

EFCA Statement of Faith

The below response to the 2008 Statement of Faith was written in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Credentialing with the EFCA.

Article One: God

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

Regarding God's Existence

Scripture assumes the existence of God as the creator of all that exists. He is the pre-existent uncaused-cause of creation (Genesis 1:1ff). Through General Revelation, what we observe externally and what we know internally, God has revealed to us His existence and essence/nature (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-20; 2:14-16). God has also disclosed Himself to mankind through Special Revelation (Article Two).

Regarding The Essence/Nature of God

While it is impossible to fully understand God it is possible to know about God's essence/nature as we see His attributes displayed in General and Special Revelation (Job 11:7-12; 36:26; Isaiah 40:18). These attributes are the manifestations of who God is (essence) and how He acts (nature). These attributes can be classified as those which are incommunicable and those which are communicable. The incommunicable attributes of God are those which surpass human comprehension in that there is no equivalent correlation between them and the experience of mankind. The communicable attributes of God are those which are comprehensible by mankind. There is found within them a correlation to the experience of mankind.

Regarding The Trinity

God is uniquely the one true God (1 Kings 8:60; 1 Corinthians 8:6). God exists as one divine being yet in three distinct persons. These persons are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each person of the Godhead shares equally and without division the complete essence/nature of God. Yet, each is distinct in manifesting the workings of the Godhead (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; Acts 5:3,4; 1 Peter 1:2).

Regarding The Relationship Between The Trinity and Other Doctrines

The Doctrine of the Trinity is uniquely a Christian Doctrine and foundational to all other doctrines. Beyond monotheism, the Christian understanding of the Triune God gives the basis for understanding God's works of incarnation, redemption, and sanctification. Within the truth of the Trinity is found the basis of community, fellowship, and unity within the Body of Christ. The triunity of God gives us the basis upon which to explore and to seek understanding of God's attributes and their application and expression within creation (Genesis 1:27; 2:24,25; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 12:12-24; Ephesians 2:16; 3:8-10; 5:31,32; Philippians 2:10,11; Colossians 1:16-20).

Regarding Modalism

Modalism is a heresy first propagated by Sabellius (200 A.D.). Sabellius understood that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were no more than three modes (manifestations or forms) of the one God. Sabellianism became known as "modalism" since it views one God who manifests Himself in three modes of existence. Modalism contradicts Trinitarian doctrine in that while God does exist as one divine being in three distinct persons each person of the Godhead shares equally and without division the complete essence/nature of God.

Regarding God's Limitless Knowledge And Sovereign Power

God is omniscient in that He knows all things. There is nothing which will ever add to God's knowledge (Isaiah 40:13,14; Hebrews 4:13). God is sovereign in that He upholds all things by His power and determines their just end. He is in complete and unalterable control (Genesis 14:19; Deuteronomy 10:14,17; Acts 17:24-26; Ephesians 1:11). God is omnipotent in that He is all powerful (Revelation 1:8; 4:8).

The significance of God's limitless knowledge and sovereign power is manifold. God will accomplish what God wills to accomplish (Ephesians 3:9-11; 1 Peter 1:20,21). Mankind cannot alter the will and purpose of God (Psalm 33:11; Malachi 3:6). God's revelation and promises to mankind regarding salvation, sanctification, and glorification can be relied upon with complete certainty. God's wisdom applied to life is always true (Job 12:13; Romans 16:27). His precepts are without error (Psalm 119:160). Trust in God is never unfounded (Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Jeremiah 10:10,11).

Article Two: The Bible

We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

Regarding Revelation

God, through self-disclosure has made known to us His divine person and truth. The purpose of God's self-disclosure is to call humankind into fellowship with Himself (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20). Scripture describes two distinct forms of God's self-disclosure; General Revelation (Article One) and Special Revelation. Through Special Revelation God has revealed to mankind all that we need to know for salvation. Special Revelation is divine self-disclosure through Jesus Christ the Living Word and through Scripture, the written word of the Old and New Testaments (Psalm 19:7-20; John 1:1-18; 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:15,16).

Regarding Inspiration, Inerrancy, and Infallibility

The writing of Scripture resulted from a cooperative activity between God and human authors. God exerted enough influence in them, yet without controlling them completely, so as to guarantee that every word in the entirety of the original manuscripts, not later copies or translations, as they were written rendered the thoughts of God free from error in what they affirm and teach (verbal plenary inspiration) (2 Timothy 3:15,16; 2 Peter 1:19-21). God, who is truth (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18), in Scripture reveals what is truth (Psalms 19:9; 119:160; Galatians 2:5; Ephesians 4:20-24; 2 Timothy 2:15). Scripture is inerrant in that it is without error, totally reliable, and the sufficient infallible authority in all matters pertaining to faith and conduct. As such, it demands our full obedience and trust (John 3:33; Romans 3:4; 1 Corinthians 2:12,13; 2 Timothy 3:17; James 1:22-25).

Regarding Canon

The 39 books of the Old Testament had already been gathered by Jesus' time through a process of accumulation. These were regarded as the revealed will of God and as having authority over God's people. These were the Scriptures that Jesus and His apostles used and quoted in their

teachings and writings which the Church adopted as the “Old Testament” Scripture (Matthew 19:4; 22:29). In the Fourth Century, worldwide representatives of the churches came together in councils (i.e. Nicea 325 A.D., Carthage 397 A.D.) and recognized the 27 books of the New Testament as divine revelation, thus confirming and bringing to a close the Biblical canon. It is important to understand that the church leaders of the fourth century did not select the books of the canon so much as recognize them under God’s guidance as inspired writings. As such, the Church does not own Scripture in the sense of having authority over it. But, the Church is under the authority of God’s word.

Regarding Authority

Since the Bible is God’s inerrant word it has absolute supreme authority over our lives. The Bible stands in authority over governments, clergy, even the church and her traditions. The Bible is to have authority over our lives, not just when it seems reasonable or convenient or fits our framework of understanding and experience. God’s word should be so deeply embedded within us that our natural reaction will be to live in obedience to it as an integral part of our nature.

In teaching and preaching, my first priority is to allow God to teach and conform me to His Scripture. Since it is the Holy Spirit who illuminates, enlightens, clarifies, and teaches the truth of God’s word it is crucial for me to begin with prayerful study and meditation (John 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:11-16). Second, my study is focused on understanding the specifics of a passage while considering its place within the larger context of God’s revelation in all Scripture. Third, is my choice to seek the conformity of my life to Scripture (Romans 12:1,2). Fourth, following the direction of the Holy Spirit, it is my goal to carefully and practically explain the Scriptures to others (2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 1:20). By experience I have come to understand that it is God’s word the Holy Spirit uses in our lives not my clever attempts at sermonizing. There are Sundays (i.e. Incarnation, Resurrection) when I will preach topically. However, my desire is to explain and practically apply the Bible through systematic exposition so as to help people understand a comprehensive Biblical perspective of the issues of our lives.

Article Three: The Human Condition

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

Regarding Man's Origin, Nature, and Purpose

The six day progression of God's creative work reveals that God was integrally and purposefully involved in His creation and that God's creation was good and fully in accord with His purposes (Genesis 1:31). Man, as God's highest creation (Psalm 8), was created by God, both male and female, uniquely in His own image (*tselem*) and likeness (*d'mut*) (Genesis 1:26; 2:7) to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7). As the image and likeness of God, man uniquely reflects the essence and nature of God mentally, physically, and spiritually (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). Created as male and female, equal as the image and likeness of God, and yet unique in their roles, God, establishing the pattern for human marital relations (Mark 10:6-9; Romans 1:24-28; Ephesians 5:31,33) brings together Adam and Eve in marriage commanding them to procreate and fill the earth with their progeny (Genesis 1:28; 2:18-25). God commands Adam and Eve, created in His image and likeness, delegated authority to exercise rulership over the earth in God's stead (Genesis 1:28-30).

Regarding Man's Subsequent Sin and Present Condition

Sin was introduced into creation by Satan (Genesis 3:1-7). Through the work of Satan, Eve according to her own will was deceived. Adam chose, through a willful act of disobedience to the revealed will of God, to follow in sin (Genesis 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:14). Through Adam's sin the entirety of mankind, existing seminally in Adam as our representative, sinned (Romans 5:12-19). Having inherited from Adam the nature of sinners all men are without excuse with regard to sin (Romans 1:16-23; 1 Corinthians 5:21,22). Mankind, by individual choice confirms that we are sinners, dead in sin, separated from God, and unable to comprehend the things of God (Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3). The result of sin is that man awaits the justified wrath of God (Romans 2:5-11), experiences alienation from God (Romans 3:23), spiritual death (Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3), physical death (Genesis 3:19), and the disruption of intimate human community (Genesis 3:7,16). God justly acts with wrath upon those who enter eternity without Christ (John 3:36; Romans 3:5; Colossians 3:6) in that

they will face eternal separation from God, including no second chance for salvation (Luke 16:19-31; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Hebrews 9:27). Those who are judged at the Great White Throne, who do not have Christ as their Savior, will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire prepared for the devil and his minions (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10-15).

Regarding Rescue, Reconciled, and Renewed

Because of his sinful state man is incapable of earning salvation or favor with God (Romans 3:9-20,23). No religion, church, priest, pastor, acts of spirituality, sacraments, or any deeds we might do can provide for or earn for us our salvation. Salvation is a work undertaken by God for man in accord with God's love and graciousness (John 3:15; Ephesians 2:8-10) and is based upon the completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross, as our sin offering (Romans 6:8-11). Our only hope of salvation is to trust in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ through Whom alone God has established and offers to us the certainty of His salvation (John 14:6; Acts 2:21; 4:12; Romans 3:20).

Rescue describes the condition of one who has received pardon from the consequences of sin both present and eternal (Romans 1:16; 8:1,2; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). Jesus Christ is the justifier of mankind before God (Romans 3:21-26; 5:6-11).

Reconciled describes the relationship of the believer with God in which we are made to be at peace with God and given the ability to grow in our relationship with Him (Romans 5:1,2). Having been justified, the believer is to set aside sin (Leviticus 20:26; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18) and through ongoing surrender to the inner working of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16,17; Ephesians 3:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13) is to live in growing conformity to Christ (Romans 6:19; 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Renewed describes the hope of all who persevere in Christ (Romans 2:4-10; 8:28,30; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 5:2-5; Hebrews 12:1,2; James 1:12). The glorification of the believer will take place at the second coming of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 1:3-9). When the believer enters into eternity with God we will be made like Christ (1 Corinthians 15:25-58; Philippians 3:20,21; 1 John 3:2).

Article Four: Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus - Israel's promised Messiah - was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

Regarding The Hypostatic Union

The word "hypostatic" comes from the Greek "hypostasis" which describes the true underlying essential substance of anything. Jesus has been, is, and will be eternally God. He is, at the same time fully divine and fully human (Hebrews 1:3). His two essences/natures (divine and human) exist as one person with the uniqueness of His two essences/natures being preserved.

During the incarnation, in humility, Jesus voluntarily emptied Himself by setting aside His prerogative to exercise His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-11). Jesus experienced the same bodily restrictions (Matthew 26:38; Luke 2:52; 24:39; John 11:35; 12:21; James 1:2-4) and range of emotions (Matthew 26:38; Hebrews 5:7) common to all mankind. With regard to His human nature, Jesus experienced the same temptations to sin which all humanity struggle with (Philippians 2:7). Though tempted in every way (Luke 4:2,13), and in His humanity fully capable of succumbing to those temptations (Hebrews 4:15), through active obedience Jesus lived without sinning (John 8:29,46; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21). With regard to His divine nature, Jesus did not enter into temptation (John 8:12; James 1:13; 1 John 3:5). Jesus is able to sympathize with us as our High Priest (Hebrews 2:18; 7:26) and to provide an example for us as to how life is to be lived (1 John 2:6; 1 Peter 2:21).

Since Jesus is fully man, and sinless, He is able to be our representative before God (Romans 5:18,19) and through His voluntary passive obedience as our substitutionary sacrifice (Hebrews 9:11-15; 1 Peter 1:19) to provide the means of our restoration to righteousness before God (1 Corinthians 15:45-49; Hebrews 2:14-18).

Regarding Jesus The Messiah

Jesus is the only begotten Son of God (Matthew 11:25-30; John 1:14,18,34,49) and the virgin born Son of Man (Matthew 16:13; Luke 9:18; Acts 7:56). Conceived by the supernatural work of God and born of a virgin, Jesus' deity and humanity are united without the inheritance of sin

(Luke 1:35). The fullness of God's redemptive work is contained in Jesus who is the Messiah promised to Israel in the Old Testament (Genesis 3:14-20; 12:1-3; 2 Samuel 7:11-16; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Jeremiah 23:5,6) and the Savior of the world revealed in the New Testament (Matthew 1:1; John 1:41; 4:22; 1 John 2:2). All the events of God's redemption history converge in Jesus and the great purpose of the Father to glorify and honor the Son (Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:16-18).

Since Jesus is fully God He is able to reveal God to us, to bear the penalty for our sins, to provide for our salvation, and to bring us into a restored relationship with God (John 3:16; 8:19; 14:9; 1 Timothy 2:5).

Regarding Crucifixion and Resurrection

In a historical act demonstrative of God's wrath upon sin, Jesus was crucified to death. He remained dead for three days and was resurrected into His glorified body which is not subject to the restrictions of our mortal bodies such as physical death (John 19:30; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8,20-23). The bodily resurrection of Jesus assures us of our own regeneration (1 Peter 1:3), justification (Romans 4:25), the receiving of our own imperishable bodies (1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:12-58), and our dwelling eternally with God (2 Corinthians 4:14). The resurrection of Jesus should affect our attitude while we serve God, as we learn to rely on His resurrection power made available to us (Romans 6:11), and as we are aware of the purpose and urgency of our service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 9:27,28; Revelation 20:11-15).

Regarding The Present Ministry of Jesus

Following His resurrection Jesus ascended to Heaven (Luke 24:50,51; Acts 1:9-11). His work of redemption completed, Jesus now sits in the position of authority at the right hand of the Father (Psalm 110:1; Matthew 26:64; Hebrews 1:3). Jesus sustains (Colossians 1:17) and has sovereign authority over creation (Ephesians 1:20,21; 1 Peter 3:22). Jesus is the sovereign Head of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:5; Colossians 1:18). Jesus has forever fulfilled the role of our High Priest and continues to present His completed sacrifice before the Father as the sufficient basis for the giving of pardoning grace (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 4:14; 5:1-10; 7:11-28). As our Advocate, when we stumble in sin, Jesus pleads for our pardon and maintains our peace with God (Romans 5:1,2; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1).

Article Five: The Work of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

Regarding Jesus as Our Representative and Substitute

Adam, representing mankind as the head of our race, through disobedience brought God's condemnation upon us. Jesus, representing mankind, through obedience made possible our acquittal from the penalty for our sin and life with God (Romans 5:18,19; 1 Corinthians 15:45,47). That Jesus is fully man enables Him to die as our representative, substituting Himself in our place, paying the penalty for our sin (Hebrews 2:14-18). That Jesus is fully God enables Him to act as our mediator and to bear the full penalty for the sins of all mankind since only God is able to save man (Jonah 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus is the firstborn representative of those who have been made alive through His vicarious sacrifice (1 Corinthians 15:20-23; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5).

Regarding Propitiation and Expiation

Propitiation (*ilaskomai*) means to appease or to turn away. Specifically, propitiation extends beyond the forgiveness of sin by emphasizing the turning away of God's deserved wrath (Lamentations 3:39-42). The amazing reality of propitiation is that God Himself provides the means of our propitiation while focusing His wrath, which should have been poured out on mankind, on His own Son (1 John 4:10). By shedding His blood on the cross Jesus poured out His life (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:11; Deuteronomy 12:23) in our place and thus became our propitious sacrifice before God (Romans 3:25,26; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). By expiation we mean that Jesus' sacrifice was the all sufficient propitious act whereby the wrath of God has been completely satisfied against those who are saved (Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:11-28).

Regarding Salvation, Atonement, and Justification

Salvation describes the condition of one who has received rescue or freedom from sin and death (Romans 1:16; 10:10; 11:11; 13:11). Salvation is a work undertaken by God for man in accord with God's love and graciousness without any basis in human merit (John 3:15; Ephesians 2:8,9) and is based upon the completed work of Jesus Christ Who died on the cross, not for His

own sin, but for ours. (Isaiah 53:5ff.; John 8:46; Hebrews 4:15; 9:22; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 2:1,2).

Through the atoning death of Jesus, God, according to His foreknowledge, in accordance with His sovereignty and loving nature, acts according to His will with regard to the effective election of those who will be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:5,6). While God's offer of salvation is extended to all mankind, and God's desire is that all mankind will respond favorably to His offer of salvation (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9), the sad reality is that not all will receive what God has so graciously provided for us (John 3:16; Romans 11:7; 1 Peter 2:8).

Knowledge of Jesus' work alone is not sufficient to bring salvation. Saving faith involves a personal response involving a decision of the will in which we agree with God as to our sorrowful state of sin, choosing to repent of our sin, and so to commit ourselves to trusting Jesus with our life (Acts 2:37,38; 3:19; 17:30; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10). On our part, the choice which takes place in our hearts must also be demonstrated in our outward confession of Jesus Christ as our personal Savior (Romans 10:8-10). These actions are not acts of our own righteousness, but descriptions of our response to what God has enabled us to experience with Him through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:10).

Justification signifies the legal establishment of a person as just by acquittal from guilt and their initial entrance into salvation (Romans 4:25; 5:16, 18). In a transaction by which God imputes Christ's righteousness to the believer and the guilt of the believer's sin to Christ (Isaiah 53:6,12; Matthew 27:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21) all of what was necessary on God's part for our justification has been effected in the death of Jesus (John 1:29; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24). Being justified through Christ, being reconciled to God by the satisfaction of divine justice, man is freed from the penalty of sin as the ultimate consequence of sin (Romans 3:21-26; 5:6-11; 6:23; Ephesians 1:7).

Regarding Exclusivity and Resurrection

Jesus' resurrection confirms that He is the only means of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). His resurrection also assures us of His victory and triumph over death and the forces of evil which are made available to us who are in Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:16-19; Colossians 2:8-15).

Article Six: The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

Regarding the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

By relationship, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the same essence/nature as God the Father and God the Son (Genesis 1:2; Isaiah 40:12-14; Matthew 28:19; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 2:10,11; 12:11; 2 Corinthians 12:14). The Holy Spirit is described in Scripture as a person, not just a power or an influence (John 14:26; Acts 10:19; 16:7; Romans 8:2; 1 Corinthians 2:10,11; 12:11; Ephesians 4:30;). The Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ specifically through His work of conviction, regeneration, and His ongoing activity in the life of the believer (Acts 16:12-15).

Regarding the Conviction, Regeneration, and the Ongoing Work of the Holy Spirit

By conviction, the Holy Spirit speaks to the heart of all men by identifying our sin and reminding us of our inherent guilt before God as “*sinners by nature and by choice*” (Article Three) thusly exposing our need for Jesus as the Savior (John 16:8-11).

Regeneration is a work which can only be accomplished by God. Without the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit we remain spiritually dead to God (John 3:5,6; 10:27). Sinners, by God’s grace saved through the work of Jesus Christ, are given new life by the Holy Spirit (Romans 3:24; 5:15-21; Titus 3:5,6). United with Jesus, the regenerate are adopted sons and daughters of God, privileged as His heirs without distinction due to spiritual or ethnic background (Romans 3:21-23; 8:14-17; Galatians 3:23-29; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:17-21).

The Holy Spirit is active in the life of the believer in that He gives illumination by increasing our knowledge of God’s redemptive work through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:21) and by guidance through increasing our knowledge of what it means to live life in Jesus Christ (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13,14; Galatians 5:16,18). The Holy Spirit equips the believer with Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:4-13) and empowers us to live lives which glorify Jesus Christ and so to please God (Acts 6:8; Romans 8:4-8; Galatians

5:22,23,25; Ephesians 3:16-21).

Regarding the Baptism, Indwelling, and Filling of the Holy Spirit

When we come to salvation in Jesus we are baptized by the Holy Spirit (John 3:1-8; Acts 10:44-48; Ephesians 1:13) and made to be a part of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12,13). At the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit indwells the believer as a sign that we do indeed belong to God (John 7:37-39; Romans 8:9-11). It is the dwelling of the Holy Spirit within us that enables us to live the Christian life (John 14:16,17,26; 16:7-15). It appears that, in special circumstances, the filling of the Holy Spirit may be delayed in order to protect the unity of the Church (Acts 19:2-6). Filling of the Spirit then is not essential for salvation but a result of salvation. The filling of the Spirit describes the daily surrender of our human will to the control of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17; Ephesians 5:18) which on occasion may be marked by a dramatic working of God in and through the believer (Acts 4:8,31; 13:9)

Regarding the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit graciously gifts each member of the Body of Christ with a unique role in building up the church and enabling her to carry out her mission in the world (Romans 12:4; 1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:12,13) until the return of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:7). While a distinction may be made between gifts which are given as a specific demonstration of the power, love, and activity of God (i.e. miracles, healing, tongues) and the other gifts it is crucial to understand that all these Spirit given gifts are the organic framework of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 4:15,16) the ultimate purpose of which is to bring about a working unity which glorifies God (1 Peter 4:10,11).

Regarding the Fruit of the Holy Spirit

While the gifts of the Spirit are unique roles in the Body of Christ the fruit of the Spirit are qualities of character evidenced in the life of the believer. Galatians 5:16-26 teaches that the fruit of the Spirit are produced in the life of a believer as he or she chooses to yield control of his or her life to the Holy Spirit. The believer is inadequate to produce these fruit by his or her own effort. Rather, by means of inwardly allowing the Holy Spirit freedom to work in the believer's life these outward fruit are manifested.

Article Seven: The Church

We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifested in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

Regarding The True Church

God graciously, without any basis in human merit (John 3:15; Ephesians 2:8,9), offers justification to those who will choose to repent of their sin and so to commit themselves by faith believing in God's efficacious acquittal of personal sin through the completed work of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:25,26; 4:25; 5:16,18). Those believers so justified by God's grace, and not by any work or association, God makes to be members of the true Church (Matthew 12:6,7; Acts 2:37-39; 4:12; Romans 3:20a; Galatians 5:5,6). Given birth at Pentecost (Acts 1:5-8; 2:1-4), the Church universal is the one timeless Body of all believers, called apart from the world by God, led through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, for the glorification of God through individual and corporate submission to the Lordship of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; John 15:8; Romans 15:5,6; Philippians 2:9-11).

Regarding Jesus as Lord and Head of the Church

The Church is described as the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12,13). It is both an organization in that it has structure (Acts 6:1-6; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 14:40; Ephesians 4:11,12; 1 Timothy 3:1-13) and an organism being a living body with Christ as its head (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18). While the Church is universal in scope it is local in manifestation as believers in obedience to the Head of the Church join together in autonomous local assemblies (Revelation 1:11; Hebrews 10:23-25) subject to Jesus her sovereign Lord and Master (John 13:14; Acts 7:59; Romans 5:1,2; Colossians 1:13,14; 1 Thessalonians 5:9). The local church is seen as an autonomous manifestation of the Body of Christ which is accountable to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:15-20; Acts 6:1-6).

God the Father gives purpose to the Body. God the Son, as Head, gives direction. God the Spirit enables the functioning of the Body (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). While Scripture affirms three specific offices of the church (Apostle, which has ceased [Acts 1:21,22], Overseer [1 Timothy

3:1], and Deacon [1 Timothy 3:8]), which are often considered as a basis for structural hierarchy, these are not essential to the effective ministry of the church. The prescription of these offices focuses on the remediation of divisive issues and heretical teaching within the churches, such as Ephesus and Crete (1 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 1:5,10,11), rather than on establishing a normative pattern of leadership for every congregation (Romans 16:1-15). What is essential is the obedience and surrender of believers individually and corporately to the enabling of the Spirit, the direction of the Son, and so to the purpose of the Father (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:4-13). An authoritative “top down” structure which separates “clergy” and “laity” is antithetical to the practical outworking of Spiritual Gifts and the priesthood all believers share in Christ (1 Peter 2:4-10). Believers, called together as Christ’s Body, who are living in obedience and surrender to the Head of the Body, will grow closer to each other in fellowship and loving service which will accomplish God’s purposes of evangelism, edification, and glorifying Him (John 15:8-11).

Regarding the Practice and Necessity of Baptism and The Lord’s Supper

Baptism symbolically identifies the believer with Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection. As such, baptism is an outward demonstration of the believer’s death through repentance from sin and his or her new life in Christ by faith (Romans 6:1-11). Baptism follows repentance (Acts 2:41; 8:12,13,26-40; 10:44-48; 16:26-34) and is administered in obedience to the command of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19). The Lord’s Supper was instituted by Jesus Christ as a remembrance and proclamation of His atoning work on the cross (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20). The Lord’s Supper is commanded by Jesus to be partaken of by all those who confess Him as their personal Savior and Lord and who are striving to live in obedience to God’s will (Acts 2:42,46; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Baptism and The Lord’s Supper are ordinances, in that they are commanded by Jesus, and not sacraments in the sense of conferring salvation. The practice of each is necessitated by obedience to Jesus Christ and by the significant role they have in the life of the believer and congregation. Baptism, as a significant moment of personal testimony, strengthens the commitment of the believer and encourages the entire congregation in their own commitment to Jesus. The Lord’s Supper provides a regular significant opportunity for self-examination and rededication to Jesus. Both baptism and The Lord’s Supper are celebratory moments in the life of the entire congregation providing opportunity for believers to celebrate life in Jesus and to proclaim His gospel.

Article Eight: Christian Living

We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

Regarding Justification and Sanctification

Through the completed work of Christ on the cross God graciously establishes the basis of the believer's justification and initial entrance into salvation (Romans 4:25; 5:16,18). By grace, God enables sanctification through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit within the believer (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Both aspects of salvation are inseparable acts of God's grace applied that the believer might live out the purposes of God for his or her life (Ephesians 2:8-10). As the believer, having been justified, continues in sanctification by daily turning from sin (Leviticus 11:44; 20:26; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18) and through ongoing surrender to the inner working of the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 1 Peter 1:20), he or she is led in growing conformity to the image of Christ (Romans 6:19; 12:2; Ephesians 5:25-27).

Regarding The Living Out of Our Faith

The two great commandments of loving God with all that we are and loving others with the same sacrificial devotion with which we love ourselves give to us a benchmark by which the veracity of our faith is to be evaluated (Matthew 22:36-40). Those who are being sanctified produce evidence, or fruit, of sanctification (Matthew 7:16; John 15:1-10; Galatians 5:22-25). Who we are in Jesus is the basis of what we do as His followers in that how we live demonstrates what we truly believe and gives evidence to the work of God within us (Romans 4:5; James 2:17,26).

Regarding Compassion Toward the Poor and Justice For The Oppressed

The church exists to glorify God through her witness of the gospel (Acts 1:8) and in seeking to make all peoples to be disciples of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20). The veracity of the gospel is demonstrated, not by our theology, doctrine, or cleverness of presentation, but when our actions genuinely demonstrate the belief we profess. Genuine love for our siblings in Jesus,

compassion towards the poor, and justice for the oppressed all demonstrate that we truly know what it means to be graciously and mercifully loved by God and that we desire to live in obedience to Him (Matthew 25:31-46; John 13:34,35; Galatians 6:10; James 2:14-26; 1 John 4:7-14).

When we live with compassion toward the poor and in seeking justice for the oppressed we follow the example of Jesus. Jesus acted with genuine compassion towards those who were oppressed physically and spiritually within His greater purpose of declaring the coming of God's kingdom to man (Luke 4:16-21). The purpose of the church is not to establish a social welfare program but by means of demonstrating genuine compassion to gain a hearing for the gospel (Matthew 5:13-16).

Regarding Spiritual Warfare

Individually and corporately, as the church lives and proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ she experiences conflict with Satan and his minions who seek to continue man's bondage in darkness and sin (Ephesians 6:12). This conflict, while experienced physically, is at its core a spiritual battle for the eternal destiny of mankind waged between the Adversary Satan and God (Genesis 3:14,15; 1 Peter 5:8). That we might prevail in our mission, the Triune God has made astounding resources available to us (Ephesians 6:10-19) and indeed is with us in the battle.

God's word provides the only light which is able to pierce the darkness of this world (Psalm 119:105). God's word is the truth which is an overwhelming weapon to be used against Satan's deceptions (Psalm 119:160; Matthew 4:1-11). The Holy Spirit, Who restrains the sinful work of Satan (2 Thessalonians 2:6,7), instructs the believer in the use of His word (John 16:13; 2 Peter 1:20,21), enlightens, indwells (Romans 8:9-11), fills, and empowers us for spiritual warfare (Zechariah 4:6; Ephesians 3:16; 5:18). Jesus is God's Word made flesh (John 1:14) Who has utterly triumphed over Satan, his minions, and death (1 Corinthians 15:20-28), Who has absolute authority over creation (Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:15-20), and in Whom we stand (Colossians 2:13-15) and are given the authority to pray and to speak in His name against the forces of darkness (Matthew 10:1; John 14:12-15; Acts 16:18; 19:11-17).

Article Nine: Christ's Return

We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

Regarding The Personal Bodily Return

As a person Jesus was resurrected with a recognizable glorified body suitable for heaven (1 Corinthians 15:4-8; 50-53, Article Four). In the same personal and bodily manner with which Jesus ascended to heaven we are to expect His return (Acts 1:9-11). That Jesus is personally and bodily resurrected and returning means that He is not an idea, philosophy, spirit, or the product of religious wishful thinking, but the returning King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). Since Jesus is the "first fruits" of those who will join Him in eternity we have the certain hope of our own personal and bodily resurrection to eternity with Him (1 Corinthians 15:20-23; 50-57).

Regarding The Timing and Sequence of Future History

Jesus will return at a time which will catch many by surprise (Matthew 24:42-44; Luke 12:39,40; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3) to remove His waiting church first by the resurrection of the saints who are asleep and second by the removal of those saints who are alive (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; Revelation 3:10). Following this first resurrection there will be a seven year tribulation of unprecedented distress and destruction (Daniel 9:26,27; Matthew 24:15-28; Revelation 16) climaxed by the resurrection of the tribulation saints (Matthew 24:31; Revelation 20:4) and the glorious and triumphant return of Jesus with His Church (Daniel 12:1; Zechariah 14:1-9; Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; Revelation 19:11-21). Following His triumphant return Jesus will judge the Gentiles for their treatment of the Jews (Matthew 25:31-46), Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss, and Jesus will establish His earthly reign for a period of 1,000 years (the Millennium) (Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:1-5; Revelation 20:1-6). During the Millennium many of the promises made to Israel will be fulfilled including regeneration (Ezekiel 11:19; 18:30-32; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 11:25-27); possession of the land (Ezekiel 20:42-44; 36:28-38), and the re-establishing of the Davidic throne (2 Samuel 7:11-16; 1 Chronicles 17:10-14; Jeremiah 33:17-26). At the completion of the Millennium Satan will be released to deceive the nations and will finally be thrown into the Lake of Fire and brimstone to

be tormented forever (Revelation 20:7-10). Then the unrighteous dead will be resurrected to judgment and eternal punishment (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-21; 21:8; Article Three; Article Ten). Following this final judgment the present heaven and earth will be done away with and a new heaven and a new earth will be established (2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1). The righteous will dwell with God forever (Revelation 21:1-7, Article Ten).

Regarding Constant Expectancy

While many of the signs which will precede Jesus' return have generally occurred throughout history (Matthew 24:5-13) the unexpected, cataclysmic, and supernatural events of His return fit best within the premillennial interpretation (Matthew 24:14-31, 42-44; 2 Peter 3:10-14). Yet, since the actual timing and sequence of future history is known only to God, great humility is required of each person seeking to understand and explain what is yet to transpire. What God has revealed to us should not be a flashpoint of division but a focal point of unity drawing us together in expectation of the certainty and consequences of Jesus' return. We look forward together with hope to the day of our release from the bondage of sin and the spiritual warfare of this world to the eternal blessedness of being with our Heavenly Father forever (Romans 8:12-25; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8; Titus 2:11-14).

Regarding Motivation

The truths of eschatology are not given to us in order to create an exclusive club of those who are saved but to drive us to passionately live out our faith in a manner which compels an audience for the gospel (Matthew 24:45-51; Romans 13:11-14; 2 Peter 3:10-14). With confidence the believer faces the daily issues of life knowing that God is sovereignly working out His plan and purposes for history (Colossians 1:13-20; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11). The believer has hope that death is not the end but a glorious transition to the rewards of heaven (1 Corinthians 15:53-37; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 21:1-7; 22:1-5). Sacrificial living produces eternal treasure (Matthew 6:19-21; 1 Corinthians 15:58). Yet, the expectation of the believer is radically contrasted with the hopelessness of those who live within the darkness and horror of sin awaiting God's eternal condemnation and wrath. The continuing patience of God makes more urgent our obedience to the mandate of the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Peter 3:8,9).

Article Ten: Response and Eternal Destiny

We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen

Regarding The Uniqueness of The Gospel

Alienated from God mankind lives without hope, in despair, fearfully anticipating the unknown of death. The unique message of the gospel is that God offers to each of us life with Him established through the only means of our salvation which is the gracious unmerited all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8,9). Incumbent upon every human is obedience to God's command to personally respond to the gospel by repentance and faith that God may make the atoning work of Jesus individually efficacious (John 1:12; Acts 17:30; 20:20,21; 26:20; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Peter 3:9; Article Five).

Regarding Physical Death and Bodily Resurrection

Physical death occurs when the corruptible body of this world ceases to function. Scripture indicates that, at the moment of physical death, the believer is brought into the presence of God (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; Hebrews 12:23). The timing and means of this transition with regard to the time space universe are a mystery to us. However, the immediacy of the transition reveals that following death there is no "second chance" of salvation or a period of unconscious waiting for what will come next. Those who physically die do not become disembodied ghosts waiting to "move on" or angels waiting to move up in the angelic ranks. There is no possibility of reincarnation or mystically moving closer to some cosmic divine oneness (Hebrews 9:27). God will raise the dead and give to them an incorruptible physical body (Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) which though differing from our present bodies is similar in its form and so its recognition (John 20:19; 24-29; 21:12-14; Article Seven).

Regarding Judgment

There is an eternal consequence for each of us which is contingent upon our individual response

to God's gospel. Raised from physical death each person will stand before God as their judge (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36,37; John 5:28,29; Acts 17:31; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-13).

Regarding Eternal Punishment

The sobering consequence of God's judgment upon the unbeliever is consignment to eternal separation from God and conscious eternal punishment without any possibility of reprieve (Matthew 25:41; Luke 16:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:8,9). More to be feared than physical death is the second death from which there is no resurrection (Matthew 10:28; Revelation 20:14,15; 21:8). Physical death and Hades, as the abode of the deceased unbeliever, are ultimately thrown into the Lake of Fire, or Hell, a lake not made of water but of fire and of brimstone, a place of sulfuric gas, acrid steam and foul odor, of eternal burning and choking, of unending weeping and sorrow. There, along with Satan and his minions, the unrighteous eternally separated from God will be tormented forever (Revelation 14:11; 20:10; 21:8; Article Three; Article Ten).

Regarding The New Heaven and The New Earth

In contrast, the consequence of God's judgment upon the believer is consignment to eternal blessedness and joy in the presence of the Lord. The believer will live in the very presence of God in the newness of His recreation of heaven and earth. God's glory will shine so that there will be no darkness. God Himself will be the source of our life and healing. Sin and death will be no more. God Himself will wipe away our tears. There will be no more mourning, or crying, or pain (Isaiah 65:17; Matthew 25:34,46; John 5:25-29; 14:1-3; 2 Peter 3:7,10-13; Revelation 21:1-7; 22:1-5; Article Three).

Regarding God's Glory

The consequences of God's judgment speak to the awesomeness of His salvation offered freely to any who respond in repentance and faith. God's purpose of salvation testifies of Who He is and so reminds us that all of creation and history bring glory to Him. The eternal affirmation of those who will spend eternity with God is that He alone is worthy of all praise and glory (Ephesians 1:6,12,14). "*Amen.*" May it be so.