

# STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

**In closed-handed beliefs, we have unity. In open-handed beliefs, we have diversity.**

## GOD

Our faith is Trinitarian, we believe in the triune God, one God eternally existing in three equally divine Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—who know, love, and glorify one another (**Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 14:25-26**).

## FATHER

The Father has existed eternally and sovereignly reigns over all creation.

## SON

The Son was eternally begotten of the Father, not made, and, as the Puritans held: “there was never a time when He was not.” He became man being born of the virgin Mary, fully God and fully human, one Person with two natures. He remained what He was from eternity, God the Son, and became what He was not, Man, that he might be our sacrifice and high priest. He lived a perfect sinless life, was crucified for our sins, died, on the third day rose again, He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father where He is worshiped and glorified.

## HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son, and He glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Counselor, Helper, Comforter, and Advocate and He is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin and regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, baptizing them into union with the Lord Jesus. By the Spirit, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God’s family; they participate in the divine nature and receive spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit is the deposit of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

## REVELATION

We believe that, God being sovereign and transcendent, the only way we as His creation can know anything about Him is by His gracious revelation. God has revealed Himself in the created order, and has supremely revealed Himself in His Son, Jesus (**Hebrews 1:1-2; Deuteronomy 29:29**).

## THE BIBLE

By the Holy Spirit God has graciously disclosed Himself in human words: we believe that God has divinely inspired the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of His will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and Final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks (**2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 119**).

## DIVINE KNOWABILITY

We confess that both our finitude and sinfulness prevent the possibility of knowing God’s truth exhaustively, but being enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God’s revealed truth truly (**Psalm 139:6; John 16:13**).

## CREATION

We believe that God created the universe for His glory, and that He uniquely created human beings, male and female, in His own image. Creation was perfect and good, and mankind was to have dominion over all creation and steward God's creation for His glory to be displayed (**Isaiah 43:7; Psalm 19:10; Genesis 1:26-31**).

## STEWARDSHIP

Humankind is called to steward God's creation by working to take care of all that was created in humble obedience to God. We are to continue this responsibility and take care of the world, and everything in it (**1 Corinthians 10:31**).

## MEN AND WOMEN

Both men and women enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both equally valuable as image-bearers of God. Men and women were made to complement each other in marriage, which ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and His Church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles, which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the Church. While both submit to one another, the husband exercises headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submits to her husband in a way that models the love of the Church for her Lord. In the ministry of the Church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential. The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is eldership. Qualified women and men may be deacons (**Genesis 2:18, 24; Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:8-3:13; Titus 1:5-9; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16**).

## FALL

We believe that Adam, being made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness, for himself and all mankind, by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, and spiritually) and condemned to death—apart from God's own gracious intervention. We are created in the image of God, but we have fallen into sin; we are all totally depraved, but we are not utterly depraved. That is, we are sinful in every way, but by God's grace we are not as sinful as we could be. We must recognize our sin if we are to recognize and treasure our Savior (**Genesis 3; Romans 5:18-19; Genesis 6:5; Job 25:4-6; Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:10-11; Romans 8:7-8; John 8:34, 15:5; Romans 7:18, 8:8; Ephesians 2:1-3; Hebrews 11:6; Jeremiah 17:9; Psalm 14:3**).

## REDEMPTION

We believe the death and resurrection of Christ provide the only means for salvation for sinners and only those who receive Jesus Christ by faith are justified, regenerated, redeemed, and adopted into the divine family as heirs with Christ. We also believe that every true Christian will persevere in faith to the end of their life, or until Jesus returns, meaning that a Christian cannot lose their salvation if they were genuinely saved (**John 6:37-39, 10:27-30, 3:36; Romans 8:1, 28-30; Ephesians 1:13-14; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 3:14**).

## THE PLAN OF GOD

From all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe, language, people, and nation, and to this end He foreknew them and chose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by His grace have faith in Jesus, and that He will one day glorify them to the praise of His glorious grace (Ezekiel 11:19-20, 36:25-26; Isaiah 53; Romans 8:28-30, 9:11-13; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:1; Revelation 13:7-8; John 3:3, 7, 6:44, 6:65; Ephesians 2:4-5; Acts 16:14; Colossians 2:13).

## THE GOSPEL

The Gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead. Folly to the world, yet the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news centers on Jesus, His cross, and His resurrection. This good news is biblical, theological, saving, historical, apostolic, and intensely personal (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 2:2, 15:1-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:14).

## ATONEMENT

Christ, by His obedience and death, fully paid the debt of all those who are justified. By His sacrifice, He bore in our place the punishment due to us for our sins, satisfying God's wrath. His perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. On the cross God's wrath on sin and His love for sinners meet in perfect justice and grace (John 3:17; Romans 3:23-26, 5:9-10, 16-18, 6:23; Titus 3:7; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 10:11, 15, 17:9; Acts 20:28; Romans 5:8, 8:33-34; Galatians 3:13).

## RESTORATION

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and are sanctified by an inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace for we are God's workmanship created for good works. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it. We are to do good and glorify God by being part of God's restoration of His creation (1 Corinthians 1:2, 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18, 5:17-18; Romans 6:19-22, 12:2; Ephesians 2:6, 10; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 10:14).

## THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

The universal church is made up of all Christians from all time and from all places, and that they are already seated with Christ in heaven. This universal Church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head. The Church is distinguished by her Gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, her love for God, and by her members' love for both one another and the world. The Church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world (Acts 9:31, 15:3-4; Ephesians 1:22-23, 3:10; Colossians 1:18, 24; Matthew 28:18-20).

## THE LOCAL CHURCH

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ (Baptism & Communion), governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through a plurality of male elders, male and female deacons, and church members (Acts 11:22, 14:27, 15:30, 20:28; Colossians 4:15-16).

## SACRAMENTS

Baptism and communion were ordained by the Lord Jesus Himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. They are visible signs of invisible realities, but are not to be regarded as a means of salvation (Luke 22:19-20, 24:30-31; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 11:26-28).

## ESCHATOLOGY

We look forward to the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He will exercise His role as Judge, and His kingdom will be consummated. There will be a bodily resurrection of both the justified and the unjust— the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, and the justified to eternal blessing in the presence of God, in the new heaven and the new earth. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering, and triumph of Christ. All sin will be purged, and its evil effects forever removed (Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:5- 12; Hebrews 9:28; Revelation).

## DOCTRINAL HUMILITY

We are called to clothe ourselves in humility, and as we hold our doctrinal convictions firmly we do so in humility. We do so that we may continually repent deeper and allow Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to conform our imperfect doctrine more and more in line with the Truth.