

Article 2 - Statement of Faith

2.01 – The Scriptures

We believe that all the words and all the parts of the thirty-nine (39) books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven (27) books of the New Testament are the only inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God. These sixty-six (66) books of God's written revelation to man are sufficient to communicate all that God intends man to know about His Being, character, and will for the Created Order, and are therefore plenary (equally inspired in every book) in nature.

Furthermore, the Bible is the product of men controlled by the Holy Spirit, and in the original manuscripts (the *autographa*, or autographic writings, written originally in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) is truth without any mixture of error. God, in His providential care, has also kept these Scriptures authentic and trustworthy from the time of their composition until the present time.

The Bible is the center of true Christian unity and the supreme standard by which all human life and conduct will be evaluated and judged (2 Timothy 3:15–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21).

Although creeds and confessions (i.e. statements of faith like this one) can be eminently helpful in outlining what one believes, they are under the judgment of the Scriptures and never over it. In other words, the Scriptures are the final, authoritative word in all matters, and all statements of faith must conform to proper interpretation of it.

We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. 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; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.¹

2.02 – God

We believe that there is one and only one living and true God, the Creator and Supreme Ruler of Heaven and Earth (Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:30). He is an infinite, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent Spirit (Psalm 90:2; 139:7-10; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Isaiah 46:9-10; Daniel 4:35; Isaiah 43:13; Jeremiah 23:24; Matthew 19:26). God is inexpressibly glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love. In the unity of the Being of God there are three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption (Exodus 20:2–3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Revelation 4:11). This belief is referred to as Trinitarian Monotheism and is the only valid expression of what the 66 canonized Scriptures teach concerning the Being of God. *God the Father* – We believe that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and accomplishes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8–9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation,

¹ "What We Teach: The Doctrinal Statement of Grace Community Church" (Accessed @ <https://www.gracechurch.org/about/doctrinal-statement> on 23 September 2022).

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 humanity (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). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4–6). He saves from sin all whom He draws to Himself by saving faith in Jesus Christ who, upon exercising a faith that He gives, are then raised by Christ to eternal life (John 6:44). He adopts as His own all those who come to Him, and He becomes, through 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 is the eternal Son of God. He was not created, but is the Second Person of the Trinity, and is therefore co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. He came into this world in obedience to His Father and, as foretold in the Scriptures, manifested God to mankind, becoming the Redeemer of this sinful world. Jesus took upon Himself human flesh and a sinless human nature through the supernatural conception by the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18-25). Thus Jesus is both truly God and truly man, the very joining together of the two complete, perfect, and distinct natures, divine and human, in one Person, without any confusion, mixture, change, separation, or division. Furthermore, during His earthly life, although His divine nature was completely present and never diminished or in any way discarded, He at times chose not to exercise the full use of all His divine prerogatives, making Himself dependent on the Spirit of God in the exercise of His earthly ministry, submitting Himself to the limitations and weaknesses of human nature as mankind's perfect representative (Philippians 2:6-8). He came to die for the sin of the world of rebellious humanity—the just for the unjust. Jesus Christ alone is the full and complete propitiation for sin for all whom the Father will effectually and fully draw to faith in Christ—the full satisfaction of the Father's justice regarding sin. His sacrificial death was made on behalf of His elect, and therefore His voluntary sacrifice was truly vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and fully accomplished the redemption of His people, not conditioned on foreseen self-willed faith on the part of the believer in any way. He rose from the dead, according to the Scriptures, retaining the same body, though glorified. His bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven, where He now serves as the High Priest for the redeemed of God and head over the Church, gives proof to the fact that His sacrificial death was fully acceptable to the Father for sin (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; 53:1ff; Micah 5:2; Luke 1:30–35; 24:34–39; John 1:1–2; 20:20; Acts 2:22–6; Romans 3:25–26; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:3; 2:17; 4:14–15; 7:25; 10:1–14).

God the Holy Spirit – We believe that the Holy Spirit is the divine Third Person of the Triune Being of God, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and God the Son, being of the exact same nature and therefore consubstantial with Father and Son. He was active in the creation of all things, along with the Father and the Son (Genesis 1:1-3; John 1:1-3). He restrains the evil one (see "Satan") until God's purposes are fulfilled. He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He bears witness to the truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, being the sovereign Agent in the new birth, creating faith in the heart of the elect individual as He brings him to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Having

brought the person to saving faith in Christ, He baptizes them into Christ's Body, the Church, sealing, guiding, teaching, witnessing, sanctifying, and helping the believer (Matthew 28:19; John 14:16–17, 26; 16:8–11; Acts 1:5; Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13; Hebrews 9:14). The Holy Spirit gives gifts to the Church through which the members serve one another and the world. Some of those gifts were temporary and are no longer given today. Some revelatory gifts such as word of knowledge, tongues, and interpretation were critical when the Church was without the written New Testament. Other foundational gifts, such as healing and raising from the dead, were used to confirm and validate the ministry of the apostles as the authentic founders of the Church (Matthew 10:8; Acts 2:22; 1 Corinthians 13:8; Hebrews 2:1–4). In His giving of gifts, the Holy Spirit does not seek His own glory or the glory of His gifts through ostentatious activity, but seeks to glorify Christ, implementing the Son's work of redemption and then building up the redeemed in the most holy faith (John 16:13–14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

2.03 – Creation

We believe that the creation of the universe from nothing is neither allegory nor myth, but was a literal, historical event. The existence of all things is the result of the direct, immediate, creative acts of the triune God over six days consisting of 24-hour periods (Genesis 1). Humanity—body and soul/spirit—was created by a direct work of God. Humans did not evolve from previously existing forms of life. The entire human race descended from the historical Adam and Eve, the first parents of the entire human race (Genesis 1–2; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16–17).

2.04 – Spirit Beings

Angels – We believe that God created an innumerable company of sinless spirit beings. Although they are a higher order of creation than humanity, they were created to serve God and to worship Him. Therefore, they are not to be in any way worshiped (Luke 2:9–14; Hebrews 1:6–7, 14; 2:6–7; Revelation 5:11–14; 19:10; 22:9).

Fallen Angels and Satan – We believe that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator, by taking numerous angels with him in his fall, and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve. He is the open and declared enemy of God and mankind. He is the prince of this world, who was defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and he will be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Genesis 3:1–15; Isaiah 14:12–17; Ezekiel 28:11–19; Matthew 4:1–11; 25:41; 2 Corinthians 4:3–4; Revelation 12:1–14; 20:10).

2.05 – Mankind

We believe that all of humanity was created in the image and likeness of God. Properly understood, this means that every man and woman was created contingent on the only non-contingent Being in existence, namely God. The human race was created to exercise stewardship over the created order, operating as co-regents under the Supreme Potentate, the Triune God of Eternity. Therefore, man was created free from sin, having a higher level of reasoning than the rest of the physical creation, with an intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility derived from God and accountable to God, something that sets

mankind apart from and above anything else in Creation. Therefore, every human being, regardless of ethnicity and physiology, share in the image of God and therefore have intrinsic value and worth. It was holy God's original intention to create man to glorify God, enjoying His fellowship and living out God's will in his life, accomplishing God's purposes for him in this world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11). Therefore, we believe that Adam, although created in innocence under the laws of his Maker, by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless and happy estate, bringing upon himself and all his progeny to the present day both physical and spiritual death, the just penalty for any and all wrongdoing before God, the One just and true Lawgiver and the One before whom all men are held accountable. Adam represented all humanity and all humanity sinned in Adam. As a result, all men and women are radically and fundamentally depraved (being inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace, including exercising true, saving faith in their Maker), are partakers of Adam's fallen nature, and are sinners by nature and by conduct and, therefore, are under just condemnation without defense or excuse (Genesis 3:1–6, 24; Romans 1:18–32; 3:10–19; 5:12, 19). The only exception to this wholesale condemnation of all humanity (past, present, future) is Jesus Christ. All men are sinners by nature, choice, and divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

2.06 – Salvation

We believe that, in order to be saved from the just and eternal condemnation that currently resides on all sons and daughters of Adam and Eve who, by their condition, are born sinners separated from God's goodness and under His just wrath & condemnation, sinners must be "born again," or regenerated. This is referred to also as "the new birth," and is a new creation in Christ Jesus alone. Salvation is instantaneous and not a process. In the new birth, someone who is dead in trespasses and sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life. Salvation is the free gift of God's grace, based entirely on the merit of Christ's shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works. Faith alone in Jesus Christ alone is the only condition for salvation (John 1:12; 3:3–7; Acts 16:30–33; Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1:7; 2:1, 5, 8–10; 1 Peter 1:18–19; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 5:1).

Regeneration – We believe that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given. It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit as He makes the sinner responsive to the Gospel of Christ. Therefore, regeneration precedes faith in God and imparts a truly new nature that will then produce true, saving faith in God. After this and through the instrumentality of the Word of God, the regenerated sinner will become the repentant sinner as, enabled and drawn by the Holy Spirit, s/he responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation (John 3:3–7; 5:24; Titus 3:5). Genuine regeneration will be accompanied by and manifested in "fruits worthy of repentance," seen in righteous attitudes and conduct, with good works being right evidence and the result of genuine regeneration (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10). This will be experienced in the life of the believer to the extent that he submits to the control of the Spirit of God through obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; 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 would graciously regenerate, save, and sanctify (Romans 8:28–30; Ephesians 1:4–11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 3:4–7; 1 Peter 1:1–2). Sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of men and women 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; 10:9–13; 2 Thessalonians 2:10–12; Revelation 22:17). However, sovereign grace by necessity includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself (Ephesians 2:8–10). Therefore, sovereign election will result in all that God determines. All God the Father draws to have faith in the Son will indeed come in faith, and all those coming the Father will receive indeed (John 6:37–40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

Justification – We believe that justification is the legal act of God in which He declares sinners righteous through faith in Christ Jesus, a faith which necessarily includes their God-given repentance from sin to the Savior and God-drawn positive confession of the Lordship of Christ. Justification includes the pardon of sin and the imputation of God’s righteousness. It is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which the sinner has done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer. (Isaiah 53:11; Zechariah 13:1; Acts 13:39; Romans 5:1, 9; 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:18–21). By this means God is enabled to “be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26). Thus, the righteousness of Christ that believers enjoy is given to Christians, not earned by Christians (Titus 3:5).

Faith — We believe that faith is not a force nor a mere mental assent to theological facts, but is rather a God-gifted, abiding trust in the full work of the Triune God of Scripture, especially in regards to the vicarious atoning sacrifice of Christ (for the full forgiveness of sins past, present, and future) and His miraculous resurrection from the dead (for the complete assurance of the efficacy of His sin-destroying work on the cross), a faith which is made real through hearing of the Word of Christ (John 15:1–11; Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:8–9). Therefore, it is not a “good work” nor in any way mingled with any “good works” to be “genuine.” Genuine, saving faith is a faith that causes the sinner to trust in the finished work of Christ solely and completely for salvation and will be evidenced by, to a greater or lesser degree, good works generated by God Himself for the Christian to walk in loving obedience in, never to achieve or maintain salvation, but in faithful response to the reality of the Christian’s salvation (Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14–26).

Repentance – We believe that repentance is a change of mind and purpose toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit. True repentance is inseparably related to true faith (Luke 13:1–3; 15:7; Romans 2:4), and as the great Puritan divine Thomas Watson put it, repentance and faith are the “two wings” by which the sinner “flies” to the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Adoption – We believe that adoption is the gracious act whereby the Father, for the sake of Christ, places new believers into the honored position of heirs. This is in contrast with regeneration, whereby the believer receives the nature of God and becomes a child of God. The full benefit of the position of adoption awaits the glorification of the believers at the coming of the Lord (Galatians 4:1–7; Ephesians 1:5, 13, 14; 1 John 3:1–2).

Sanctification – We believe that sanctification is the unfolding work of God. First, it is an eternal act of God, based upon redemption in Christ, establishing the believer in a position of holiness at the moment he or she trusts the Savior. This is what is also termed “positional sanctification,” set apart by and unto God by justification, transitioning the sinner into a state of sainthood. This aspect of sanctification has to do with the believer’s standing before God, not his present progression in the Christian life or spiritual maturity. Second, it is a continuing process in the saint as the Holy Spirit applies the Word of God to his or her life. This is what is also termed as “progressive sanctification,” bringing the believer more into conformity with his positional standing due to his justification by God. Through the Christian’s obedience to God’s Word and through the empowerment the Holy Spirit provides, the believer is enabled to live a life of increasing holiness and conformity to the will & Word of God, becoming more like Jesus Christ (John 17:17-19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23). Third, the final accomplishment of this process at the Lord’s return is the hope of every true believer, and can also be termed as “glorified sanctification,” or more simply, “glorification.” The final victory over all sin will occur at this stage, with the present age being one marked by daily conflict and struggle with the flesh, with any claim to eradication of sin completely in this life (see “sinless perfectionism”) as wholly unbiblical; however, the Holy Spirit does provide adequate provision to assist the believer in gaining victory over temptation and therefore sin in this life as well (John 17:17; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24, 5:25–26; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; Hebrews 3:1; 1 John 1:5-10, 3:5-9).

Eternal Perseverance – We believe that all who are truly born again and therefore are redeemed are kept secure by God the Father and secure in and for Jesus Christ forever (Philippians 1:6). The redeemed will persevere to the end in faith and obedience by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:10; Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 2:19), with the resultant security and privilege from such eternal guarantee never to be seen or used as an excuse to abuse Christian liberty as occasion for sinful living to any degree (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14). God will preserve His elect people through all trials, temptations, and tribulations, causing them to endure to the end and thereby prove the true salvation God had granted to them all along (Matthew 24:13).

2.07 – The Church

We believe in the unity of all true believers in the universal Church, which is the body of Christ and was formed on the Day of Pentecost. All believers from Pentecost and during this present age, both Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:11-3:6), are added to this Church when they believe the Gospel and are spiritually immersed into Christ’s body (Acts 2:41–42; 1 Corinthians 11:2; 12:12–13; Ephesians 3:1–6). This Church, also called the Bride of Christ, is a unique spiritual organism, distinct from the ethnic nation of Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this present age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32), although, being connected by unbreakable faith to the covenant God of Israel, is fundamentally related to Israel. The universal Church is revealed through local congregations of redeemed, baptized believers who commit to one another in their covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel. The Church observes the ordinances of Christ, is governed by His laws, and exercises the gifts, rights and privileges

invested in them by His Word, Christ being the one supreme authority for the Church (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18). The biblically designated offices of the Church are elders (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor-teachers) and deacons, whose qualifications and duties are revealed in the scriptural accounts of the early Church. These church leaders lead or rule as servants of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the Church, with the congregation being under scriptural compulsion to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17). The true mission of the Church is the faithful witnessing of Christ to all as we have opportunity. Along with this, the members of the local church should seek to both make disciples as they are being disciplined, being mutually accountable to one another, including the need to discipline sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:5-14, 28:18-20; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:10-16). The local church has the absolute right of self-government free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations. The one and only superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is scriptural for biblical churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel. Each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. On all matters of membership, polity, government, discipline, and benevolence, the will of the local church is final (Acts 15:13–18; 20:17–28; Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:11; 5:23–24; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–5).

Ordinances – We believe that two ordinances have been committed to the universal Church, to be administered by each local congregation: Baptism and Communion (see “Lord’s Supper”). The biblical mode of baptism is the immersion of a believer in water (Acts 8:36-39). It is a wonderful and beautiful outward testimony of a believer’s faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to new life (Romans 6:1-11). It also serves as a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42). Baptism by immersion upon positive, conscientious confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and performed in the tripartite name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (also known as “Credo-baptism”) is the only method revealed and commanded in the Scriptures. Baptism has no saving power, but is an act of obedience for those who are already saved. The Bible affirms that the Lord’s Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of Jesus’s death until He comes and should be preceded by solemn self-examination. The elements themselves represent the body and blood of the Savior in symbol only and are in no way transubstantiated into the actual body and blood of Christ (contra Roman Catholicism) or consubstantiated, so that Christ’s presence is “in, with, and under” the elements of Communion (contra Lutheranism). However, participation in the Lord’s Supper is an actual communion with the risen Savior, who indwells all who believe, and so when Communion is celebrated, Christ is really present, fellowshiping with His people (Matthew 3:16; 28:19–20; John 3:23; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:36–39; 10:47– 48; Romans 6:3–6; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 11:23–28; Colossians 2:12). Furthermore, water baptism is a one-time act of identification, whereas participation in the Lord’s Supper or Communion is a repeated act of obedient remembrance of Christ’s death and its benefits.

Separation – We believe that Christians are to separate entirely from worldliness and ecclesiastical apostasy unto God (2 Corinthians 6:14– 7:1).

Civil Government – We believe that civil government is ordained by God for the interests and good order of human society. Believers are to pray for and conscientiously honor and obey their civil authorities except when they are ordered to disobey Scripture and the will of God either explicitly or by clear implication by said civil government (Exodus 18:21, 22; 2 Samuel 23:3; Acts 23:5; Romans 13:17).

Israel – We believe that God sovereignly selected Israel as His eternal covenant people. Israel is now dispersed because of disobedience and rejection of their Messiah, Jesus Christ, but will be regathered to conscientious repentance and faith in their Messiah at some point in the future, in which all Israel alive at that time will be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. We wholeheartedly reject that Israel is saved from sin due to their ethnic heritage in this present age (Matthew 3:7-10), for not only was the Gospel delivered to the Jew first due to covenantal priority (Romans 1:16), but condemnation comes to the Jew first due to his rejection of what should be evident to him from the Hebrew Scriptures (Romans 2:9-11), that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah and all promises of God find their “yes” and “amen” in Him (2 Corinthians 1:20). Therefore, the Jewish person enters into the New Covenantal blessings of Christ the same as the Gentile does, through repentant faith in Jesus the Messiah. All members of the nation of Israel outside of faith in Jesus Christ are just as eternally condemned as Gentiles who are outside of the same faith, and all Gentiles who exercise saving faith in Jesus the Messiah become spiritual children of Abraham, while remaining distinct from ethnic children of Abraham (i.e. ethnic Jewish people) since the wall of separation that once separated Jew and Gentile is destroyed in Christ (Galatians 3:6-14; Ephesians 2:11-22). Therefore, we soundly reject any notion that Gentiles in the Church are “second-class citizens” of Christ’s Kingdom or that they must come under obedience and designation of the Law of Moses, i.e. by becoming “Jewish,” or anything of that nature (Galatians 2:11-21). Even though the New Covenant was made by Christ with the nation of Israel initially (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-13), at the present time they are broken off from all the blessings of the New Covenant due to unbelief (Romans 11:7-16). Elect Gentiles from all over the world become partakers of all New Covenantal blessings by their faith in Christ alone (without adherence to the Law of Moses) and are grafted into the promises of God as if they were natural born recipients of the New Covenant (Romans 11:17-24). However, according to God’s grace and His eternal covenant with the Jewish nation, God will prepare their hearts for repentance & faith, awaiting the Second Coming of Christ (Genesis 13:14–17; Ezekiel 37; Romans 11:1–32).

2.08 – Last Things

Death — We believe that, because of our inherited guilt in Adam (termed “original sin,” meaning that we all to the present day have originally sinned in Adam, he being our “federal head” and carry on that same sinful nature), the curse of sin outlined in Genesis 2:15-17, 3:17-19 is also inherited by every other descendent of Adam ever since, save Christ Himself (since Christ had no “original sin” and submitted Himself to a death He infinitely did not deserve). Therefore, not only are all human beings born into a state of spiritual death, our bodies are also presently destined for physical death, for “in Adam all die” (1 Corinthians 15:22a) and therefore our physical bodies remain under the curse of death for sin, regardless of our spiritual condition (i.e. spiritually alive in Christ or spiritually dead in sin). Physical death involves no loss of our

immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11); the soul of the spiritually alive (i.e. those who have placed their faith in Christ) passes immediately into the presence of Christ upon death in this age (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23). All physically dead men, regardless of spiritual condition at death or at the arrival of Christ, will be raised from the grave, 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).

The Rapture and Tribulation – We believe in the imminent, premillennial return of Christ for His Church. At that moment the dead in Christ shall be raised in glorified bodies, and the living in Christ shall be given glorified bodies without tasting death (Daniel 9:25–27; Matthew 24:29–31; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 20:1–4, 6).

The Millennial Kingdom and Subsequent Events – We believe at the end of the Tribulation Christ will return physically to Earth to render judgment and inaugurate the 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom. Christ will establish Himself as King, sitting on the throne of David, as the nation of Israel alive at that time is saved (that is, brought to repentant faith by the sovereign, regenerating Spirit of God in accordance with the election of the Triune God from before the Creation itself) and restored to the land of Israel (also known in the OT as the land of Canaan and, for better or worse, throughout much of history before 1947 the land of Palestine), bringing them into faithful reception of the New Covenant blessings the Church of Christ has already been enjoying. The Church, being the Bride of Christ, will be present with Christ to rule and reign with Him (Matthew 19:28-30; Revelation 19:6-20:4), although there is some uncertainty as to how and where. The Millennium will be a time of peace, joy, righteousness, obedience, holiness, truth and fullness of the Holy Spirit. Satan will be bound during this time but released at the end when he leads a final rebellion against Christ, only to be defeated and judged, confining him to hell for all eternity to bear the awful weight of God's almighty wrath. As the Millennium concludes, the unsaved dead of all ages are resurrected and judged at the Great White Throne. Following this, God will create a new Heavens and a new Earth (Psalm 24; Isaiah 9:3-7; 11:1-10; 32; 35; 61:7-10; 65; 66; Daniel 12:2-3; Joel 2:28-29; Micah 4:1-4; Zechariah 12:10-14; 14:4-21; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 1:32-33; Romans 11:25-27; 1 Corinthians 15:22-28; Revelation 19:11-21; 20-22).

The Saved and the Lost – We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between those who are saved and those who are lost. Only those who are justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Spirit of our God are saved in God's sight. All who continue in unrepentant sin and unbelief are lost in God's sight and under His abiding curse. This distinction will remain eternally: in the everlasting joy of heaven now and at the Second Coming of Christ enjoying a new Heavens and Earth for the saved and in the everlasting conscious punishment of suffering and torment of the lost in the lake of fire (Genesis 18:23; Malachi 3:18; Matthew 25:46; John 8:21; Romans 6:17–18, 23; 7:6; 1 John 5:19).

2.09 – Moral Issues

Abortion – We believe that human life begins at fertilization and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn God-given

human life. God is the author of life and death. Therefore, abortion is murder (Job 3:16; Psalm 51:5; 139:14–16; Isaiah 49:1, 5; Jeremiah 1:5; 20:15–18; Luke 1:44; Galatians 1:15).

Euthanasia – We believe that God is the author of life and death. The direct taking of an innocent human life is a moral evil, regardless of intention. Life is a gift of God and must be respected from fertilization to natural death (Exodus 20:13; 23:7; Matthew 5:21; Acts 17:28).

Human Sexuality – We believe that sexual activity outside of a marriage between one man and one woman is sin. Any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, transgenderism, bestiality, incest, pedophilia, fornication, adultery, pornography, or anything that deviates from the first statement in this subsection are sinful perversions of God’s gift of sex. God has created us solely as male and female, and He desires that we find joy and contentment in His design (Genesis 2:24; Genesis 19:5, 13; Genesis 26:8–9; Leviticus 18:1–30; Romans 1: 26–29; 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8; Hebrews 13:4).

Marriage – We believe that the only Scriptural marriage (and therefore the only marriage instituted by God, the Author of reality and all truth) is the joining of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22–23).

Gender Relationships – We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate functions for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is the head of his household, serving as a shepherd/leader in the home. Likewise, men are to hold the offices of authority in the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination by the church and qualified to exercise their authority by leading (mixed) adult worship services and adult Christian education classes (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:8–15; 3:4–5, 12). We firmly reject any notion that a person’s internal sense of “gender” can be (or should be) different than their biological physiology and sexuality, seeing sex change operations or “gender-affirming surgery” to be wholly out of line with what the Bible teaches regarding gender relationships and therefore sinful by nature.

Family Relationships – We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the Church. The wife is to submit herself to the scriptural leadership of her husband as the Church submits to the headship of Christ. Children are a heritage from the Lord, and parents are responsible to oversee their children’s spiritual and moral instruction, which includes a consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline, including scriptural corporal correction (Genesis 1:26–28; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Psalm 127:3–5; Proverbs 19:18; 22:15; 23:13–14; Mark 10:6–12; 1 Corinthians 7:1–16; Ephesians 5:21–33; 6:1–4, Colossians 3:18–21; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1–7).

Divorce and Remarriage – We believe that God disapproves of and forbids divorce and intends marriage to last until the death of a spouse. Divorce and remarriage is regarded as adultery except on the grounds of fornication and spousal abandonment. Divorce is also permissible to end civil unions or legal marriages which violate Scriptural marriage as defined above (such as

polygamous or homosexual unions). However, marriage to an unbeliever is not solely a legitimate ground for divorce (Malachi 2:14–17; Matthew 19:3–12; Romans 7:1–3; 1 Corinthians 7:10–16; 1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6).

Protection of Children — We believe that children are from the Lord and must be absolutely protected within the church from any form of abuse or molestation. The church has zero tolerance for any person, whether paid staff, volunteer, member, or visitor, who abuses or molests a child (Psalm 127:3–5; Matthew 18:6, 19:14; Mark 10:14).

2.10 – Christian Interactions

Christian Love – We believe that we should demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow believers, but also toward those who are not believers, those who oppose us, and those who engage in sinful actions. We are to deal with those who oppose us graciously, gently, patiently, prayerfully, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the taking of revenge, or the threat of or use of violence as a means of resolving personal conflict or obtaining personal justice. Although God commands us to abhor sinful actions, we are to love and pray for any person who engages in such sinful actions (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:44–48; Luke 6:31; John 13:34–35; Romans 12:9–10; 17–21; 13:8–10; Philippians 2:2–4; 2 Timothy 2:24–26; Titus 3:2; 1 John 3:17–18).

Lawsuits Between Believers – We believe that Scripture prohibits members from bringing civil lawsuits against other members of our assembly or the Church Universal to resolve personal disputes (1 Corinthians 6:1–8; Ephesians 4:31–32). We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation from another Christian’s insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander.

2.11 – Authority of Statement of Faith

This statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our belief. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing statement of faith accurately represents the teaching of the Bible and, therefore, is binding upon all members (with certain and definable exceptions; see “Addendum” below). For purposes of church doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the elders are the church’s final interpretive authority on the Bible’s meaning and application. All teaching conducted as part of our ministry and all curriculums used in our education ministries must be approved by appropriate church leadership.

2.12 —Addendum: Level of Agreement Required With This Statement of Faith

The leadership of Messiah Bible Church recognizes that there are some doctrinal issues within this doctrinal statement that are hotly debated ones with strong, Gospel-affirming, Bible-believing scholarship on different sides of these issues. It is also the contention of the leadership of Messiah Bible Church that unity around what are considered doctrines of primary importance are the true litmus test of Christian orthodoxy, and therefore true Christian fellowship and service.

Although what will be preached and taught from leadership and teachers at Messiah Bible Church will seek to uphold all of the doctrines as they are outlined in this Statement of Faith, complete adherence to items deemed to be of more secondary or tertiary nature by the elders of MBC are not required for membership in this local body of believers. Furthermore, those who feel that it may be God's leading to serve in any capacity as teacher (or in any other ministerial capacity) but cannot find themselves being in full agreement with those items deemed secondary or tertiary in nature are not automatically barred from serving Christ's Church in this local assembly in those capacities. The leadership at Messiah Bible Church would only have those potential individuals, at the very least, not teach in such a way that demeans, belittles, or casts purposeful confusion on what this local church affirms as the best understanding of the aforementioned Sections.

Any other issues a potential member might have with other areas of this Statement of Faith should be brought to church leadership, to help dispel confusion and promote growth in the knowledge of God.