

The Doctrinal Statement of The Covenant of Peace Church

What We Believe

What We Teach

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Introduction

2 Timothy 4:3&4

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

What do you believe?

Why do you believe it?

These two Questions are probably the most important Questions that anyone will ever try to answer. Because the Answer to these Questions is vital- not only for our own soul's sake, but for the sake of lost Sinners and for Civilization as well. It is the Ignorance and/or Confusion about what we, as God's people, believe and teach today; what we hold on to- as being Dear, Precious, and Holy; what we ascribe to- as a matter of both Belief and Practice; that is the Foundation for the moral Upheaval and radical social Transformation that is taking place all around us.

And as we enter into the third Millennium since that first Prayer Meeting that birthed the Church, far too many have neglected serious Bible Study and have chosen to ignore over two thousand years of Church history. And as a Result- we seldom understand *why* we believe those things that the Church teaches.

The Apostles' Teaching

We know from Scripture and from History that the Apostles of the early Church understood the Importance of teaching the multitudes of new Believers, things that we usually don't view today as necessary. They taught sound biblical Doctrine. Here is a "snap- shot" of what the early Church looked like:

The Acts 2:42

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

The Bible declares that four things were done in the Church among those that were saved on an ongoing Basis:

1. **Continually devoting themselves to the Apostle's Teaching** (an on going; in depth; line upon line; precept upon precept; systematic STUDY of the Word of God)

2. **Fellowship** (among Believers)
3. **The Breaking of Bread** (Holy Communion)
4. **Prayer** (Consistent, scheduled, corporate times of effectual and fervent Prayer)

So, we can see that the first necessary Component of the Life of the Christian Church- during the Time when it was being established- was that born again; Blood bought; Spirit-filled Believers “*continually devoted*” themselves to what Dr. Luke was inspired to write, the “*Apostles’ Teaching*.”

So, exactly how did they do this? Without printed books; without Libraries or the Internet- and without even a Bible- the Scriptures declare that the men and women of the early Church were taught two primary things:

1. *What* to believe
2. *Why* to believe it

... by the Leaders of the Church.

And these Teachings, collectively, became known as the “*Apostles’ Teaching*”. And the Bible says that ALL those in the early Church learned these Truths. And that means they were taught this “Teaching” *often*; and they were taught it *thoroughly*. And as a Result of everyone in the Church being taught God’s Truth; and by everyone personally *experiencing* the Truth that was taught- the Church became Strong; and the people were greatly used by God.

The Acts 19:20

So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

The Acts 2:43&44

43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;

Sound Doctrine Exposes and Rejects Heresy

This Teaching began in the New Testament Church by the Apostles- but this Teaching continued to be carried out- down through the Centuries- by men, who were trained to teach. So, it is clear that every Leader of every local Church in the first Century was a Theologian. And every time a Heretic would rise up to teach and to spread false Doctrine- the Leaders of the Church were able to clearly expose the Heresy and reject it- using both Scripture itself as well as the “Logic of Scripture”.

But the Reason the Church had great and continued Success in exposing and denouncing Heresy was because the Church was *not* confused about *what* they believed and or *why* they believed it. The Church was aware that “*Divine Truth*” was able to confront and defeat Man-made Error. But the Reason the early Church was so adamant about Teaching and Believing “*Sound Doctrine*”- was

because they had been promised that Error would try to enter the Church and corrupt the people:

The Acts 20:29-32

29 I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

31 Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Galatians 1:8&9

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

2Timothy 3:1-7

1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,

7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

2Peter 2:1&2

1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

These Attacks against the Gospel became so severe that the Apostle Jude gave an inspired Command to the Church:

Jude 3&4

3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

The Church had been warned over and over by the very men who literally walked and talked with Jesus about the Seriousness of learning and teaching “*Sound Doctrine*” and about the long, protracted War against the Truth. So, it is no small matter that when Paul was saved, and became an Apostle- he taught the same thing:

2Timothy 4:3&4

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

So, in order to effectively combat the tide of Error and false Teaching that was promised to come, Paul and the other Apostles began to diligently teach those who would lead the Church after them, so that the Purity of the Gospel might be preserved.

2Timothy 2:2

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

So, down through the Centuries, the Church did just that. It was precisely because people in the Church knew what they believed and why they believed it that gave the Church the Courage and the Ability to uphold and defend God’s Truth against those who would wage War against it. And the Sound Doctrine that was used to combat Heresy and to put down false Doctrine also enabled the Church to:

1. Receive all of the Holy Scriptures into one Book which represented the “*Canon*” or the “*Rule*” of Christian Faith and Practice
2. Reject the “Error of the Judaizers” (*Legalism*), which sought to impose Jewish ceremonial Law upon the Gentile believers (**The Acts 15**).
3. Reject popular Gnostic Teachings (by developing the Apostles’ Creed 175 A.D.)
4. Put forth an authoritative Statement concerning “*Christian Orthodoxy*” (the Nicene Creed 325 A.D.)
5. Issue an official Statement upholding the Sovereignty of God over the supposed “Free-will of Man (the Council of Carthage 412 A.D.)
6. Cry out against the Abuses and Errors of the Roman religious System (the 95 Thesis)
7. Break away from the apostate religious System of the 16th Century (the Protestant Reformation)
8. Hammer out a working Confession of Protestant Theology (the Westminster Confession; the London Baptist Confession of Faith)

The Pentecostal Renewal De-Emphasized Sound Doctrine

With the advent of the Pentecostal Movement in America in the late 1800's and early 1900's- with its supposed Emphasis on the "free flow of God's Spirit in and through the Believer", the Emphasis to continue a systematic Defense of the Faith has waned.

Many in the modern Church have *incorrectly* interpreted this "Movement" that supposedly focuses on the Holy Spirit as being a *Reduction* or an outright *Elimination* of the Need to "**continually devote themselves to the apostles' teaching**" (**The Acts 2:42**); and learning and teaching Sound Doctrine has been *de-emphasized*.

The Vacuum, created by the Absence of Sound Doctrine in the hearts and minds of God's people, is today being filled with exactly what the Apostles warned us about. And it has created a Situation whereby men do "**whatever is right in his own eyes**" (**Deuteronomy 12:8b**).

Many incorrectly understand the Working of the Holy Spirit today as a License to hear and see and comprehend and teach strange new Doctrines and utter strange new Revelations that have nothing in common with the Bible or God or Divine Truth or Christianity. As a result of this Abuse of God's Spirit, ancient Heresies that the Church exposed and renounced many Centuries ago- have made a Comeback; and they draw unlearned and ignorant souls after them.

The Result of the Failure of the Church to "**contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints**" (**Jude 3**), has been disastrous and has produced a weak, effeminate, and ineffective Church that accepts unscriptural Practices and Teachings as being equal with Divine Truth "in the Name of" the same Spirit Whom Jesus said would not do that (**John 16:13**). We now put a greater Premium on hearing "some *new* thing" (so-called new Revelations), than we do to study and understand and live the "*first* thing" (The Apostles' Teaching). This, the Holy Spirit would never do.

The Spirit Will Teach Us

John 14:26

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

The Apostles John and Paul wrote that all who have repented and trusted in Jesus Christ have indeed been filled with the Holy Spirit. And we have God the Holy Spirit living within us continually as the unmistakable and unproveable Sign that Jesus Christ has forgiven us and made us Righteous.

1John 3:24b

... We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Ephesians 1:13&14

13 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,

14 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.

So, we see then that because we have now been washed in pure Blood; and because the Righteousness of Jesus Christ has been imputed to us (by Faith alone); we now have, residing within us, His Holy Spirit. But beloved, we must still understand that, in spite of this being true- we are still Flesh; and we are still given to Excesses; and we are still given to Extremes; and we are still given to Misappropriate and Misinterpret that which the Spirit speaks and does and teaches. So, the Need that we have today to study and know the Objective, Propositional, Divine, and Absolute Truth of Scripture is as great as it was when the Church began.

Spiritual Discernment

1John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

So, while John tells us that we indeed have God's Spirit- he also cautioned us to not believe everything that we **think** that the Spirit says but to make sure that what *appears* to be from God is truly from God.

It is clear that simply being Sincere is not enough to judge whether something said or done is actually from the Lord. What God says to us is far too important to simply leave to someone's fleeting Sincerity. We are told that there is one objective Way of knowing for sure- we must "**test the spirits**" (exercise spiritual Discernment) and spiritual Discernment can only be accomplished by and through the correct and full Understanding of the Word of God. So, we see that if we desire for the Holy Spirit to have free reign; and to lead, guide, direct us, and to teach us all things- that sound, biblical Doctrine must be understood, believed, and taught by the Church.

So, which one do we need? The Word or the Spirit? Beloved, **we need both!** And we must struggle very hard to achieve a godly and holy Balance between the glorious Life- giving Power of the Spirit; while maintaining proper and correct biblical Doctrine. This Doctrinal Statement has been written to facilitate such a Balance.

We Must Learn from the Past or We Will Repeat It

In spite of hundreds of godly men who exposed the Foolishness and Fallacy of the Roman religious System's "collections" (the bones of the saints; John the Baptist's skull; the remains of St. Peter, etc.), and in spite of extensive Writings which exposed the false Teaching of Rome over 500 years ago, the modern Church has, for the most part, returned to an exchange of Symbolism over Substance. And

the Result is an Acceptance of many of the very same false Teachings that the Reformation exposed and denounced.

We now have religious Trinkets, Rituals, and Ceremonies at the expense of a correct biblical View, sound Doctrine, and Divine Truth. The result is that a “holy Certainty” has turned into a “carnal Uncertainty”. “Godly Steadfastness” has turned into “earthly Weakness”; and strong, vibrant, empowered Believers have been reduced, and marginalized, and quieted.

The Bible promises that anytime the Enemy comes in like a flood and attacks the things of God- God will be faithful to raise up someone, who will hold the Banner of Truth higher than ever. And so, all throughout History, we have seen God sound an Alarm in His holy Mountain and call the Church to Repentance. Among those many Efforts include:

- ✓ Because Heretics were reading and teaching from books that were not divinely inspired, the Church met. And using agonizingly tedious and detailed methods, “received” the 27 books of the New Testament as the Canon or Rule of both Faith and Practice of the Church, which today we call the Holy Bible.
- ✓ Because of the popularity of the so-called “*Gnostic Gospels*” (the very same books that are gaining popularity today), the Church wrote down the Apostles’ Creed in the second Century, which summarized the Apostles’ Teaching.
- ✓ In the dark days of the Church in the fourth Century, when it appeared that Arius’s heretical Teachings (that Jesus was not Deity and that He was a created being) would carry the day, God raised up an obscure man named, Athanasius, who almost single handedly, brought the Church back to her first Love. The result of years of his dedicated efforts to combat both the majority of all the Bishops of the Church as well as the Emperor of Rome himself was the part of the Nicene Creed, that simply but powerfully gives the correct biblical view of both the full Deity and the full Humanity of Christ:

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
The only-begotten Son of God,
Begotten of the Father before all worlds;
God of God,
Light of Light,
Very God of very God;
Begotten, not made,
Being of one substance with the Father,
By whom all things were made.
Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven,
And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,
And was made man;
And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered and was buried;
And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures;

And ascended into heaven,
And sits on the right hand of the Father;
And He shall come again, with glory,
To judge the quick and the dead;
Whose kingdom shall have no end.

- ✓ In the sixteenth century, when Martin Luther saw that the Roman Church had descended into Greed and Arrogance and false Teaching, God used him to write down 95 Questions or Expressions. These “Thesis” challenged the Church to return to the absolute Authority of the Scriptures.
- ✓ When it became clear that Rome would not repent of her Apostasy, the Reformers **“came out of her”** and hammered out their “Protest” concerning *“Justification by Grace through Faith in Christ alone”* and the Protestant Reformation was born.
- ✓ Jonathan Edwards warned the Church in the mid eighteenth Century that she needed to include all Believers in the Communion service- even Indians and slaves. He was banished for doing so.
- ✓ Charles Spurgeon cried out again in the nineteenth century against the Liberalism that was creeping into the Church; and of substituting social Change and Psychology for genuine Salvation and sound biblical Doctrine which was putting the Church on what he called, *“the Down Grade”*. He was forced to resign for doing so.

These heroes of Church History all suffered enormously for their Stand and we should honor them today, because without God ordaining, anointing, and blessing their courageous Efforts, the Church would not be **“the pillar and support of the Truth”** (1Timothy 3:15).

It is utter nonsense that we, who make up the Church of Jesus Christ in the third millennium, would ignore the Wealth of Information about the Struggles and Victories of two thousand years of History and try to “make it up as we go along”. In order to fully understand how we got to where we are today- we must study the Past.

Sola Scriptura

Today, the words of the Apostle Paul should ring in our ears:

2Timothy 3:16&17

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

The Reformers developed the Doctrine of *“Sola Scriptura”* (Latin, for “by Scripture alone”), which teaches that four things were to come from Scripture and from Scripture **alone**:

1. All Church Teaching
2. All Reproof
3. All Church Discipline
4. All Spiritual Training

This important Church Doctrine teaches that we are free to be led by the Spirit in many areas of our Lives- but about these four things- we must be directed by Scripture and by Scripture **alone**.

By emphasizing the Concept of “Sola Scriptura”, the Reformers were trying to achieve the delicate Balance between allowing Freedom for the Spirit to **“teach us all things”** while maintaining the Stability of the Church **“continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching”**.

Sola Scriptura in no way hinders the free Flow of God's Spirit, but as it pertains to these four things (Doctrine; Reproof; Correction; and Instruction in Righteousness), Sola Scriptura upholds the Word of God over that of Church Councils, Papal Edicts, Church Tradition, Personal Experiences, and Supernatural Manifestations. So, the Answer to the Question of *“Why do you believe that?”* is, *“Because that is what God has said in His Word”*.

Too much of what is believed and taught today in the modern Church is not based in Scripture alone but is based on something that sounds good; something that feels good; or something that is popular. We view that as being very Dangerous. When a book, that is written by a nationally known Preacher, becomes a best seller- that may be great for Business- but it is not the criteria from which to formulate Doctrine. We, who are serious about *what* we believe and *why* we believe it, need to make sure that what we believe is completely “Scriptural”; and we need to make sure that what we teach is from the Bible alone.

The Church has been endued with Power from on High to preach and teach and do those things that the Bible commands- but nothing else. We have no Right; we have no License; we have no Authority; and we have no Anointing and no Empowerment to teach or preach or do things that the Bible does not command or allow.

Therefore, because all of this is true, it became necessary for me to write down this Statement of our Position on the things that matter most.

This Effort that you hold in your hand represents years of Labor and Research and Love and it is in this Light and in this Spirit that I offer this Doctrinal Statement to the Board of Elders of the Covenant of Peace Church for their examination in Light of Holy Scripture.

This is what I believe. This is what I will teach.

Respectfully submitted for the Glory of God,

Blair Bradley
December 2005
Gulfport, Mississippi
Approved by the Board of Elders December 2005

1. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

We believe and teach that the Holy Bible is God's unique written Revelation to Man, and thus the 66 Books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (**1Corinthians 2:7-14; 2Peter 1:20&21**).

We believe and teach that the 66 Books of the Holy Bible are the completed and finished Revelation of God which cannot be added to; nor taken away from; by any Man, Church, or Organization. (**The Revelation 22:18&19**)

We believe and teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional Revelation (**1Thessalonians 2:13; 1Corinthians 2:13**), verbally inspired in every Word (**2Timothy 3:16**), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed.

We believe and teach the literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of **Genesis** present Creation in six literal days of 24 hours each (**Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17**).

We believe and teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible Rule of Faith and Practice for the Church and the saints of God (**Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12&13; 17:17; 1Corinthians 2:13; 2Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2Peter 1:20&21**).

We believe and teach that God spoke in His written Word by a wondrous and mysterious process whereby the Holy Spirit supernaturally and miraculously superintended the human writers in such a way that through their own languages and their individual personalities and different styles of writing- the human writers were able to compose and record God's Word to Man (**2Peter 1:20&21**) without error in the whole or in the part (**Matthew 5:18; 2Timothy 3:16**).

We believe and teach that all Church Doctrine; all Spiritual Instruction; all Moral Counseling; and all Godly Correction must come from the Holy Scriptures alone and should not be based on human ingenuity; personal opinion or experience; nor the ruling of any man, group, Church council, Church history, previous rulings, or miraculous or supernatural manifestations. (**2Timothy 3:16&17**)

We believe and teach that the written Scriptures take precedent over any spiritual manifestation of any gift by any person at any time. (**2Timothy 3:16&17**)

We believe and teach that it is the solemn duty of every believer to carefully discern all spiritual manifestations and to “try the spirits” in accordance with the written Scriptures. (**1John 4:1**)

We believe and teach that the leadership of the Church has the ability; the mandate; and the responsibility to judge any manifestation of any gift by any person when that manifestation is brought forth in the Church. (**1Corinthians 14:26-33**)

We believe and teach that the Holy Spirit will never lead anyone to ever do anything that is contrary to the written Word of God, but that He will always lead and guide the believer into the single correct and true interpretation of the written Word of God. (**John 16:13; John 17:17**)

We believe and teach that, whereas there may be various applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true and correct interpretation of Scripture. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (**John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1Corinthians 2:7-15; 1John 2:20**). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, and to “take out” (exegete) of the Bible only what God the Holy Spirit put into it- no more and no less.

We believe and teach that the proper application of Scripture that is derived through the proper interpretation of Scripture is binding on all people and all generations for all time. (**2Timothy 2:15; 1Peter 1:25; Luke 21:33**)

We believe and teach that the moral Law of God as recorded in both the Old and New Testaments is eternal and is binding upon everyone forever. We believe and teach that this moral Law is a reflection of the very Nature and Character of God Himself and is the instrument by which God will judge all Mankind. (**Exodus 20: 1-17; Psalms 19:7-11; Jeremiah 31:33; Matthew 5: 17-20; The Acts 15: 19&20; Romans 3:31; 1Corinthians 6: 9-11**)

We believe and teach that the Jewish ceremonial, cultural, sacrificial, and dietary Laws were for the Jew alone and were temporary and have been fulfilled in, by, and through the Lord Jesus Christ and are no longer in effect today. (**The Acts 10: 14&15; Galatians 3: 24-26; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14-23; Hebrews 8:4-13**)

2. GOD

We believe and teach that there is but one living and true God (**Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1Corinthians 8:4**), Who is an infinite, all-knowing; and all powerful Spirit (**John 4:24**), perfect in all His Attributes; one in Essence and eternally existing in three Persons of God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit (**Matthew 28:19; 2Corinthians 13:14**) with each Person being equally deserving of our worship and obedience.

God the Father **We believe and teach** that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His Own Purpose and Grace (**Psalm 145:8-9; 1Corinthians 8:6**). He is the Creator of all things (**Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9**). As the only Absolute and Omnipotent Ruler in the Universe- He is Sovereign in Creation, Providence, and Redemption (**Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36**). His Fatherhood involves both His Designation within the Trinity and His Relationship with Mankind. As Creator, He is Sovereign to all men (**Ephesians 4:6**), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (**Romans 8:14; 2Corinthians 6:18**). He has decreed for His own Glory- all things that come to pass (**Ephesians 1:11**). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all Creatures and Events (**1Chronicles 29:11**). In His Sovereignty- He is neither the Author nor the Approver of Sin (**Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47**), nor does He abridge the Responsibility and Accountability of moral, intelligent Creatures (**1Peter 1:17**). He has graciously chosen from “Eternity Past” those whom He would have as His own (**Ephesians 1:4-6**); He saves from Sin all those, who come to Him by Faith in Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own, all those who have come to Jesus; and He becomes, upon Adoption, Father to His own (**John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9**).

God the Son **We believe and teach** that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the Divine Excellencies of God, and that in these He is Coequal, Consubstantial, and Coeternal with the Father (**John 10:30; 14:9**).

We believe and teach that Jesus Christ is 100% God and 100% Man in the *same* Body; at the *same* Time: without Conflict or Contradiction. (**John 5:18; Philippians 2:6**)

We believe and teach that God the Father created all things according to His own Will, by His Son, Jesus Christ, by Whom all things continue in Existence and in Operation (**John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2**).

We believe and teach that in the Incarnation (God becoming Man), Christ surrendered only the Prerogatives of Deity but nothing of the Divine Essence, either in Degree or Kind. In His Incarnation- the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity accepted all the essential Characteristics of Humanity and so became the God-Man (**Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9**).

We believe and teach that Jesus Christ represents both Humanity and Deity in indivisible Oneness (**Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9&10; Colossians 2:9**).

We believe and teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin Conceived and virgin Born (**Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35**); that He was God Incarnate (**John 1:1, 14**); and that the Purpose of the Incarnation was to reveal God; to redeem men; and to rule over God's Kingdom (**Psalms 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1Peter 1:18&19**).

We believe and teach that, in the Incarnation, the second Person of the Trinity (Jesus) willingly laid aside His Right to the full Benefits of Coexistence with God and took on an Existence appropriate to a Servant while never divesting Himself of His Divine Attributes (**Philippians 2:5-8**).

We believe and teach that Jesus Christ was, in reality and in practice, totally and absolutely Sinless (**Hebrews 4:15**), perfectly and continuously keeping all the Commands of God (**John 5:19**), and that Jesus Christ accomplished our eternal Redemption through the shedding of His Blood and sacrificial Death on the Cross and that His Death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (**John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1Peter 2:24**).

We believe and teach that on the basis of the Efficacy of the Death of our Lord Jesus Christ- the believing Sinner is freed from the Punishment, the Penalty, the Power, and one day the very Presence of Sin; and that he is declared Righteous, given Eternal Life, and adopted into the Family of God (**Romans 3:25; 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1Peter 2:24; 3:18**).

We believe and teach that our Justification is made sure by Christ's literal and physical Resurrection from the Dead and that He is now ascended to the Right Hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (**Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1John 2:1**).

We believe and teach that in the physical, literal, and bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Grave- God confirmed the Deity of His Son and gave Proof that God has accepted the atoning Work of Christ on the Cross. Jesus' bodily Resurrection is also the Guarantee of a future Resurrection Life for all Believers (**John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1Corinthians 15:20, 23**).

We believe and teach that Jesus Christ will return to this earth to receive the Church, which is His Body, unto Himself as the glorious Crown of His Achievement. (**The Acts 1:9-11; 1Thessalonians 4:13-18**).

We believe and teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge:

- All Mankind (**John 5:22-23**):
- Believers (**1Corinthians 3:10-15; 2Corinthians 5:10**)
- Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious Return (**Matthew 25:31-46**)
- Unbelieving Dead at the Great White Throne (**The Revelation 20:11-15**)

We believe and teach that as the Mediator between God and Man (**1Timothy 2:5**), the Head of His Body the Church (**Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18**), and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David (**Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33**), that Jesus Christ is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (**Matthew 25:14-46; John 5:22; The Acts 17:30-31**).

God the Holy Spirit **We believe and teach** that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, eternal and underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and Deity, including intellect (**1Corinthians 2:10-13**), emotions (**Ephesians 4:30**), will (**1Corinthians 12:11**), eternality (**Hebrews 9:14**), omnipresence (**Psalms 139:7-10**), omniscience (**Isaiah 40:13&14**), omnipotence (**Romans 15:13**), and truthfulness (**John 16:13**). In all the Divine Attributes- He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (**Matthew 28:19; The Acts 5:3&4; 28:25&26; 1Corinthians 12:4-6; 2Corinthians 13:14; Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17**).

We believe and teach that it is the Work of the Holy Spirit to execute the Divine Will with relation to all Mankind. We recognize His Sovereign Activity in Creation (**Genesis 1:2**), the Incarnation (**Matthew 1:18**), the written Revelation (**2Peter 1:20& 21**), and the Work of Salvation (**John 3:5-7**).

We believe and teach that the Work of the Holy Spirit in this Age began at Pentecost, when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (**John 14:16-17; 15:26**) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His Church (**1Corinthians 12:13**). The broad scope of His Divine Activity includes convicting the world of Sin, of Righteousness, and of Judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the Image of Christ (**John 16:7-9; The Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22**).

We believe and teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in Regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ (**1Corinthians 12:13**). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for Service, and seals them unto the day of Redemption (**Romans 8:9; 2Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13**).

We believe and teach that the Holy Spirit is the Divine Teacher, Who guided the Apostles and Prophets into all Truth as they committed to writing God's Revelation, the Bible (**2Peter 1:19-21**).

We believe and teach that every believer possesses the indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit from the very moment of Salvation, and it is the Duty of all those born of the Spirit to subsequently be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit on an ongoing basis (**John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 1John 2:20, 27**).

We believe and teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual Gifts to the Church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His Gifts by ostentatious Displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His Work of redeeming the Lost and building up Believers in the most holy Faith (**John 16:13-14; The Acts 1:8; 1Corinthians 12:4-11; 2Corinthians 3:18**).

We believe and teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is Sovereign in the bestowing of all His Gifts for the perfecting of the saints today, and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the Church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the Apostles as revealers of Divine Truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (**1Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4**).

We believe and teach that, while all of the spiritual Gifts are in part and operate on occasion and by times, the indwelling of the Spirit gives every believer the Ability and Power to bear and tangibly produce nine distinct Fruit, which are not in part and which remain. (**Galatians 5:22-26, John 15:16**)

We believe and teach that all nine Fruit should reside and be manifested through every believer and are the unmistakable proof of Redemption. (**John 15; 1John 3:24**)

3. MAN

We believe and teach that Man (Adam) was directly and immediately created by God in His Image and His Likeness and did not evolve over time from lesser creatures. Adam was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination (free will), and moral responsibility to God (**Genesis 1:27&28; 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9**).

We believe and teach that God's grandest purpose in the creation of Man was that Man would know and enjoy God in fullness and that Man should give to God the Glory that He is entitled to receive by Man living his life according to the Will of God. (**Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; The Revelation 4:11**).

We believe and teach that Adam fell from that first Estate through his Sin of Disobedience to the revealed Will and spoken Word of God. (**Genesis 3**)

We believe and teach that all of the subsequent descendants of Adam (the entire human Race) have had transmitted to them through human conception- the guilt of the Sin of Adam and the fallen nature of Adam and therefore, all of Mankind are totally and incurably corrupt and depraved in their nature and that lost man is unwilling and unable of possessing an intrinsic righteousness of their own. Unregenerated Man exists in a state of spiritual death and utter lostness and that apart from Divine Grace- all of Mankind are without God and are, in and of themselves, without any hope of eternal life. Man's Salvation is thereby wholly of God's Grace alone through the redemptive Work of our Lord Jesus Christ (**Genesis 2:16&17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1Timothy 2:13&14; 1John 1:8**).

We believe and teach that, because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by Divine declaration (**Psalms 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12**).

4. Human Sexuality/Marriage

We believe and teach that God wisely, purposefully, instantly, and miraculously created Mankind *uniquely* Male and Female with specific sexual Attributes and Qualities for the Glory of God and the enjoyment of themselves when conducted in a Manner consistent with God's revealed Will in Scripture. Thus, it is God and God's revealed Will in Scripture alone that is qualified to define what is and what is not sexually Helpful, Fulfilling, Satisfying, and Acceptable. (**Genesis 1:26-30; 2:7; 15-25; 1Kings 3:14; Psalm 95:10; Proverbs 8:32; Isaiah 55:8-11; Mark 10:6; Hebrews 13:4; 2Peter 1:3&4**)

We believe and teach that part of what it means to live on this Earth and in this Life after the Fall of Adam in the Garden- is that all Humans now have certain Inclinations/Proclivities that exist in our Flesh from the moment of Conception- which are Sinful; and which exist and operate in Opposition to God's revealed Will and Word. Some of these sinful Inclinations/Proclivities are Sexual in Nature; and it is from those fallen, sinful, Inclinations/Proclivities where the various sexual Deviations/Perversions come. However, this Fact does not, in any Way, mitigate the Sinfulness of those Deviations/Perversions; nor does it alleviate the Responsibility of the individual Believer to openly, regularly, publicly as well as privately denounce them as Sin; resist them in the Power of the Holy Spirit; and walk in Victory over them- as God grants that Victory.

We believe and teach that Scripture reveals clearly and repeatedly that sexual Sins are *unique* from other Sins; and have been *specifically* "defined" by God as *particularly* dishonoring to His Glory; as well as *especially* destructive to people. Therefore, great Care and Concern should be expended by both the Leaders, as well as the general Membership, that each individual Member learn how to "keep himself" pure from sexual Sins of every sort.

We believe and teach that individual Believers may have more than one of these sinful Inclinations/Proclivities that trouble them and that act as a Source for sexual Temptation and Sin. We acknowledge that some of these Inclinations/Proclivities are ancient; and have been identified and faithfully resisted and overcome by many Believers since the Beginning of the Church; and should be resisted and overcome by the Believers of the 21st Century.

We believe and teach that the Holy Bible repeatedly and clearly declares in both the Old and New Testaments that faithful Heterosexuality within the Covenant of Holy Matrimony; and Fidelity outside of Marriage; is God's revealed Will for all Mankind; and is the one single Divine Standard of human Sexuality that honors and glorifies God to which God calls all of the human Race and to

which He holds them all accountable. (**Genesis 1:26-31; 2:18-25; Exodus 20:14; Romans 14:12; 1Corinthians 6:13-20; Ephesians 5:22-33**)

We believe and teach that the sacred Covenant of Marriage is primarily a religious Event- not a secular one- having been sovereignly ordained by God; and is to be carried out by the Christian Church in accord with God's revealed Word in the 66 Books of the Holy Bible. Therefore, it is the Christian Church which has the primary Right and sacred Duty to define, defend, and uphold Marriage. This Church defines Holy Matrimony as being:

“A sacred Union between one, unmarried, naturally born, Christian Man and one, unmarried, naturally born, Christian Woman united together by the Power of God and the mystery of Holiness with the blessings and approval of the Church as a temporary, public, tangible, visible, and earthly *representation* of the Mystery of the Divine Relationship between Christ and His Church for the primary purpose of bringing Glory to God through a “complementarian view” of Marriage in a godly and joyful companionship and the establishment of the family unit by extending the human race through procreation (if God permits) and to raise children in the Fear and Nurture of the Lord.”

We believe and teach that the Definition of Marriage contained herein is superior to; and takes the place of; any other Definition given by any State; Government; or other religious Organizations. Therefore- any type or form of a “Union”; or a “Marriage”; or a “Partnership”; or “Sexual Expression”; that deviates from this Definition and/or is contrary to Scripture- is hereby rejected; denied; and rendered null, void, and meaningless by the Covenant of Peace Church. (**Genesis 1:26-31; 2:18-25; Exodus 20:14; Romans 14:12; 1Corinthians 6:1-3; 13-20; Ephesians 5:22-33**)

We believe and teach that Freedom from sinful, sexual, Behavior in any form is attained through a Process which includes publicly and privately believing and acknowledging those unbiblical Thoughts and Behaviors as being Sin; publicly and privately renouncing the Practice of Unbiblical sexual Behavior as completely incompatible with Biblical Holiness; rediscovering healthy, non-erotic Friendships with people of the same Sex; embracing a biblical sexual Lifestyle; and in the Age to come- rising from the Dead with a new body free from every sinful Impulse- including all sexual Sinfulness. (**John 8:34-36; Galatians 6:1-6**)

We believe and teach that genuine Love and Respect for all people includes the honest, reasoned, nonviolent, and clear sharing of eternal, absolute, Truth about all the Issues of Life- including the Immorality and eternal Liability of all ungodly sexual Orientation, Thoughts, and Behavior. Therefore, being silent about; celebrating; or endorsing any Behavior which the Bible condemns is neither Love nor Respect- as it endangers persons and dishonors God. Therefore, we do not believe that the faithful and full Preaching and Teaching of God's Word- including

the explicit divine Condemnation of all Sin- including sexual Deviation in all of its various Manifestations- is in any way Hateful, Ungodly, or Unmerciful. On the contrary- we believe and teach that the full, right, and unashamed Preaching and Teaching of the *“full Purpose of God”* from sacred Scripture in Love without Apology is the one single Method by which God has chosen to save those who believe. **(The Acts 20:27; Romans 1:16; 10:6-15; 1Corinthians 1:21; Ephesians 4:15)**

We believe and teach that the Christian Church should reach out in Love and Truth to minister to people touched by sexual Sin (as with any Sin), and that those who genuinely and ongoingly contend biblically against their own sexual Temptations should be lovingly and patiently assisted in their Battle- not ostracized or disdained. This loving and patient Assistance is available to all those who freely denounce their Sin and who are consistently struggling to overcome it with the Guidance of Church Leadership- not those who continue in their sexual Sin or who celebrate it without genuine *“Sorrow that is according to the Will of God”* that will lead to genuine Repentance. However, the more prominent a Leadership Role a person holds in the Church- the higher will be the Expectations for God's Ideal of sexual Obedience and Wholeness. We affirm that both Heterosexual and Homosexual persons should find Help in the Church to engage in the biblical Battle against all improper sexual Thoughts and Behaviors. **(Matthew 7:15-23; 2Corinthians 7:8-11; 1Timothy 3:1-13; 2Timothy 3; Titus 2)**

For a more comprehensive Treatment of the Issue of Human Sexuality- please refer to the Teaching entitled “Human Sexuality and the Supremacy of Jesus Christ”

5. SALVATION

We believe and teach that Salvation is wholly a Sovereign Work of God by Grace and is solely based upon the Redemption of Jesus Christ, the Merit of His shed Blood; His sinless Life; and His Bodily Resurrection, and is not based upon any human merit or work and Salvation is not generated, assisted, or helped by keeping Church Sacraments (**John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1Peter 1:18&19**).

A. Regeneration **We believe and teach** that Regeneration is a Sovereign Supernatural Work of the Holy Spirit by which the Divine Nature and Divine Life are given to the believer (**John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5**). Regeneration is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the Power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (**John 5:24**) when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the Divine Provision of Salvation. Genuine Regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. The believer has now become a new creature. (**2Corinthians 5:17**)

We believe and teach that while good works do not possess the ability to save anyone, they are, nonetheless the evidence and irrefutable proof that Regeneration has occurred (**1Corinthians 6:19&20; Ephesians 2:10**). These good works are the automatic response of gratitude and love that the believer manifests as the result of being connected to the True Vine (Jesus Christ) (**John 15**). The degree of good works will be to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (**Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2Peter1:4-10**). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the Image of our Lord Jesus Christ (**2Corinthians 3:18**). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's second coming (**Romans 8:17; 2Peter 1:4; 1John 3:2&3**).

B. Election **We believe and teach** that Election is the Act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies without regard to any merit on their part (**Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2Thessalonians 2:13; 2Timothy 2:10; 1Peter 1:1-2**).

We believe and teach that Sovereign Election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (**Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17**). Nevertheless, since Sovereign Grace includes the means of receiving the gift of Salvation as well as the gift itself, Sovereign Election will always result in

what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in Faith, and all who come in Faith the Father will receive (**John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8**).

We believe and teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally unworthy and depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part or to God's anticipation of what they might do at some future time by their own will, but is solely of His Sovereign Grace and Mercy (**Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1Peter 1:2**).

We believe and teach that Election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract Sovereignty. God is truly and practically Sovereign, but He exercises this Sovereignty in harmony with His other Attributes, especially His Omniscience, Justice, Holiness, Wisdom, Grace, and Love (**Romans 9:11-16**). This Sovereignty will always exalt the Will of God in a manner totally consistent with His Character as revealed in the Life of our Lord Jesus Christ (**Matthew 11:25-28; 2Timothy 1:9**).

C. Justification **We believe and teach** that Justification before God is a one time event of God (**Romans 8:33**) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (**Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7**) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (**Romans 10:9-10; 1Corinthians 12:3; 2Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11**). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of Man (**Romans 3:20; 4:6**) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (**Colossians 2:14; 1Peter 2:24**) and the imputation of Christ's Righteousness to us (**1Corinthians 1:30; 2Corinthians 5:21**). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (**Romans 3:26**).

D. Sanctification **We believe and teach** that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by Justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This Sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This Sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (**Acts 20:32; 1Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1Peter 1:2**).

We believe and teach that there is also, by the Work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to God and more able to be used by God. This Sanctification is a process that extends throughout the believer's life and involves trials, tests, afflictions, tumults, persecutions, and suffering as the Spirit leads and as God wills for that individual. (**Psalms 34:19; Romans 8:18; 2Corinthians 1:5-7; Philippians 3:10; 1Peter 4:13; 1Peter 5:10**). Through faithfully obeying the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing

holiness in conformity to the Will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (**John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2Corinthians 3:18; 1Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23**).

We believe and teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the unredeemed flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the Power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Complete eradication of sin is not possible in this life, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (**Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1Peter 1:14-16; 1John 3:5-9**).

E. Perseverance **We believe and teach** that God will preserve those that are His and will give them the Grace and Power necessary for them to persevere to the end and although tried and tested, those who are truly saved will ultimately be kept by God to Christ and His Word. (**John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1Peter 1:5; Jude 24**).

We believe and teach that above all the people on the earth, believers possess the fullness of Joy and Peace in Christ. (**John 15:11; Philippians 4:7**) Therefore it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the knowledge of their Salvation through the testimony of God's Word. It is this same Word, however, which clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (**Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14**).

F. Separation **We believe and teach** that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase, especially as it pertains to this issue. (**2Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2Timothy 3:1-5**).

We believe and teach that, out of deep gratitude for the undeserved Grace of God granted to us, and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (**Romans 12:1-2, 1Corinthians 5:9-13; 2Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1John 2:15-17; 2John 9-11**). We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (**2Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2**) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (**Matthew 5:2-12**) and a continual pursuit of holiness (**Romans 12:1-2; 2Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1John 3:1-10**).

G. Proof **We believe and teach** that no one is truly saved unless they have received within themselves the new Divine Nature of Jesus Christ (**2Corinthians 5:17**). This new nature working in harmony with the indwelt Holy Spirit gives both the will and the ability (power) to live the life that God chooses (**Philippians 2:13**). This new life necessarily involves bearing nine fruit (**John 15**).

We believe and teach that no one who is lost can consistently bear holy and godly fruit and all who saved will bear it (**John 15**).

6. THE CHURCH

We believe and teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the Church (**1Corinthians 12:12-13**), the bride of Christ in function (**2Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; The Revelation 19:7-8**), and the body of Christ in position (**Ephesians 1:22&23**), of which Christ is the Head (**Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18**).

We believe and teach that the formation of the Church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (**The Acts 2:1-21, 38-47**) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own (**1Corinthians 15:51&52; 1Thessalonians 4:13-18**).

We believe and teach that the Church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (**Ephesians 2:11-3:6**).

We believe and teach that the Church of Jesus is distinct from Israel (**1Corinthians 10:32**), a mystery not revealed until this age (**Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32**).

We believe and teach that the establishment and continuity of local Churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (**The Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1Thessalonians 1:1; 2Thessalonians 1:1**) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (**1Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25**).

We believe and teach that the one supreme authority for the Church is Christ (**1Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18**) and that Church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His Sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The Biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly of saints are Elders (also called Bishops, Pastors, and Pastor/Teachers; **The Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11**) and Deacons, both of whom must meet Biblical qualifications (**1Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1Peter 5:1-5**).

We believe and teach that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (**1Timothy 5:17-22**) and have His authority in directing the Church. The congregation are to submit to their leadership (**Hebrews 13:7, 17**).

We believe and teach the importance of discipleship (**Matthew 28:19-20; 2Timothy 2:2**), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (**Matthew 18:5-14**), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (**Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1Corinthians 5:1-13; 2Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16**).

We believe and teach the autonomy of the local Church, free from any external

authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (**Titus 1:5**). We teach that it is Scriptural for true Churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the Christian Faith. Each local Church, however, through its Elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. The Elders should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government as well (**The Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1Peter 5:1-4**).

We believe and teach that the purpose of the Church is to glorify God (**Ephesians 3:21**) by building itself up in the Faith (**Ephesians 4:13-16**), by instruction of the Word (**2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17**), by fellowship (**The Acts 2:47; 1John 1:3**), by keeping the ordinances (**Luke 22:19; The Acts 2:38-42**) and by advancing and communicating the Gospel to the entire world (**Matthew 28:19; The Acts 1:8; 2:42**). We teach the calling of all saints to the work of service (**1Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; The Revelation 22:12**).

We believe and teach the need of the Church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His Purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the Church spiritual gifts. He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (**Ephesians 4:7-12**), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (**Romans 12:5-8; 1Corinthians 12:4-31; 1Peter 4:10&11**).

We believe and teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local Church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper (**The Acts 2:38-42**).

We believe and teach that Christian baptism by full bodily immersion (**The Acts 8:36-39**) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (**Romans 6:1-11**). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (**The Acts 2:41&42**).

We believe and teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of the death of Jesus Christ until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (**1Corinthians 11:28-32**).

We believe and teach that, whereas the elements of Communion are only representative of the Flesh and Blood of Christ, participation in the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ, who indwells every believer, and so is present, fellowshiping with His people (**1Corinthians 10:16**).

7. ANGELS

A. Holy Angels We believe and teach that holy angels are created beings, which are sent or commanded by God to do His Will. Since all holy angels are created beings, they are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than Man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; The Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9).

We believe and teach that holy angels have, since the beginning of time, been in direct communication with humans and continue in our present day to minister to those who are, or who shall be saved. (Hebrews 1:13&14).

B. Fallen Angels We believe and teach that satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matthew 25:41; The Revelation 12:1-14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1-15).

We believe and teach that satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; The Revelation 12:9-10); that he is the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20); and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; The Revelation 20:10).

We believe and teach that those angels which fell with satan are what the Bible refers to when it speaks of demons or devils, and that these fallen angels operate only in the earth to steal, kill, and destroy Man (Matthew 25:41; John 10:10; The Revelation 12:7-9).

We believe and teach that demons, while supernatural beings, are limited supernatural beings and can only operate within the framework of God's Sovereignty (Job 1:9-12; Job 2: 4-6).

We believe and teach that like Satan, all demons have been defeated through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and shall also be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; 2Peter 2:4; The Revelation 20:10)

We believe and teach that demons may physically and literally inhabit or possess unsaved human bodies and minds, causing hurtful and evil Acts to be committed along with ungodly supernatural Manifestations (Matthew 17: 14-18; Mark 5: 2-17).

We believe and teach that all genuine Blood washed, Spirit empowered Believers have the God given Ability to cast out demons from possessed humans

(Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:14&15; The Acts 19:14-16).

We believe and teach that while demons may hinder or fight against the Believer, it is impossible for a genuine Believer to be possessed by demons.
(Ephesians 1:13&14; Philippians 4:7)

8. LAST THINGS (Eschatology)

Note: We recognize that there are different Views about how all Things are going to come to an End. We respect those various Views- realizing that many of them are both historic and genuine Attempts at correctly understanding what the Bible actually says. We also know that we look at the Future much differently than we do the Past. And therefore, seeking to discern what certain Biblical Symbolism represents- is much harder than understanding historic Facts. The Church does not have a very good track Record at predicting the Future- even when the best of Intentions are utilized. Therefore, we, regretfully, will be more Vague and General about this Section of the Doctrinal Statement than any other. There are, however, several Issues about which we are Certain:

A. Death We believe and teach that physical death involves no loss of the human soul (**The Revelation 6:9-11**), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the Presence of Christ (**Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2Corinthians 5:8**), that there is a separation of soul and body (**Philippians 1:21-24**), and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until Christ gathers His Church (**1Thessalonians 4:13-17**), which initiates the first resurrection (**The Revelation 20:4-6**), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (**Philippians 3:21; 1Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54**). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (**2Corinthians 5:8**).

B. Resurrection We believe and teach the literal, physical, and bodily resurrection of all the saved- to Eternal Life (**John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2Corinthians 4:14**), and the unsaved to Judgment and Everlasting Punishment (**Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; The Revelation 20:13-15**).

C. Eternal Punishment We believe and teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the Second Resurrection (**Luke 16:19-26; The Revelation 20:13-15**), when the soul and the resurrected body will be united (**John 5:28-29**). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne Judgment (**The Revelation 20:11-15**) and shall be cast into a literal hell, the lake of fire (**Matthew 25:41-46**), cut off from the life of God forever (**Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2Thessalonians 1:7-9**).

D. The Second Coming. We believe and teach that Jesus Christ will literally and physically return to the Earth at some undisclosed time in the future. Therefore, all genuine believers should live every day in great anticipation of His Return. Jesus will return in the same way that He ascended. At that time- Jesus will present to Himself the crowning Achievement of His Grace- the Church- in all her Glory. (**Matthew 24:30-31, 36; Acts 1:10-11; The Revelation 19:11-16**)

E. The Judgment of the Lost. We believe and teach that the resurrection of the unsaved dead to Judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their Judgment (**Romans 14:10-13**), they will be committed to an eternal, conscious Punishment in the lake of fire (**Matthew 25:41; The Revelation 20:11-15**).

F. Eternity. We believe and teach that the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (**2Peter 3:10**) and replaced with a new earth, wherein only righteousness dwells (**Ephesians 5:5; The Revelation 20:15; 21:1-27; 22:1-21**). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (**The Revelation 21:2**) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (**John 17:3; The Revelation 21-22**). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (**1Corinthians 15:24-28**), that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (**1Corinthians 15:28**).

G. Other Issues. At this time, the Board of Elders are in a deep and serious Search for more specific Answers to other eschatological Issues like the “*Mark of the Beast*”; the “*Rapture*”; the “*Man of Lawlessness*”; the “*False Prophet*”; the “*Thousand Year (millennial) Reign*”; and “*just how (or if) the people and the current Nation of Israel will play a part in Last Things*”. As God is Good to reveal His Word to us about these Issues- we will update this part of the Doctrinal Statement.

H. Summation. The best Summary of what we believe and teach about “*Last Things*” is this Statement:

Jesus is coming back to this Earth at some Point in the Future to judge both the Living and the Dead. Therefore, we should live our Lives in such a Way that proves that we believe this.