries Task Force

Remembering such scriptural admonitions as "Bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2) and "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15), the Women's Ministries Task Force seeks to provide ways in which women members of the congregation can have fellowship with one another, rejoice with one another, support one another, and share with one another on matters of mutual concern.

The Women's Ministries Task Force chairperson facilitates such sharing by making the congregation aware of the concerns or joys of individual members, organizing all church activities such as dinners, and organizing meals for families who need such services. The chairperson of this task force will be responsible for the oversight of the women's ministry accounts listed as part of the approved budget of the congregation. Specific areas of the church's ministry assigned to this task force are:

1. Coordination of specific special events associated with women such as the Valentines banquet, spring brunch, fall retreat and Christmas tea.

2. Coordination of compassion activities when needed such as new mother meals/baskets, hospital surgery meals, funeral dinners, card ministry and single mother ministry.
3. Coordination of fellowship and outreach activities for women such as Women's Night Out, Sister-to-Sister, pies for the county fair, crotchet classes and quilting ministry.
4. Coordination, in conjunction with the Christian Education Task Force, Bible studies designed for women.
5. Providing publications for communications when necessary such as the annual magazine, various mailings, publicity of women's events, etc.

Worship Task Force

Worship is an action in which people take part. It is not something just observed or attended, but it is something we do. Selected members of the congregation aid the ministerial staff and the Director of Worship and Magnification in leading worship, thereby, stimulating more active lay participation.

Worship is celebration because it expresses joy in what the Spirit has done. Our method of worshipping or celebration is determined by Christian convictions rather than simply by what people enjoy. Just as Christ, our Lord was characterized by a life involving struggles and numerous painful experiences; our worship encompasses more than a shallow involvement in order to be of real meaning and purpose. Members of the congregation are allowed that freedom to interact with one another, and are encouraged to express themselves openly and honestly in response to the love of God.

The chairperson of the Worship Task Force will be responsible for the oversight of the worship and music accounts listed as part of the approved budget of the congregation. Specific areas of the church's ministry assigned to this task force are:

1. Spiritual support through prayer vigils, National Day of Prayer, special services, seasonal events, Singspiration, etc.
2. Coordination of communion activities
3. Technical support in the areas of sound and lighting, sound and visual equipment maintenance and other media arts.
4. Coordination of drama activities including direction, actors, script writers, stage crew, set design, costuming, art/graphics, etc
5. Coordination of music activities including worship choir, other choirs, praise teams, ensembles, solo work, pianists, instrumental groups, orchestra, etc.

Youth Ministries Task Force

The purpose of the Youth Ministries Task Force is to assist the youth minister in creating, scheduling, and implementing youth ministry programming; and to serve as spiritual leaders

and role models to the youth, fifth grade through college and career, that we come in contact with, both in daily life and in scheduled ministry. This will be accomplished in part by regular attendance of scheduled planning meetings, regular attendance and participating in scheduled youth events, and regular attendance of all scheduled church activities whenever practical and possible. New committee members will be church members who express a desire to serve God and youth and who are recommended by the existing committee and approved by the pastoral staff. The chairperson of this task force will be responsible for the oversight of the youth activities and youth missions accounts listed as part of the approved budget of the congregation.

Additions, Deletions and Amendments to the Bylaws or Covenant

Any church member or church organization may initiate suggested changes in the Bylaws or covenant.

Any changes suggested must be discussed by the cabinet, approved by the cabinet and brought before the congregation.

Recommendations for changes in the covenant and bylaws may be made at any regular cabinet meeting of the church, provided each amendment shall have been presented in writing at a previous cabinet meeting and copies of the proposed amendment shall have been furnished to each member present at the earlier meeting. Any amendments and/or changes approved by the cabinet must receive a two-thirds majority vote by the congregation at a called congregational meeting for final approval.

AUTHORITY OF STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing Statement of Faith accurately represents the teaching of the Bible, and therefore, is binding on all members. All literature used in the Church shall be in complete agreement with the Statement of Faith.

COVENANT

Having been led by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on profession of our faith, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ. We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, and the spread of the gospel through all nations. We also desire to maintain family and private devotions; to educate our children according to Biblical precepts and principles; to seek the salvation of our kindred, acquaintances, and all others; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful to our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; and to live according to the Core Values of the Church so that we might advance the kingdom of God. We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy of speech; to be slow to take offense, and mindful of the words of our Savior, to secure reconciliation without delay.

CORE VALUES

Grace Community Church believes that how we accomplish our purposes is as important as the purpose itself. Therefore, we seek to glorify God through core values that honor people and exalt the Lord:

- **Character in ourselves** – a result of a growing relationship with Jesus Christ; lives characterized by integrity; solid, stable and secure.
- **Honor to others** – providing an atmosphere of respect where each person can contribute and thrive.

- **Grace in our relationships** – practicing thoughtfulness, kindness, generosity, courtesy, freedom, forgiveness, encouragement and appreciation of others’ differences as we inspire greatness in those around us.
- **Excellence in our pursuits** – reflecting the infinite excellence of the God we serve; producing the highest quality ministry program, materials and personal service possible.
- **Glory to our God** – living by faith; entrusting our talents, finances and plans to God’s control
- **Accountability to one another** – a willingness to answer for one’s life, characterized by vulnerability, teachability, honesty and availability.

APPENDIX

Grace Community Church General Organization

