

## **Bethel Baptist Church – Statement of Faith**<sup>1</sup>

(Revised: 05/09/13)

### **1) The Tri-une God**

We believe in one<sup>2</sup> true<sup>3</sup> and living<sup>4</sup> God, who exists eternally in three<sup>5</sup> equally divine and glorious Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God the Father<sup>6</sup> is underived and the fountain of all being.<sup>7</sup> God the Son,<sup>8</sup> eternally begotten, without beginning,<sup>9</sup> is of one essence with the Father. God the Holy Spirit<sup>10</sup> proceeds eternally, in full, divine essence, as a Person,<sup>11</sup> from the Father and the Son. Thus, each Person in the Godhead is fully and completely God. In the planning and accomplishment of the eternal work of creation and redemption, each Person possesses unique and harmonious roles.<sup>12</sup>

God is perfect in holiness;<sup>13</sup> transcendentally superlative in his every attribute. He is the Creator of all things,<sup>14</sup> and in him all things hold together.<sup>15</sup> From him and through him and to him are all things.<sup>16</sup> He is completely self-existent,<sup>17</sup> self-sufficient,<sup>18</sup> unchanging,<sup>19</sup> sovereign,<sup>20</sup> and supreme.<sup>21</sup> His knowledge is infinite and infallible,<sup>22</sup> and for him nothing is contingent or uncertain. He works all things according to the counsel of his will.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge our grateful debt to and our glad solidarity with those Christian theologians who have faithfully “guarded the good deposit” (2 Timothy 1:14) of biblical doctrine. In this statement we follow their well-worn path (Jeremiah 6:16), the one blazed by the Author of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), in order to promote, protect, and pass on “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3).

Though we have benefited from many statements and confessions, we owe a special debt to the following excellent formulations: The London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689), “The Affirmation of Faith” of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, MN, and “The Confessional Statement” of The Gospel Coalition. We gratefully acknowledge that we have, in places, adopted significant portions of these formulations as our own.

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6, 18, 21, 22; 46:9; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6

<sup>3</sup> John 17:3; 1 John 5:20

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 10:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Timothy 4:10; Hebrews 10:31

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; John 14:26; 15:26; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 103:13; Matthew 6:9, 31-32; 7:11; Mark 14:36; John 1:14; 5:18, 26; Romans 8:15

<sup>7</sup> Acts 17:24-25; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 6:13

<sup>8</sup> Mark 1:1; John 5:17-18; Hebrews 1:8; 2 John 1:3

<sup>9</sup> John 1:1-3; 8:53-58; Colossians 1:17

<sup>10</sup> Acts 5:3-4

<sup>11</sup> John 14:26; 15:26; Romans 8:26; Ephesians 4:30

<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 1:3-14

<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8

<sup>14</sup> Revelation 4:11

<sup>15</sup> Colossians 1:17

<sup>16</sup> Romans 11:36

<sup>17</sup> Exodus 3:14

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 50:12; Acts 17:24-25

<sup>19</sup> Malachi 3:6

<sup>20</sup> Job 42:2; Psalm 115:3; Daniel 4:25, 34-35; 1 Timothy 6:15-16; James 4:15

<sup>21</sup> Colossians 1:18

<sup>22</sup> Psalm 139:1-6; 1 John 3:20

<sup>23</sup> Ephesians 1:11

God is transcendent, infinite, eternal and incomprehensible. If human beings are to know him, he must condescend and accommodate to their finitude and creaturely limitations. Unless he makes himself known, they cannot know him by their own reason.

## **2) Revelation**

In the Holy Scriptures, God has graciously revealed himself in human words. The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, sovereignly and conspicuously preserved by God and duly recognized by the people of God for their authenticity and authority, constitute this verbally inspired revelation. The Bible alone and the Bible in its entirety is the Word of God written. God chose to reveal his words through the personalities of individual writers and superintended this process so as to guard his Word from human error. The Holy Scriptures are consequently inerrant in the original manuscripts.<sup>24</sup>

The Bible has the first and the final authoritative word in all matters of faith and conduct for the Church. It has sovereign authority over our lives even as God himself has sovereign authority over our lives. The Bible is also sufficient for all God requires us to believe and do.<sup>25</sup> We acknowledge that all things in Scripture are not equally clear.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, those things which are necessary for salvation and the life of faith are so clearly expounded that we can attain a sufficient understanding of them for life and godliness.<sup>27</sup>

The entirety of this biblical canon points to and climaxes in the ultimate self-revelation of God:<sup>28</sup> the Word made flesh,<sup>29</sup> Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the Son, the incarnate Word, has made him known.<sup>30</sup> As such, no part of the Bible is properly understood apart from its relation to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus.<sup>31</sup>

## **3) God's Purpose and Plan of Redemption**

We believe that God's grand purpose for creation and all of human history is the glorification of his holy name.<sup>32</sup> God did not create out of need.<sup>33</sup> His creation does not add to his intrinsic glory. He is eternally and perfectly glorious in loving<sup>34</sup> and self-sufficient Tri-unity. His creation and redemptive plan reveal and reflect his glory. He created from a gracious desire to give the riches of his glory to objects of his mercy.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> This is the clear implication of the character of God. Consider the implications of the following texts: Numbers 23:19 Psalm 12:6; Proverbs 30:5; Matthew 24:35; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18.

<sup>25</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16-17

<sup>26</sup> 2 Peter 3:15-16

<sup>27</sup> 2 Peter 1:3-4

<sup>28</sup> Hebrews 1:1-2

<sup>29</sup> John 1:14

<sup>30</sup> John 1:18

<sup>31</sup> Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39; 2 Timothy 3:15

<sup>32</sup> Exodus 9:16; Isaiah 43:7; 48:9-11; John 12:27-28; 17:1; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14

<sup>33</sup> Acts 17:24-25

<sup>34</sup> John 17:24-26

<sup>35</sup> Romans 9:22-23

Before the ages began,<sup>36</sup> the Father lovingly purposed to save a multitude of sinners. He foreknew<sup>37</sup> this vast company, choosing them before the foundation of the world.<sup>38</sup> He predestined<sup>39</sup> them for adoption through Jesus Christ. In the fullness of time, he sent forth his Son,<sup>40</sup> who accomplished all his Father's will,<sup>41</sup> ransoming this people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,<sup>42</sup> all to the praise of his glorious grace.<sup>43</sup>

The knowledge of this purpose and plan, and our participation in it, must not lead to spiritual pride or doctrinal elitism. It should humble us to the dust and cause us to tremble with grateful joy.<sup>44</sup> He freely chose to save those with no claim whatsoever to his eternal pardon, acceptance, and blessing, who had every just claim to his eternal condemnation, rejection, and wrath. All boasting is therefore excluded,<sup>45</sup> except in the cross<sup>46</sup> of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.<sup>47</sup>

#### 4) Creation

We believe that God created all things for his glory,<sup>48</sup> both visible and invisible, out of nothing,<sup>49</sup> in the space of six days, and all very good.<sup>50</sup> He created our first parents, Adam and Eve, equally in his own image,<sup>51</sup> to reflect his glory by enjoying fellowship with him and each other. As God's image bearers, they were to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, exercising dominion over it in humble dependence on their Creator-King. In this way, the earth would be filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.<sup>52</sup> He made Adam and Eve male and female, with differing and complementary roles in marriage as a type of Christ and the Church.<sup>53</sup>

In God's wise and loving design, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but complement each other in mutually enriching ways. The glory of God is reflected in the redeemed masculinity of men and the redeemed femininity of women, and in the gracious outworking of their complementarity in each of their differing relationships. In the ministry of the local church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. We believe that the distinctive

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<sup>36</sup> 2 Timothy 1:8-9

<sup>37</sup> Romans 8:29; 11:2; 1 Peter 1:1-2

<sup>38</sup> Ephesians 1:4

<sup>39</sup> Ephesians 1:11

<sup>40</sup> Galatians 4:4; John 3:16

<sup>41</sup> John 19:30; 4:34; 6:37-40; 17:4

<sup>42</sup> Revelation 5:9

<sup>43</sup> Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14

<sup>44</sup> Colossians 1:11-14

<sup>45</sup> Romans 3:27

<sup>46</sup> Galatians 6:14

<sup>47</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

<sup>48</sup> Psalm 19:1-6; 148:1-13

<sup>49</sup> Hebrews 11:3; 1:2; John 1:1-3

<sup>50</sup> Genesis 1:31

<sup>51</sup> Genesis 1:26-28

<sup>52</sup> Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14

<sup>53</sup> Ephesians 5:22-33; Genesis 2:18

leadership role of eldership within the church is reserved for qualified men<sup>54</sup> and is grounded in creation, the fall,<sup>55</sup> and the redemptive work of Christ.<sup>56</sup>

## **5) The Fall**

Adam and Eve were created without sin, having the power to obey God, yet living under the possibility of transgressing. When tempted by the subtlety of Satan's deceit,<sup>57</sup> they doubted the goodness of God and the sufficiency of his very good provision, and so willfully ate the forbidden fruit.<sup>58</sup> By this cosmic rebellion against God's wise and loving rule, they fell from their original innocence and perfect fellowship with God. Just as God warned,<sup>59</sup> they incurred immediate spiritual death and subsequent physical death.

We believe Adam's fall became the fall of all mankind,<sup>60</sup> he being the head of the human race. Consequently, all people are by nature alienated from God, dead in trespasses and slaves of sin, corrupted in every aspect of being, and without hope. The supreme need of every person is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath they stand.

## **6) Jesus Christ: God Incarnate and the Only Mediator**

We believe that, in the fullness of time,<sup>61</sup> the eternal Son of God, the radiance of the Father's glory,<sup>62</sup> most willingly took on human flesh to save sinners.<sup>63</sup> He was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit<sup>64</sup> and born of the virgin Mary.<sup>65</sup> As Immanuel,<sup>66</sup> truly God and truly man, he became the only mediator between God and man.<sup>67</sup>

We believe that Jesus Christ, by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, acted as our representative and substitute. He was born under the law, and fulfilled it, perfectly accomplishing the will of his heavenly Father.<sup>68</sup> He was crucified, died for our sins, was buried, and on the third day rose bodily from the dead.<sup>69</sup> During the forty days after his resurrection, he appeared at various times, giving many convincing proofs of his resurrection.<sup>70</sup> He then ascended bodily into heaven where he remains seated at the right hand of God, reigning as King of kings

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<sup>54</sup> 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

<sup>55</sup> 1 Timothy 2:11-15

<sup>56</sup> 1 Peter 5:1-4

<sup>57</sup> Genesis 3:13; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:9

<sup>58</sup> Genesis 3:1-6

<sup>59</sup> Genesis 2:16-17

<sup>60</sup> Romans 5:12-21

<sup>61</sup> Galatians 4:4

<sup>62</sup> Hebrews 1:3; John 14:9

<sup>63</sup> Matthew 1:21

<sup>64</sup> Matthew 1:20

<sup>65</sup> Luke 1:26-35

<sup>66</sup> Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23

<sup>67</sup> 1 Timothy 2:5

<sup>68</sup> John 6:38; 17:4

<sup>69</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

<sup>70</sup> Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:5-7

and interceding<sup>71</sup> for his people as righteous advocate<sup>72</sup> and high priest,<sup>73</sup> on the basis of his all-sufficient sacrifice for sin.<sup>74</sup>

## **7) The Saving Work of the Holy Spirit**

When the Lord Jesus had made atonement for sin, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, he inaugurated a new era of the Spirit by pouring out the promise of the Father on his Church at Pentecost.<sup>75</sup>

We believe that apart from the effectual work of the Spirit no one would come to faith.<sup>76</sup> All are dead in trespasses and sins,<sup>77</sup> hostile to God, and morally unable to obey his holy law.<sup>78</sup> For God's chosen people, the Spirit triumphs over all resistance,<sup>79</sup> raising them from spiritual deadness and causing them to be born again to new and everlasting life,<sup>80</sup> washing, renewing,<sup>81</sup> and baptizing them into union with Christ<sup>82</sup> and his Body.<sup>83</sup> He removes blindness,<sup>84</sup> granting repentant<sup>85</sup> faith, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The Holy Spirit is himself the seal and guarantee of their promised inheritance as adopted sons and daughters, until they acquire possession of it at the day of redemption.<sup>86</sup> They receive his sovereignly distributed gifts<sup>87</sup> for the purpose of building up the church<sup>88</sup> and reaching the lost.<sup>89</sup> He indwells, fills, instructs, guides, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

## **8) Justification**

We believe that Christ, by his obedient life and substitutionary death, fully discharged the debt<sup>90</sup> of all those who are justified, and provided the perfect righteousness imputed to their account. The God who justifies the ungodly<sup>91</sup> thus demonstrates his righteousness<sup>92</sup> by declaring them righteous not for anything in them, or done by them, but on the basis of Christ's righteousness

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<sup>71</sup> Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25

<sup>72</sup> 1 John 2:1

<sup>73</sup> Hebrews 2:17; 4:14-15

<sup>74</sup> Hebrews 10:12

<sup>75</sup> Ezekiel 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-29; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-4, 14-21, 33

<sup>76</sup> Matthew 11:27; John 6:44, 65; Romans 3:10-11; 2 Corinthians 4:4

<sup>77</sup> Ephesians 2:1-6

<sup>78</sup> Romans 8:7-8

<sup>79</sup> Romans 6:17; 8:7-9

<sup>80</sup> Ephesians 2:4-6; Colossians 2:13-14; 1 Peter 1:3

<sup>81</sup> Titus 3:5

<sup>82</sup> Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27

<sup>83</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13

<sup>84</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:4-6

<sup>85</sup> Acts 11:15-18

<sup>86</sup> Ephesians 1:13-14

<sup>87</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:11

<sup>88</sup> Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12:7

<sup>89</sup> Acts 1:8

<sup>90</sup> Colossians 2:13-14

<sup>91</sup> Romans 4:5; Luke 18:9-14

<sup>92</sup> Romans 3:24-26

alone. He is therefore both just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus,<sup>93</sup> upholding his unbending justice toward the guilt of sin and exalting his rich mercy toward guilty sinners.

We believe that justification is a free act of righteous grace wherein God pardons and accepts repentant sinners by their faith in Christ, apart from works.<sup>94</sup> Faith is the sole instrument by which they, as sinners, are united to Christ, whose perfect righteousness and substitutionary sacrifice for sins is alone the ground of their acceptance with God. This acceptance happens fully and permanently at the moment of justification. Though they receive the righteousness of God by faith alone, that faith by which they are justified does not remain alone. It is not a dead faith, but works by love,<sup>95</sup> leading to sanctification.

## 9) Sanctification

For those who are justified, the dominion of sin is decisively broken.<sup>96</sup> Christ is Lord! By means of their union with Christ, their old self is crucified with him and buried and their new self is raised with him to walk in newness of life.<sup>97</sup> His grace holds dominion over them such that, though once slaves of sin, they are now slaves of righteousness.<sup>98</sup> As they continue, by the Spirit, through faith, to grow in grace, their sinful desires are progressively weakened and mortified. They are increasingly strengthened to practice all true holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.<sup>99</sup>

This sanctification extends throughout the whole person, yet it remains imperfect in this life. Some remnants of corruption live on in every part, and thus give rise to irreconcilable war,<sup>100</sup> calling for vigilance in the lifelong fight of faith.<sup>101</sup> In this war, although the remaining corruption for a time may greatly prevail, yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the child of God overcomes.<sup>102</sup> And so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.<sup>103</sup>

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We believe that justification and sanctification are both brought about by God, by grace, through faith, but not in the same way. Justification is an act of God's imputing and reckoning; sanctification is an act of God's imparting and transforming. Justification is an act of God whereby we receive the gracious declaration of positional righteousness. Sanctification is an act of God whereby we receive gracious empowerment for practical righteousness.

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<sup>93</sup> Romans 3:26

<sup>94</sup> Romans 3:28

<sup>95</sup> Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:10

<sup>96</sup> Romans 6:14

<sup>97</sup> Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:17

<sup>98</sup> Romans 6:17-19

<sup>99</sup> Hebrews 12:14; Galatians 5:21; 6:8-9

<sup>100</sup> Romans 7:14-25; Galatians 5:16-17

<sup>101</sup> 1 Timothy 6:12; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

<sup>102</sup> Romans 8:37

<sup>103</sup> 2 Corinthians 7:1

Nevertheless, the faith that justifies and the faith that sanctifies are one and the same faith. Living, justifying faith necessarily sanctifies. And only living, sanctifying, persevering faith is justifying faith, since faith without works is a dead and false faith.<sup>104</sup>

## 10) Perseverance of the Saints

Those whom God has chosen in Christ, and has effectually called and justified, can neither totally nor finally fall away.<sup>105</sup> They will certainly persevere to the end and be saved.<sup>106</sup> He who began a good work in his own will be faithful to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.<sup>107</sup>

God's very faithfulness is at stake in the fulfilling of all his New Covenant promises<sup>108</sup> on behalf of his chosen people. His covenantal, keeping grace is worked in them,<sup>109</sup> not so as to diminish their vigilance,<sup>110</sup> but to empower and encourage it. In the end, they can say, "I have fought the good fight,"<sup>111</sup> "though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me."<sup>112</sup>

## 11) The Church

We believe in the one universal Church, composed of all those, in every time and place, who are chosen in Christ and united to him through faith by the Spirit. They are all members of one Body, with Christ himself as the all-sufficient and supreme Head.<sup>113</sup> The Lord Jesus Christ promised that he would build his Church,<sup>114</sup> and he governs her as the chief Shepherd.<sup>115</sup> He does so through his Word, by means of the faithful teaching ministry of qualified pastors and teachers,<sup>116</sup> and as the members speak the truth to one another in love.<sup>117</sup>

We believe it is God's will that the universal Church find expression in local churches in which believers, as members of one another,<sup>118</sup> covenant together to hear the Word of God proclaimed,<sup>119</sup> to engage in corporate praise<sup>120</sup> and prayer,<sup>121</sup> to practice the ordinances of baptism<sup>122</sup> and the Lord's Supper,<sup>123</sup> to build each other's faith through the manifold ministries of

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<sup>104</sup> James 2:17-20, 26

<sup>105</sup> Romans 8:29-30

<sup>106</sup> Mark 13:13; John 6:37-40; Romans 8:31-39

<sup>107</sup> Philippians 1:6

<sup>108</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-36; 32:37-40

<sup>109</sup> Hebrews 13:20-21

<sup>110</sup> Philippians 2:12-13

<sup>111</sup> 2 Timothy 4:7-8

<sup>112</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:10

<sup>113</sup> Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:9-10, 22; 3:6; 4:15-16; 5:23

<sup>114</sup> Matthew 16:18

<sup>115</sup> 1 Peter 5:4; Hebrews 13:20-21

<sup>116</sup> Ephesians 4:11-14

<sup>117</sup> Ephesians 4:15-16

<sup>118</sup> Romans 12:5

<sup>119</sup> Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 4:1-2

<sup>120</sup> Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16

<sup>121</sup> Acts 1:14; 2:42; Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 4:2

<sup>122</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>123</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

love,<sup>124</sup> to hold each other accountable in the obedience of faith through biblical discipline,<sup>125</sup> and to engage in local and world evangelization,<sup>126</sup> all to the glory of God.<sup>127</sup>

## **12) The Ordinances**

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are both ordained by the Lord Jesus himself, as means of grace to his people. The former is associated with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal.

We believe that baptism is the ordinance in which those who have believed the gospel<sup>128</sup> display their union with Christ in his death and resurrection<sup>129</sup> by being immersed in water<sup>130</sup> in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>131</sup> It is a public sign of belonging to the new people of God,<sup>132</sup> signifying death to the old life of unbelief, purification from the pollution of sin,<sup>133</sup> and spiritual resurrection to newness of life in Christ.<sup>134</sup>

We believe that the Lord's Supper is the ordinance in which gathered believers, after solemn self-examination,<sup>135</sup> eat bread, signifying Christ's body given for his people, and drink the cup of the Lord, signifying the New Covenant in Christ's blood. We do this in remembrance<sup>136</sup> of the dying love of our Lord, and in anticipation of the marriage supper of the Lamb,<sup>137</sup> and thus proclaim his death until he comes.<sup>138</sup>

## **13) The Church and Civil Government**

We believe that the Scriptures teach that civil government is of divine appointment,<sup>139</sup> ordained by God to be under him, over the people, for his own glory and the public good. Because civil magistrates are established by God for these purposes, we ought to be subject to all their lawful commands, except only in things opposed to the word of our God,<sup>140</sup> who is the King of kings and Lord of lords.<sup>141</sup> We ought also to honor and pray for rulers and all that are in authority, that under them we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and dignity.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 13:1-7; Romans 12:6-10

<sup>125</sup> Matthew 18:15-22; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:7, 11-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

<sup>126</sup> Colossians 4:5-6; Romans 15:24; 3 John 7-8

<sup>127</sup> Ephesians 3:10, 21

<sup>128</sup> Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 3:26-27; Acts 2:38; 18:8

<sup>129</sup> Romans 6:3-4

<sup>130</sup> Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:4

<sup>131</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>132</sup> Romans 2:28-29; Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:7; 6:16

<sup>133</sup> Acts 22:16

<sup>134</sup> Romans 6:3-4

<sup>135</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:27-29

<sup>136</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:24-25; Luke 22:19

<sup>137</sup> Revelation 19:9; Luke 22:16

<sup>138</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:26

<sup>139</sup> Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:12-17

<sup>140</sup> Acts 5:29

<sup>141</sup> 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16

<sup>142</sup> 1 Timothy 2:1-2



## 14) The Mission

We believe that the commission given by the Lord Jesus to make disciples of all nations is binding on all his disciples to the end of the age.<sup>143</sup> The task is to spread his gospel urgently,<sup>144</sup> indiscriminately,<sup>145</sup> and graciously,<sup>146</sup> both near and far, to every tribe and tongue and people and nation,<sup>147</sup> baptizing those who respond in faith, teaching them the words and ways of the Lord, and gathering them into churches able to fulfill their Christian calling among their own people. The love of Christ compels his ambassadors to carry out this ministry of reconciliation<sup>148</sup> in the context of holistic and authentic neighbor love. 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; rather, they are to do good to all,<sup>149</sup> including their enemies,<sup>150</sup> and always remember the poor.<sup>151</sup> The church can confidently carry out this mission, empowered by King Jesus, who possesses all authority in heaven and on earth and who promises to be with them to the very end of the age.<sup>152</sup>

The ultimate aim of the mission is that God would create, by his Word, worshippers who glorify his name through the glad-hearted obedience of faith.<sup>153</sup> This mission exists because worship of the true God does not. When the time of ingathering is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, the mission will be no more. It is a temporary necessity, but worship abides forever. Worship, which fuels the mission, is therefore also the goal of the mission.

## 15) The Return of Christ and Renewal of All Things

We believe in the blessed hope<sup>154</sup> that at the end of the age Jesus Christ will return to this earth personally,<sup>155</sup> visibly,<sup>156</sup> physically,<sup>157</sup> and suddenly<sup>158</sup> in power and great glory,<sup>159</sup> and that he will gather his elect,<sup>160</sup> raise the dead,<sup>161</sup> judge the nations, and consummate his kingdom.

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<sup>143</sup> Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20

<sup>144</sup> Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30-31

<sup>145</sup> Isaiah 55:1-7; Matthew 11:28-30; John 3:15-16; 6:35; 7:37-39; Romans 10:8-13; Revelation 22:17

<sup>146</sup> Colossians 4:5-6; 1 Peter 3:15

<sup>147</sup> Revelation 5:9

<sup>148</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

<sup>149</sup> Matthew 5:13-16; Galatians 6:10; 1 Peter 2:12

<sup>150</sup> Matthew 5:44-45; Luke 6:26-36

<sup>151</sup> Galatians 2:10; James 1:27

<sup>152</sup> Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>153</sup> Romans 1:5; John 4:23; Romans 15:8-11, 18

<sup>154</sup> Titus 2:13

<sup>155</sup> Acts 1:9-11

<sup>156</sup> Mark 14:61-62

<sup>157</sup> Luke 24:39-43

<sup>158</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

<sup>159</sup> Luke 21:27

<sup>160</sup> Matthew 24:31

<sup>161</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to everlasting conscious misery in hell,<sup>162</sup> and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb,<sup>163</sup> in the new heaven and new earth, the home of righteousness.<sup>164</sup>

We believe that the end of all things in this age will be the beginning of the never-ending, ever-increasing happiness of the redeemed, as God shows the infinite riches of his glorious grace for the everlasting enjoyment of his people.<sup>165</sup> God will be all in all<sup>166</sup> and his people will be enthralled by the unmediated sight<sup>167</sup> of his ineffable beauty. We therefore eagerly await<sup>168</sup> our Savior's return,<sup>169</sup> longing for his appearing,<sup>170</sup> living as pilgrims<sup>171</sup> in this vapor-like life<sup>172</sup> on earth, desiring our better homeland,<sup>173</sup> where we will see our Savior face to face<sup>174</sup> and be forever with our Lord.<sup>175</sup>

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Daniel 12:2; Matthew 10:28; 25:41, 46; Mark 9:43-48; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 14:11

<sup>163</sup> Revelation 5:13

<sup>164</sup> 2 Peter 3:13

<sup>165</sup> Ephesians 2:6-7; Psalm 16:11; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 13:12

<sup>166</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:28

<sup>167</sup> Revelation 22:4; Matthew 5:8

<sup>168</sup> Hebrews 9:28; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

<sup>169</sup> Philippians 3:20-21

<sup>170</sup> 2 Timothy 4:8

<sup>171</sup> 1 Peter 2:11

<sup>172</sup> James 4:13-15

<sup>173</sup> Hebrews 11:13-16

<sup>174</sup> 1 John 3:2

<sup>175</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

<sup>176</sup> Revelation 22:20