

Christ Community Church

We exist to glorify God by exalting Jesus Christ, equipping believers, and evangelizing unbelievers.

Doctrinal Statement

Christ Community Church
21342 N. Ripon Rd.
Ripon, CA 95366

I. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES	1
II. GOD	1
GOD THE FATHER	1
GOD THE SON	2
GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT	3
III. HUMANS	4
IV. SALVATION	5
REGENERATION	5
ELECTION	6
JUSTIFICATION	6
SANCTIFICATION	7
SECURITY	7
V. HOLY LIVING	8
VI. THE CHURCH	8
VII. ANGELS	11
HOLY ANGELS	11
FALLEN ANGELS	11
VIII. THE END	11
DEATH	12
THE RETURN OF JESUS	12
ETERNITY	12

I. The Holy Scriptures

We believe that the Bible is God's written revelation to humanity, and the sixty-six books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit are the Word of God in every part (1 Corinthians 2:7–14; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).

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

We believe that the Bible provides the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).

We believe that God spoke in his written Word through human authors. The Holy Spirit directed the human authors so that through their individual personalities and different styles of writing they composed and recorded God's Word to humanity (2 Peter 1:20, 21) without error in whole or in part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16).

We believe that while there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture there is only one true interpretation. Every Christian can find the meaning of Scripture by diligently applying the literal grammatical historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12–15; 1 Corinthians 2:7–15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to discover carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. The truth of Scripture stands in authority over people; never do people stand in authority over it.

Application: This belief in God's Word leads to a variety of necessary applications, such as in preaching, biblical counseling, and understanding of Genesis 1-11. Our goal in preaching is to explain what God has already said, not create original ideas of our own. We practice biblical counseling because we believe God's word is the authority in our lives and that it is sufficient to address every current issue affecting the human heart. We believe Genesis 1-11 is a literal and true account in every respect, including a 24 hour six-day creation, a historical Adam and Eve, and a global flood.

II. God

We believe that there is only one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5–7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all his attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

God the Father

We believe that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and directs all things according to his own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8, 9; 1 Corinthians 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 Father to all humans (Ephesians 4:6), but he is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 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 (1 Chronicles 29:11). In his sovereignty he is neither the author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38–47), nor does he invalidate the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 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 who come to him through Jesus Christ; he adopts as his own all those who come to him; 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 that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these he is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

We believe that God the Father created all things through God the Son and that through him all things continue to exist and operate (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15–17; Hebrews 1:2).

We believe 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. Jesus laid aside his right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God, assumed the place of a Son, and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting himself of his divine attributes (Philippians 2:5–8).

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 that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9, 10; Colossians 2:9).

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ was 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, redeem humans, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7–9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9–11; Hebrews 7:25, 26; 1 Peter 1:18, 19).

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our 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; 1 Peter 2:24).

We believe that our justification is made sure by his literal, 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; 1 John 2:1).

We believe that in the 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; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

We believe that Jesus Christ will return physically to earth a second time to receive the church and to establish his kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9–11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Revelation 20).

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all humanity (John 5:22, 23):

- Believers (1 Corinthians 3:10–15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
- Living inhabitants of the earth at his glorious return (Matthew 25:31–46).
- Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11–15).

As the Mediator between God and mankind (1 Timothy 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), Jesus is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14–46; Acts 17:30, 31). We believe that the cross work and resurrection of Jesus frees believing sinners from the punishment, penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin and is the basis for Christians to be declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8, 9; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

God the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person who is eternal and uncreated. He possesses all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10–13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 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; Acts 5:3, 4; 28:25, 26; 1 Corinthians 12:4–6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Jeremiah 31:31–34 with Hebrews 10:15–17).

We believe the work of the Holy Spirit is 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 (2 Peter 1:20, 21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5–7).

We believe 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 (1 Corinthians 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; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

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

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they wrote the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19–21; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We believe that the Holy Spirit gives 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; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

We believe that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of his gifts for the perfecting of the saints today. Miraculous gifts such as speaking in tongues, healing, and revelation in the beginning days of the church pointed to and authenticated the apostles as revealers of divine truth but were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4–11; 13:8–10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7–12; Hebrews 2:14).

Application: This belief in God leads to a variety of necessary applications, such as recognizing God's sovereignty in salvation, dependent prayer, and a high view of worship. God's sovereignty extends to all things, including salvation. God both chooses and regenerates dead sinners, who must repent and believe. God's sovereignty does not eliminate human responsibility nor are they opposing truths. Because God is powerful, wise, and good, we should pray to him consistently, dependently, and worshipfully. Because of God's greatness, our worship should be marked by fear and reverence. His greatness should humble us since he is so different from us while also fill us with happiness since he is so gracious to us.

III. Humans

We believe that Adam and Eve were directly and immediately created by God in his image and likeness. They were created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15–25; James 3:9).

We believe that God's intention in the creation of humanity was that humans should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

We believe that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, humans lost their innocence; incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death; became subject to the wrath of God; and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, every human is hopelessly lost. Salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:1–19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1–3; 1 Timothy 2:13, 14; 1 John 1:8).

We believe that because all humanity was in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all people of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All people are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1–3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9–18, 23; 5:10–12).

Application: This belief about humanity leads to a variety of necessary applications, such as defining marriage, determining gender, establishing relational roles, and opposing abortion and racism. We believe that marriage is a life-long covenant between a man and a woman. The only permissible reasons for divorce are sexual infidelity or abandonment by an unbelieving spouse. Therefore we will not support weddings where one or both parties have been unbiblically divorced if there is any possibility of reconciliation of the prior marriage or weddings between same-sex couples or polygamous or polyandrous relationships. God has determined that gender is not a social construct but rather is a binary assignment made by him at conception. God also establishes relational roles in the family and in the church, based not on patriarchal tradition but on his wise and good plan for men and women to flourish in complementarian relationship. Because God is the creator of life and all people are made in his image, abortion is a murderous sin that the church should oppose in every lawful and possible way. All people of all ethnicities are equally made in the image of God. Jesus Christ will be worshipped for all eternity by people from every tribe, language, nation, and people. Racism, more clearly identified in the Bible as the sin of partiality, is a real evil that is forgivable by the death of Jesus.

IV. Salvation

We believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Salvation is based on God's grace, the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of his shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8–10; 1 Peter 1:18, 19).

Regeneration

We believe that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which God gives spiritual life to dead sinners (John 3:3–7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is

accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God (John 5:24) when the repentant sinner is enabled by the Spirit to respond in faith to the message of the gospel. Genuine regeneration manifests itself in fruits worthy of repentance such as righteous attitudes and actions. Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Ephesians 2:10) and will be experienced 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; 2 Peter 1:4–10).

Election

We believe 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 (Romans 8:28–30; Ephesians 1:4–11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1, 2).

We believe that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of an individual 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 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 that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of his sovereign grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:4–7; Titus 3:4–7; 1 Peter 1:2).

We believe that election is not based on an abstract sovereignty. God is truly 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; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Justification

We believe that justification before God is an act of God in a moment of time (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; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6, 7) and confess him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9, 10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of an individual (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 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).

Sanctification

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

We believe that there is also a progressive sanctification which is an ongoing process for all believers that makes them more and more holy. Progressive sanctification is a process over time as a believer is increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Every Christian is gradually becoming what justification has already declared him or her to be. Through obedience to 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; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4; 5:23).

In this respect, we believe that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the struggle stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims of the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, 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; 1 Peter 1:14–16; 1 John 3:5–9).

Glorification

We believe that sanctification is completed in glorification, the moment each Christian becomes fully like Jesus with a new body and complete freedom from sin at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2, 3). Just like true salvation can never be lost, God's complete plan of salvation is guaranteed. Glorification is the final stage of God's plan, when salvation is completely accomplished. Glorification is the guaranteed culmination of salvation that every Christian can look forward to (Romans 8:30).

Security

We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37–40; 10:27–30; Romans 5:9, 10; 8:1, 31–39; 1 Corinthians 1:4–8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

We believe that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word while also refusing to use 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).

Application: This belief about salvation leads to a variety of necessary applications, such as Gospel-centered living and evangelism. Gospel-centered living is not a passing

theological fad or a contemporary cliché. Rather, it is God's revealed plan for his people to become what they already are. The Gospel humbles us while simultaneously making us happy. It shows us how desperately lost we are while also affirming how divinely loved we are. The gospel is intended to be the functioning center of our motivation towards and disciplines of godliness. Living a grace-motivated life is not a liberty that allows a believer to choose a lifestyle independent of the Scriptures. Rather, it is a discipline that increasingly teaches a believer to say "no" to ungodliness and to hunger for righteousness. Because the gospel can bring life to a dead sinner, the church must prioritize going into all the world and preaching this one true gospel. In our own families, to our neighbors, and in mission's efforts across the world, we must spread this good news with loving tact and holy boldness.

V. Holy Living

We believe 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 (2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1–5).

We believe that out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in a way that demonstrates our love for God and does not bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also believe that God commands us to separate from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices (Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 5:9–13; 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1; 1 John 2:15–17; 2 John 9–11).

We believe that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11, 12; Hebrews 12:1, 2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of Jesus (Matthew 5:2–12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11–14; 1 John 3:1–10).

Application: This belief about holy living leads to a variety of necessary applications, including Christian liberty and restricting formal church partnerships. Christian liberty only applies to practical wisdom decisions, not to any attitude or action that the Bible calls sin. Christians should repent from and abstain from sin, but should express love and patience for one another in their personal preferences and Christian liberties. The church ought to restrict formal partnerships with any other church that distorts the gospel or denies the faith. No matter how noble or community-minded a goal might be, the church must not sacrifice truth for the sake of relationships.

VI. The Church

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

We believe that the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–21, 38–47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for believers (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

We believe 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). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1–6; 5:32).

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

We believe that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 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 are elders (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–5). We believe that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17–22) and have his authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

We believe the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19, 20; 2 Timothy 2:2) and 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; 1 Corinthians 5:1–13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15; 1 Timothy 1:19, 20; Titus 1:10–16).

We believe in 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 believe that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the 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 (Acts 15:19–31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4–7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1–4).

We believe 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 (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19;

Acts 2:38–42) and by advancing and communicating the Gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

We believe that every Christian is called to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12).

We believe in 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; 1 Corinthians 12:4–31; 1 Peter 4:10, 11).

We believe that there were two kinds of gifts given to the early church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 12:12), and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a person's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate an individual or his or her message (1 Corinthians 13:8–12). Miraculous gifts can be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 13:13, 14:12; Revelation 13:13, 14). The only gifts in operation today are those non-revelatory equipping gifts given for edification (Romans 12:6–8). We believe that no one possesses the New Testament gift of healing today but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with his own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1–6; John 5:7–9; 2 Corinthians 12:6–10; James 5:13–16; 1 John 5:14, 15).

We believe that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38–42). Christian baptism by immersion (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 Christ 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 (Acts 2:41, 42).

We believe that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of his death until he comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28–32). We also believe that whereas the elements of Communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ who is present in a unique way, fellowshiping with his people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Application: This belief about the church leads to a variety of necessary applications, including formal church membership and ministry roles for men and women. Christians identify with Jesus Christ, submit to elder leadership, and live in community with other Christians through formal church membership. The New Testament uses "church" almost exclusively in the sense of the local church, church discipline only makes sense

in the context of a formal church membership, and membership is the only way elders can know which sheep they are accountable to God for. Ministry roles for men and women are determined by Christ in his word, not through tradition or cultural preference. The Bible limits the role of eldership to qualified males only, while affirming the worth of all other men and women and also encouraging service in every other aspect of the church.

VII. Angels

Holy Angels

We believe that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshipped. Although they are a higher order of creation than humans, they are created to serve God and to worship him (Luke 2:9–14; Hebrews 1:6, 7, 14; 2:6, 7; Revelation 5:11–14; 19:10; 22:9).

Fallen Angels

We believe 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; Revelation 12:1–14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1–15).

We believe that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and humans (Isaiah 14:13, 14; Matthew 4:1–11; Revelation 12:9, 10); 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; Revelation 20:10).

Application: This belief about angels leads to a variety of necessary applications, such as limiting our fascination with angels and recognizing the reality of Satan as a person. God has told us all he has wanted to tell us about angels in his word. Any study of or fascination with angels beyond what he has revealed is unhealthy, unhelpful, and ultimately unprofitable for God's people. Satan is an actual, real, created being. He should neither be trivialized as a fable nor revered as if he had the attributes of God.

VIII. The End

We believe that the end of all things includes the visible, personal, and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the gathering up of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the end, Satan with his hosts and all those outside Christ will be finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, enduring eternal punishment, but the righteous, in glorious bodies, will live and reign with him forever. Married to Christ as his Bride, the Church will be in the presence of God forever, serving him and giving him unending praise and glory. Then shall the eager expectation of creation be fulfilled and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God, who makes all things new.

Death

We believe that physical death does not involve the loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9–11), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 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 Jesus comes (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35–44, 50–54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all people, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10, 11, 19–23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13–15).

We believe that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19–26; Revelation 20:13–15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28, 29). They will then appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11–15) and will be cast into hell along with Satan and all his demons (Matthew 25:41–46; Revelation 20:10), cut off from the life of God forever and experiencing unending physical torment (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41–46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9).

The Return of Jesus

We believe in the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13) to gather his church from this earth (John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:51–53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–5:11) and to reward believers according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11–15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

We believe that Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31–33; Acts 1:10, 11; 2:29, 30) and establish his messianic kingdom.

We believe that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Isaiah 65:17–25; Ezekiel 37:21–28; Zechariah 8:1–17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15–68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1–26) but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:22–32; Romans 11:25–29).

We believe that this time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isaiah 11; 65:17–25; Ezekiel 36:33–38).

Eternity

We believe that the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth will be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15, 21, 22). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the

dwelling place of the saints, where they will forever enjoy fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21, 22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled his redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24–28) that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Application: This belief about the end leads to a variety of necessary applications, such as comfort in grief and an eager waiting for Jesus' return. While Christians do and should grieve the death of other Christians, our grief is not like people who have no hope. Death is our enemy, but not a final and all-powerful enemy. We eagerly wait for Jesus to return and make all things right, ending the curse of Genesis 3 and eliminating even the presence of sin. With Christians of all ages we pray, "Come quickly Lord Jesus."