

Authority of Statement of Faith

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. 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. All literature used in the church shall be in complete agreement with the Statement of Faith.

The following comprise the Scriptural beliefs of this church and its attendees.

A. The Holy Scriptures.

We believe the 66 traditional, canonical books of the Old and New Testament in the Holy Bible to be the full and final revelation of God to mankind in written form. We believe God directly *inspired* the truths it contains by way of revelation to dedicated men who faithfully committed them to writing.

These verses define what we hereafter refer to as “inspired”. The term inspired as is used in I Tim. 3:16 in reference to the Holy Scriptures means “God breathed”. We use the passages below to precisely demonstrate what is the net result of His breath or inspiration, which is **life** as define by Christ Himself.

God breathed into the clay sculpture of Adam and he became a living soul [Gen. 2:7].

Jesus breathed on his disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit of God and they came alive spiritually and became sons of the Most High God [John 20:22].

Life as defined by Jesus is to know God, in a deep, relationally unifying way. To be intimate with Him [John 17:3].

We believe the Holy Scriptures to be completely inerrant, infallible and as so are the absolute and final authority for doctrine, faith and life.

The greatest portion of the Scriptures must be interpreted according to their normal grammatical-historical meaning. By this we mean that the Bible sometimes uses metaphors and presents truths from man’s perspective and in such cases must be interpreted in that way.

Two examples are:

1. Psalm 50:1 “*from the rising of the sun*” this is clearly written from man’s vantage point on earth and is not to be interpreted as though the Bible is making a scientific claim that the sun orbits the earth.
2. Psalm 17:8 “*Keep me as the apple of Your eye and under the shadow of Your wings.*” This is not to be interpreted as though God has pupils as we understand them, nor that if He does they are made of fruit, that God has wings or that He casts a shadow. – Psalm 139:11,12.

We also recognize that some of the statements recorded in the Bible were spoken by men and while it is true that man spoke those words, not everything that man spoke was true.

For example:

1. Job said, *"It profits a man nothing that he should serve the Lord."* Job 34:9.

God however, disagrees with Job's statement as is testified to in Malachi 3:13,14, *"Your words have been harsh against Me," Says the LORD, Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, And that we have walked as mourners Before the LORD of hosts'".*

2. Job said, *"...He destroys the blameless with the wicked."* – Yet God affirms the opposite in Gen. 18:25 and Prov. 17:26.

"Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" – Genesis 18:25

"Also, to punish the righteous is not good, Nor to strike princes for their uprightness." – Proverbs 17:26

Beyond these stipulations which should be obvious to most people anyway, we believe the Bible should be interpreted directly and obviously in a literal, grammatical-historical way.

We believe the Bible, though inspired is also veiled from comprehension outside of the immediate intervention of God's Holy Spirit.

We believe that the Bible, as inspired, contains the potential for life if the Holy Spirit who inspired them also reveals their meaning. This revelation is given to the non-believer in the revelation of God's Son Jesus Christ. It is given to the believer in FURTHER revelation of God's Son Jesus Christ. If one is not born again, they cannot hope to understand or correctly interpret God's words beyond a simple, superficial acknowledgement of the obvious and plain facts.

"Why don't you understand what I say? Because you cannot listen to My word. You are of your father the Devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of liars. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Who among you can convict Me of sin? If I tell the truth, why don't you believe Me? The one who is from God listens to God's words. This is why you don't listen, because you are not from God." ~ John 8:43-47

"But their minds were closed. For to this day, at the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remains; it is not lifted, because it is set aside only in Christ. However, to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts, but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the

Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. We all, with unveiled faces, are reflecting the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit."
~ 2 Cor 3:14-18

"But the natural, non-spiritual man does not accept or welcome or admit into his heart the gifts and teachings and revelations of the Spirit of God, for they are folly (meaningless nonsense) to him; and he is incapable of knowing them [of progressively recognizing, understanding, and becoming better acquainted with them] because they are spiritually discerned and estimated and appreciated." ~ I Cor. 2:14

We believe that God has given certain people grace by which they are better and more naturally equipped to clearly and accurately discern the meaning of the scriptures. We also believe that the meaning of scripture is **not** subject to any one person's private interpretation, irrespective to whether or not that person is called of God [1Peter 1:20] into any ministry capacity.

So it stands as such that we believe that each member of the body of Christ (See Christian below) has the inward witness of the Holy Spirit and is able to be correctly guided into the true understanding and interpretation of all scripture with or without the aid of any man with a special grace or calling [I John 2:27; John 16:13].

Finally, we believe that all issues of interpretation and meaning shall be determined by the scriptures themselves as is above demonstrated concerning the erroneous and ungodly statements of Job. Scripture will always interpret scripture with absolutely no exceptions whatsoever.

Translations – We do not adhere to any specific English translation(-s) due to the fact that many English translations are good, but none are altogether excellent. We therefore encourage the use of several translations together with exegetical aids in order to determine the literal, grammatical-historical meaning of those words within a given context.

Some of the translations we encourage the use of are:

- King James & New King James
- American Standard & New American Standard
- Wuest – The New Testament
- 1912 Weymouth Translation

Some of the study aids we use include:

- Strong's Concordance
- Thayer's Lexicon
- Vines Expository Dictionary
- Ungers Bible Dictionary
- Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary
- John Gill's Exposition
- Matthew Henry's Commentary

- The Complete Word Study Dictionaries for Old & New Testaments – (An in-depth, per verse word study revealing word derivations, history & etymology, idioms, nuances, an exegetical commentary along with synonyms and antonyms all linked to the Strong’s numbering system.)

Translations/Paraphrases which we never use as a basis for theology:

- All paraphrased “translations”
- The New International Version
- Common English Version
- The Amplified Bible
- The Message

B. Dispensationalism - We believe that the Scriptures interpreted in their natural, literal sense reveal divinely determined dispensations or rules of life which define man’s responsibilities in successive ages. These dispensations are not ways of salvation, but rather are divinely ordered stewardships by which God directs man according to His purpose.

The seven recognized dispensations are:

1. The Perfect Age – Pre-fall age of mankind – Gen. 1-3:24
2. Before the law (Age of Death) – Gen. 4:26; Rom. 5:12-21
3. The Law (Ministry of Death) – Ex. 24; Rom. 5:20; II Cor. 3:7-10
4. The Age of Grace and the Church – Gal. 3:23-25*
5. The Post-Rapture Age of Lawlessness – II Thess. 2
6. The Millennial Reign of Christ – Rev. 20*
7. The New Age – Rev. 21

*These we believe to be the dispensations of the kingdom of God interrupted only by a brief interval of 6 years during which lawlessness will abound (1 Cor. 9:17; 2 Cor. 3:9-18; Gal. 3:13-25; Eph. 1:10; 3:2-10; Col. 1:24-25, 27; Rev. 20:2-6)

As regarding Dispensational truths, we believe that with very few exceptions all of the Scriptures are applicable to all at all times. The exceptions are clearly outlined in scripture by the Apostles who were given the authority from Christ to declare doctrine lawful (bound) or unlawful (loosed) as per Jesus' words in Matt. 16:19.

Examples:

1. God, never tolerated idol worship from His covenant people the Jewish nation [Deut. 29:9-29]. In His goodness, however, He chose to overlook the same practice of the Gentiles worshiping man-made idols up until the time following the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. From that day forward the dispensation of overlooking this pagan practice among the Gentiles ended. See Acts 17:22-31 below,

22 Then Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious in every respect.

23 For as I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

- 24 *The God who made the world and everything in it--He is Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in shrines made by hands.*
- 25 *Neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives everyone life and breath and all things.*
- 26 *From one man He has made every nation of men to live all over the earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live,*
- 27 *so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.*
- 28 *For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'*
- 29 *Being God's offspring, then, we shouldn't think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image fashioned by human art and imagination.*
- 30 *"Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent,*
- 31 *because He has set a day on which He is going to judge the world in righteousness by the Man He has appointed. He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead."*

- 2. Prior to the resurrection of Christ there were Jewish observances which **symbolized** the person of Christ Who was to come. Once He came and completed His work, the necessity to observe these traditions became obsolete. See Colossians 2:9-17 below,

- 9 *For it is in Christ that the fullness of God's nature dwells embodied, and in Him you are made complete,*
- 10 *and He is the Lord of all princes and rulers.*
- 11 *In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision not performed by hand, when you threw off your sinful nature in true Christian circumcision;*
- 12 *having been buried with Him in your baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith produced within you by God who raised Him from among the dead.*
- 13 *And to you--dead as you once were in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your natural state--He has nevertheless given Life with Himself, having forgiven us all our transgressions.*
- 14 *The bond, with its requirements, which was in force against us and was hostile to us, He cancelled, and cleared it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross.*
- 15 *And the hostile princes and rulers He shook off from Himself, and boldly displayed them as His conquests, when by the Cross He triumphed over them.*
- 16 *Therefore suffer no one to sit in judgment on you as to eating or drinking or with regard to a festival, a new moon or a Sabbath.*
- 17 *These were a shadow of things that were soon to come, **but the substance is of Christ.***

- 3. Any observance or practice which offered any form of righteousness, justification or the Holy Spirit under the law has been superseded by faith in the finished work of Christ.

Gal 3:1-14

- 1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.
 - 2 Let me ask you only this: Did you **receive the Spirit** by works of the law or by hearing with faith?
 - 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?
 - 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain?
 - 5 Does he who supplies **the Spirit** to you and works miracles among you do so **by works of the law, or by hearing with faith--**
 - 6 just as Abraham "**believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness**"?
 - 7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.
 - 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God **would justify the Gentiles by** , preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."
 - 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.
 - 10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."
 - 11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "**The righteous shall live by faith.**"
 - 12 But **the law is not of faith**, rather "The one who does them shall live by them."
 - 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"--
 - 14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might **receive the promised Spirit through faith.**
4. Feasts and festivals which are clearly dramatizations of the coming Christ, the union we'd have with Him, the Exodus of Israel from Egypt (which symbolizes our exodus from the world in Christ) is not in any way required, but is encouraged from time to time in order to use these dramatizations to better conceptualize their meaning under the New Covenant.

C. Faith -

There are several words in scripture translated into the English word - faith. In our statement of faith we will address four of them.

The first one is the most relevant to this statement of faith. Whenever the scriptures use the phrase "the faith" it is in reference to the doctrine we are convinced is true. So here the word 'Faith' actually means - the doctrine we all agree upon and believe is true.

"And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily." - Acts 16:4-5

The second word faith is a confidence we develop on our own. This confidence can be in other people, in things, events or even scripture. When it is in reference to scripture however, it can be very dangerous. To convince yourself of the accuracy of scripture is to offer mental ascent that the logos (the expression of intelligence) of the scriptures are true, and while that is necessary - it is NOT the basis of the kind of faith by which we are called to live. So long as the convincing is intellectual, mental and scientific, it is still a product of man, and while that has its legitimate place - it is NOT true saving faith nor is it the kind of faith by which we overcome the world or live the Christian life. This is NOT to say that genuine faith cannot come from sight, for Thomas believed due to seeing and touching the risen Messiah, but it was at Christ's bidding, still making Him the Author and Developer of our Faith.

The third kind of faith is when God, through the Holy Spirit, convinces you of the certainty of something. This kind of faith is NOT purely intellectual but relational. Rom. 10:17 say it comes from revelation of the Spirit of God. Such revelation stands in stark contrast the to the second type of faith we just mentioned in that it is the result of God speaking directly to you (rhema) rather than you just reading the words of scriptures on your own.

An example of this in the ministry of Jesus was when Peter realized that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

"He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." ~ Matt. 16:15-17

This kind of faith is given by God, in fact Jesus is said to be the Author and the Developer of this kind of faith - Heb. 12:2. However this faith is a noun, it can do nothing without being placed into someone. Many people have been convinced of the truthfulness of the Gospel but failed to actively place their faith into Christ and these are not saved.

"Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HARDENED THEIR HEARTS, LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, LEST THEY SHOULD UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEARTS AND TURN, SO THAT I SHOULD HEAL THEM." These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him. Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;" ~ John 12:39-42

The fourth and final type of faith we are concerned with is active faith. This ALWAYS comes as a result of the above stated 3rd type of faith. The crucial difference is that this faith is a verb. It is not only received from Christ, it returns back to Him in the form of deep, relational trust born out of a revelation of Him.

The only other point which is important in relation to our statement of faith...concerning faith is that faith is always personal. It is NOT for a thing, it is IN a person. For the Christian than needs

a vehicle, the revelation the Holy Spirit offers them is not of a vehicle, but of Christ as provider. The responding (verb) faith is placed IN Christ AS provider of all that is needed and a vehicle in particular. It should be noted that as the Author and Developer of our faith HE alone can determine what we are believing for He alone controls what he reveals to us. Unless God says, "Trust me that I am providing you a Lamborghini" you have no leg to stand on to believe. If you attempt to you will be crossing over into the second form of faith we mentioned which has no Godly power behind it, but it may very well encourage your adversary to act for you in order to deceive you.

D. The Godhead - We believe in one triune God, existing from and throughout all of eternity in three individual persons most commonly revealed to mankind as – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though relative to our experience They each have separate functions we do not know absolutely that this speaks to Their uniqueness as compared among each other or if it is simply for our sakes and throughout the limited duration and scope of human history that They choose to reveal Themselves in this way.

Each person of the Godhead is co-eternal in being and co-complementary in nature. We believe that corporately Their power is limitless and Their authority over all things and realms is absolute.

For example: The Godhead cannot steal because there is nothing that exists of which They are not the author and owner – even down to the very consciousness of man. Therefore, there is no one who owns anything from whom they could steal.

We believe the tri-unity of God is addressed in scripture from the beginning in Genesis 1:26,

*"And God said, Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, after **Our** likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."*

The Person of the Godhead here speaking, was obviously addressing the other members of the Godhead, for only God has creative power. Also, scripture reveals no connection between the image of angels and that of man so to assume that "Us" and "Our" is in reference to God (as a single personality) and the angels is to make unfounded assumptions upon scripture. Finally, it was this same God Who breathed into the clay nostrils of man and made him a living soul. Man partook of God's very spirit in his creation - not the spirit of angels or any other heavenly being.

Even the Shema, indicates a plurality of entities within the Godhead by the use of the word '*echad*'

"Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One (echad)." ~ Deut. 6:4

This is the same word used for 'one' which is true for a husband and a wife. It means not singular in person, but unified in purpose.

"and the two shall become one (unified) flesh". ~ Gen. 2:24 & Matt. 19:5

It does not mean that the two people become one person, but that they become unified or mingled in purpose. The concept of the tri-unity of God as understood and believed by this church could be illustrated by a sports team. The word team is a singular noun representing a plurality of persons who all share a common goal. So it is with the singular noun - God, by very nature it represents a plurality of persons Who exist and work in perfect union as one unit.

All aspects of everything exists by and through Their power and for Their cooperate glory and pleasure.

We believe that out of all of their Divine perfections, Agape love is the very center or core of Their nature and is defined **not** by their expressions of love towards mankind, but from Their eternal co-deference and unbridled dedications towards each other in Their spending Themselves on One another from eternity past. It is from this position of dedication and faithfulness to each other, to fulfill the hearts desire of one another, that the creation and thus humanity was conceptualized and created.

We believe that the Godhead exists in perfect unity and perfect love for each other. We believe that all ventures of God whether the creation, redemption or our future eternity with Them are an expression of the admiration, devotion and glory each member of the Godhead shows to the other members. Deep honor and agape love for each other is the core motivation for all They have ever done and will ever do.

We believe the Godhead has created mankind bearing Their likeness and image in order to best glorify each other. We believe that Their honor of man is due to Their cooperate, deep respect for the image mankind bears. An idiom lifted from the words of Charles Caleb Colton which illustrate the truism of this is,

"Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery"

~ Charles Caleb Colton, (1780 - 1832) in Lacon, volume I, no. 183.

As such we believe the Godhead created mankind in Their cooperate image, not so much as flattery, but as the truest expression of honor and praise to each other - thus bringing honor, glory and pleasure to Them is the highest goal and purpose of all humanity.

We believe that God in Their infinite wisdom has created mankind with the intention of inviting them into the relationship and joy They experience among each other while at the same time existing in our very being **for Their** corporate pleasure. We believe that mankind's responsibilities of absolute honor and deference towards the Godhead is owed Them due to Their position as the Owners of what They Create as well as Their purpose as the Architects of all things including humanity. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; John 14:10, 26; 2 Cor. 13:14).

We also believe that demonstrating the honor and irreproachable majesty of Their character was part of the reasons mankind was created. We believe that humanity was in the heart of the Godhead from eternity past, but that They chose to create us when They did because of convenience relative to the fall of Lucifer. The Bible makes fleeting reference to the nature of the fall of Lucifer and that of 2/3rds of the angels of God. It also makes many references from which we can infer than mankind is a centerpiece of

angelic attention and busyness. We believe that a key to why these things are true is mentioned in passing in the letter to the Ephesian church,

- 8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;*
9 and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things;
10 to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God,
11 according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:
12 in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him. ~ Ephesians 3:8-12

This is significant because Paul is only said to have offered everything he knew about God's purposes to the Ephesian church,

"For I have not kept back from you anything of the purpose of God." ~ Act 20:27

We believe that our understanding of the Godhead is fragmentary at best and that those Divine perfections which have been so far revealed to us in no way gives us the authority or even enough understanding to be dogmatic about Their nature beyond some simple observations from scripture. We also openly confess and admit that it is entirely possible that what we know of Them now is only in reference to this creation and therefore some of these attributes may only exist in the here and now due to Their interactions with temporal humanity in their mortal and corporeal form.

God the Father

God the Father seems to be the One who desired the creation of the temporal universe and all that is in it - especially humanity itself. This is evidenced by the Father's primary role in creation as the One Who loved it from eternity past, arranged it as His pleased in His heart and spoke it into existence with His mouth - Heb. 11:3; Jer. 31:3; Rev. 4:11. (That Jesus is not that part of the Godhead Who is represented as "the One on the throne" see Rev. 7:10.)

God the Father seems to be the One Who planned out the salvation of man - Jn. 5:30; I Thess. 5:9; II Thess. 2:13;

It was for the fulfilling of the desire of God the Father's heart that salvation was even made available and knowing Him is in fact the primary purpose of salvation - Jn. 16:25-28.

The Person and Work of Christ & the Living Word

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is and has always been an eternal part of the Godhead. We believe He was referred to as 'The Word' prior to His incarnation and that He currently is known by that title and that during the future Millennial Reign of Christ, He will be called by that name (I John 5:7; John 1:1,2; Rev.19:13). We believe that as 'The Word', He was the One

member of the Godhead Who was actively involved in the act of creation (John 1:1-3) precisely and absolutely literally as stated in the book of Genesis. This in no way contradicts our formerly stated belief that the Father was the Creator. In fact all three members of the Godhead were directly involved in the process, but the following verse demonstrates the creative process between the Father and the Son.

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;" ~ Heb. 1:1-2

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." ~ John 1:1-4

We believe that the Jesus Christ of Galilee was 'The Word' physically incarnate as testified to by both biblical and natural historical accounts. We believe His incarnation to be literal (Heb. 10:5) and of literal virgin birth made possible by the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit and God the Father.

Luke 1:35 *"The angel replied to her: The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. **Therefore** the holy One to be born will be called the Son of God."* - Holman Christian Standard (Emphasis added)

We believe His earthly name of 'Jesus' was given to Him by God as a title representing His earthly mission, for Jesus means savior (Matt. 1:21). We believe that throughout the Old and New Testaments Jesus (The Word) has been referred to by many names and that these names as given by God are functional in nature. He is referred to as:

- Immanuel – Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23
- Wonderful – Isa. 9:6
- Counselor – Isa. 9:6
- Might God – Isa. 9:6
- Everlasting Father – Isa. 9:6
- Prince of Peace (King of Salem) – Isa. 9:6
- Son of Man – Daniel 7:13; Matt. 9:6; 26:64
- Holy One (particularly in reference to His earthly body) – Ps. 16:10; Mk. 1:24; Acts 3:14
- KING of Kings – I Tim. 6:15
- LORD or Lords – I Tim. 6:15
- Sovereign – I Tim. 6:15
- The Word - I John 5:7; John 1:1,2; Rev.19:13

- Jesus – Matt. 1:21
- Christ – Matt. 16:16; 26:63; Jn. 11:27; 20:31;
- Messiah – Daniel 9:25, 26; Jn. 1:41
- ...and many more

We believe that Jesus Christ was physically of Jewish descent. We believe that both Mary and Joseph had a lineage which could be traced directly to King David who was of the tribe of Judah. We believe that while Joseph was in fact Jesus' earthly parent he did not participate in the conception of Jesus. We believe that the birth of Jesus had to be without earthly father in order to make Him without sin which we believe to be transferred through the blood - Lev. 17:11,14. We believe that Jesus' blood had to be without sin or any defilement of any kind in order for its shedding to fully pay the purchase price of redemption for humanity and all of creation (Rom. 8:). We believe that Jesus Christ was subjected to every temptation which is common to mankind yet NEVER having swerved in His entire allegiance to God. Jesus NEVER sinned in any way whatsoever at any time whatsoever. We believe that His blood remained fully holy throughout His life in order to be a sacrifice without spot or wrinkle, and it is in this way that we believe in Penal Substitutionary Redemption. It was not due to God's "white hot" anger at mankind, but His unwavering fidelity to the nature the Godhead - which image humanity defiled, which made this supreme sacrifice necessary. For God to simply overlook the defilement would be to place mankind on a level of honor and importance above Those Whose image they bear, which in itself would be a lie.

We believe that Jesus Christ was physically male and that this was absolutely necessary from a redemptive (not a cultural) standpoint. We believe sin entered the world through the man (Rom. 5:12) – Adam (See mankind Below). It was through one man that sin entered the bloodline of the family of mankind. Due to this it was men - not women - who were circumcised into the covenant and that in this way symbolically man was cutting off the dead and external and by the shedding of blood in the organ which perpetuates the human family blood line and was therefore symbolic of a perpetual (and by extension) eternal covenant. Due to the nature of blood as described in Lev. 17, we believe it would therefore require the sinless, pure and holy blood of a male in order to redeem and sanctify mankind once again (Lev. 17:11) and once for all (Heb. 9:12).

"For the soul of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the soul." ~ Lev. 17:11

This has to do with man being the propagator of the bloodline and the fact that the basic family unit was placed under man. Woman was made FOR man and functions as his glory - I Cor. 11:9. Man was made for God and exists for His glory - I Cor. 11:7. Since sin is an issue between God and man - a male had to be sacrificed.

We believe that throughout Jesus' ministry He did not represent His Own agenda, His Own thoughts or purposes, but that He fully and completely submitted Himself to God as a human, though still in actual nature He was fully God. Phil. 2:5-8 DOES NOT say Jesus forsook and left behind His former God-like qualities to become human. In fact, it clearly acknowledges that while human He still had His Divine nature and all of its ensuing properties. The passage, if clearly translated, reads,

"Who in His true essence of being was fully God, esteemed equality with God a reality to not be tightly grasped, but instead MADE Himself of no reputation, taking on the additional nature of a bondservant, and being *born* as a human male, and thus obtaining the appearance of a man, He humbled Himself and BECAME obedient to the point of death, even the death of the Cross." ~ [Php. 2:6-8](#) (also see Jn. 8:28,29; 12:49,50).

These verses DO NOT imply that Jesus ever became less than fully God, but that in terms of the sum of His parts - He became more than God because He was now both God and man. These verses stress what Jesus took ON - not that He ever left anything behind.

We hold Jesus' personal statement of Himself as totally true, when He said,

"Whoever has seen Me, has seen the Father" – John 14:7-9

We believe that Jesus Christ literally and physically died on the cross at Gethsemane outside of Jerusalem even as the scriptures predicted and record. We believe that no man had the power to take His life, but that He offered it up freely by the aid of the Holy Spirit - Jn. 10:17,18; Heb. 7:27; 9:14.

We believe that Jesus took upon Himself (within His own body) the sins of the whole world throughout time - I Peter 2:24. We believe that in His sinless death He shed blood and water and that His shed blood provided 100% remission of all sins throughout time. We believe that He was buried as scripture claims, and remained dead for 3 days (which according to Jewish calendar of days and the dates upon which the feasts and festivals fell that year He did) and that on the 3rd day He literally, physically arose from the dead by the agency of the Father's personal Glory and the Holy Spirit - Rom. 6:4 & 8:11. We believe that He was glorified and received power and authority composite within His Holy Name – **Jesus** - Col. 2:10; Phil. 2:9-11.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the One and ONLY way to the Father. We believe that Jesus Christ has acted as High Priest, Intercessor and Advocate for all humanity ever since (Acts 1:9-10; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24; 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2) and that it is through absolute reliance upon His Person, His finished work of redemption on the cross and confession of Him as our Lord (not just savior) that salvation is received though it has been already purchased once for all and is continually offered to all mankind - Heb. 7:17-28; Rom. 9:9,10; Jn. 1:9; 2:2. We believe it is the will of the entire Godhead that ALL MANKIND are saved and come to

embrace the love of these truths - I Tim. 2:4.

We believe that Jesus Christ will in reality come again for those Who know Him and love with anticipation His return - II Tim. 4:1,8.

We believe that against Him the beast, the false prophet and the anti-christ will make war - Rev. 19:19.

We believe that following these events Jesus will bind satan for 1,000 literal years (Rev. 20:1-6) and that throughout this time Jesus will reign on the earth in bodily form. We believe that following His Millennial reign satan will be release for a short time and then the final end to this age will come - Rev. 20:7-15.

After these things the Lord Jesus Christ will forever be with those who have loved Him and known Him through reliance upon His finished work of redemption and He will make all things brand new - Rev. 21:5.

(Also see - Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-2, 14; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Gal. 4:4-5; Phil. 2:5-8)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice; and, that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead. (Acts 2:18-36; Rom. 3:24-25; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Peter 1:3-5)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of the Father where, as our High Priest, He continues to fulfill the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate as stated above - Acts 2:32,33; Heb. 10:12,13; I Jn. 2:1; Rom. 8:34.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit seems to be the facilitator of the Godhead. He seems to always be involved in a very "hands on" way with creation to aid in bringing to pass, BY HIS OWN POWER, the desire and intent of the Father God.

- **In Creation** - Gen. 1:2
- **Within those "called" in the Old Testament** - Neh. 9:30; Dan. 4:9
- **The One Who directly influences man** - Zech. 12:10;
- **The One Who indwells Christians** - Isa. 59:21
- **The One into which Christians may be baptized** - Matt. 3:11; Acts. 1:8; 10:44; 11:15; 19:6
- **He is the voice and inspiration of the gifts** - I Cor. 12
- **He is the imparter of spiritual prayer languages** - Rom. 8:26
- **He is our peace (meaning our agreement with God)** - John 14:26,27

- **He is the ONLY member of the Godhead against Whom one may blaspheme and be forgiven** - Matt. 12:21; Heb. 10:29

As the Agent of the Godhead who has been given to the church and is its current Comforter, Instructor and Guide we believe that it is in the person of the Holy Spirit that the feminine nature of God is most clearly seen.

- Reminds God's children of everything the Father has spoken through the Son - Jn. 14:26
- Does not speak of Himself or on His Own authority - Jn. 16:13
- Glorifies the Son even as the Son glorified the Father - Jn. 16:14-17
- Comforts us - Jn. 14:16,17
- Guides us - Jn. 16:13
- Instructs us as children - 1Cor. 2:9-14
- Is sensitive to our callousness (do not grieve) - Eph. 4:30
- He dotes upon us & jealously craves possession of us - James 4:5
- Is the only member of the Godhead to Whom blasphemy cannot and will not be tolerated or forgiven - Matt. 12:31,32

E. The Creation

We believe in a literal interpretation of Creation as represented in the Bible - That of *Creation Ex Nihilo* or more specifically *Raysheeth El Oheem Bara* (At the first God brought forth from nothing).

We believe creation occurred within the last 7,000 literal years. Thus, we believe the days of creation to be literal 24hr periods represented by actual and literal "evening and morning" cycles, just as a straight-forward reading of the account in Genesis would lead someone to believe.

We believe that the earth and universe in which it exists was created with a superficially imposed "age" in order to meet God's objective of making the earth a habitable environment for mankind.

*"For this is what the LORD says--God is the Creator of the heavens. He formed the earth and made it; He established it; He did not create it to be empty, **but formed it to be inhabited**--"I am the LORD, and there is no other."* ~ Isa. 45:18

To illustrate this - God created all the radioactive elements on earth in various forms of decay from Day 1. If all radioactive elements on earth were created in their initial stages of decay, the earth would not have been habitable both due to the intense heat these radioactive elements would have generated at the beginning of their decay and to a lesser extent, due to the higher levels of harmful radiation generated by radioactive elements in their initial stages of decay.

This superficial age would have held true for plant life as well. If God had created plants as just seeds in the ground, man and animal alike would have starved before the first harvest. No, God anticipating these arguments against Him as Creator of an earth as young as it is, addressed these concerns from the beginning of His book the Bible. The scripture is clear that from the first day there were full grown trees with fruit on the tree and seeds in the fruit. Without these basic considerations from the Creator, the earth would NOT have been what He planned - namely, habitable!

We **do not** believe that prior this initial act of *creation out of nothing* - there was anything as far as a natural universe. By this we mean - no matter, no energy, no material whether corporal or temporal in nature as we understand it as pertaining to this universe.

We **do not** believe in multiple universes or macro-evolution in any of its variegated forms.

While we **do** believe in variation and adaptation **within kinds**, we realize that these adaptations ALWAYS demonstrate a rearranging or deletion of genetic information and are NEVER the result of information being added to the genetic profile.

Furthermore, we **do not** believe that without artificial intervention and gene manipulation from man - there ever has been nor can there ever be, any natural occurrence of cross-species breeding, nor of any species becoming another by any naturally occurring processes.

We believe that every kind of creature were created as a fully developed species and that they were designed with the inherent ability to adapt within its own genetic programming to changes in environment over time. That the existence of dominant and recessive genes were in the genetic programming from the beginning and that no adaptation is the result of adding quantifiably NEW information into the existing genetic code of any and all species. Mutation and genetic recombination do not ADD information to the genetic code it only deletes or re-arranges existing information. Never has any such adaptation yielded a variety of species which was more adept to life in its given, native environment than that of the original. The reason we "over" state this point is due to a copious amount of misinformation and half-truths being circulated in the popular media a fact and we know better. Furthermore, the Bible puts forth God as the Originator, Creator and Source of everything INCLUDING information. Therefore, we hold that NO information can be added to the genetic profile on any creature by means of natural, unaided processes.

We believe that humanity was created in the image of God from the beginning and that intelligence, comprehension, genius, speech and skills (both general and refined) were available and in fact immediately operating in mankind from the moment they were created. If anything, human history has revealed a decrease in intelligence not an increase. A loss in genetic potential not a gain.

Concerning laws of nature and physics we believe them also to be *Creation Ex Nihilo* during the first six literal days of creation. We believe that the Bible itself and science have both demonstrated beyond all reasonable doubt that the physical laws of nature are "fine tuned" for life and human life in particular. We believe that the irony of the fact that the laws of physics which make life possible, also make discovery of the natural

universe and it's physical laws possible and that this is due to God's deliberate action and they speak to His intent.

Concerning the rest of creation outside of the earth itself, we believe it was created by God *Ex Nihilo* at the same time as everything else. We believe its purpose is primarily to reveal His glory and handiwork - Ps. 91:1. We know from both science and from Romans 1:20 that the universe in its entirety was designed for discovery by man and that in so doing we might come to know Him and seek after Him.

We have many scriptures to support these views as well as having many natural evidences to its veracity. For further information on these points please see Pastor Mark.

F. Mankind

We believe that humanity was called into existence out of God's Own desires - some of which He has chosen to reveal to mankind in the scriptures. Mankind first and foremost exist for the Glory and pleasure of God.

G. The Fall of Mankind -

- We believe in the Total Depravity of Man - meaning, we believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God; but that in Adam's sin the human race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became literally alienated from God - spirit, soul and body. Man is totally depraved and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition. (Gen. 1:26-27; Rom. 3:22-23; 5:12; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17-19)
- We believe that sin (rebellion towards God - specifically His character and nature) and thus death (separation from knowing God) entered the human race through Adam - even though Eve fell first.
- We believe that there is NO atonement (Old Covenant) nor eradication (New Covenant) of sin without the shedding of blood.
- Jesus Christ was...
 - 100% human & 100% God (Creator).
 - He was supernaturally conceived by the power of God through the Holy Spirit (not through carnal union). He inherited no sin nature from his mother for we believe the nature of sin resides in the "soul" of the flesh a.k.a. in the blood. The blood of a child originates from their father, thus the need for God to be His literal Father.
 - He was born without the inherent knowledge of God in that He had to learn as does any other man.
 - We believe He was born of a virgin.

- He lived a sinless life in complete surrender to and reliance upon His Father by the power and influence of the Holy Spirit within Him in life and upon Him in ministry.
- He had approximately a three year ministry in which He...
 - Taught with power and authority given by God.
 - Worked real miracles, including healing, water walking & raising the dead.
 - Shed His blood by scourging and crucifixion.
 - Died the death we deserved - was crushed for us in soul and body (Is. 53) was literally forsaken by the Father but not the Spirit (Matt. 27:46; Heb. 9:14)
 - Physically died for our sins and physically rose again for our justification. (Rm. 4:25)
 - His blood is on the seat of mercy before God our Father and proclaims pardon even today.
 - He stands as our Advocate before the Father.
 - The sins of the whole world have been paid for though the payment but is only applied to the sinner by their total reliance upon Him and His finished work.
- We enter into justification and life by forsaking self-effort birthed from pride and embrace whole heartedly our oneness with the Father through total reliance (faith) upon Him and Jesus' finished work.
- We believe in water baptism following conversion - though it is not the instrument by which we are cleansed of sin, it is the answer of a cleansed conscience before God. A deep and meaningful proof of union with Him in His death and resurrection. We do not believe it is necessary for salvation but an act which should, if possible, follow salvation with teaching on its meaning and significance.
- Those who continue in self-reliance will spend an eternity separated from the knowledge of God and totally alone in their guilt and shame which will devour them from within, in hell and the lake of fire.
- We have been commissioned as His ambassadors to continue His ministry of reconciliation - not by witnessing, but by being witnesses of and to His goodness, mercy and grace in bringing us to the Father.
- We live godly lives NOT by self-effort, but by total reliance upon the work of Christ as His lives His life in and through us by the influence (grace) of the Holy Spirit.
- Christians still commit sin and need forgiveness, but forgiveness of individual sins once coming to Christ do not separate us from Him - though it does hinder fellowship and co-enjoyment and joint-participation with Him and other believers.
- If we do not judge ourselves, God will, so that we will not be condemned with the world - I Cor. 11:31-32.
- The faithfulness of God to forgive sin should never be seen as a license to sin. Sin is a serious matter because it is a rebellious act tantamount to treason and must be addressed by the individual or in some cases by others in the body and if still

impenitent they must be brought before the entire assembly and removed from their fellowship with the agreement and participation of all.

H. Salvation -

We believe that salvation is that state to which God restores man into right relationship with Himself by means of the bodily shed blood sacrifice of the incarnate "Word of God" - the second person of the eternal Godhead - historically known as Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

We believe that this salvation is God's free gift to us, made available to us by revelation of His Spirit in the heart of the unbeliever - by grace (God's influence upon the heart). This salvation becomes a living reality for all those who will believe - that is fully, finally and perpetually put the totality of their reliance upon God's finished work through Christ Jesus.

We believe that all sins, except blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, are forgivable. (Matt. 12:31-32; John 1:12; Eph. 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:9)

Christians are those who have entered into eternal relationship with God by total reliance upon His finished work for, in and through them.

I. The Security and Assurance of Believers -

- We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power by faith. (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Rom. 8:1; 38-39; 1 Cor. 1:4-8; 1 Pet. 1:4-5).
- We believe that no external power, force or foe can remove them out of His hand - Jn. 10:29; Rom. 8:38-39.
- We believe that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh. (Rom. 13:13-14; Gal. 5:13; Titus 2:11-15).
- We DO believe that any believer may of their own volition stop believing in and relying upon Christ for salvation. This is done for various reasons and in various ways but all of them are rooted in sin of some sort.
 - Denying Him - 2Tim. 2:12; Titus 1:16
 - Love of this world - 2Tim. 4:10; 2Peter 2; Jude 5-16
 - Desire to return to the law - Gal. 5:4; Heb. 3:1-15
 - Bearing no fruit and continuing in unfruitfulness after having come to Christ - Jn. 15:1-6; Heb. 6:1-11; Heb. 12:12-29.
 - Through the deceptiveness of sin and the hardness of heart that it brings - 1Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5-7;
 - Open and willful defiance deliberately against Him out of animosity of heart - Heb. 10:23-31
 - Faith being uprooted or overthrown - 1Tim. 4:1; 2Tim. 2:18; 2Peter 2:22 w/ 1Jn. 5:4-5

J. The Church

We believe that the church is comprised entirely of Christians as defined above. The term church is a word which is used as one of many names in scripture to describe all who are in eternal relationship and union with God - a.k.a. - Christians. Other names and divisions thereof are... the local church, the body, the bride, the tabernacle, the sheepfold, the temple, the great city, the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, Zion...etc.

As for these bylaws, "The Church" refers to our local assembly of believers who worship together and have willingly entered into a community of like-minded believers by the direction of the Holy Spirit underneath the spiritual guidance, leadership and teaching of our elders/pastors. (Acts 20:28; 1Cor. 12:12-14; 2Cor. 11:2; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-27; 1Peter 5:1,2).

- We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures. (Acts 14:27; 20:17, 28-32; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11).
- We believe in the autonomy of the local church free of any external authority or control. (Acts 13:1-4; 15:19-31; 20:28; Rom. 16:1, 4; 1 Cor. 3:9, 16; 5:4-7, 13; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).
- We believe that local churches are established by Apostles or those doing an apostolic work.
- We believe that local churches are led by a plurality of male Elders who all share equal authority and responsibility over and concerning the church and its members. **(See Elders below)**
- We recognize water baptism and the Lord's Supper as the Scriptural ordinances of obedience for the church in this age. (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; 8:36-38; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).
- We believe in male leadership within the church, patterned after the home according to scripture.

K. Separation.

We believe that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord. God commands His people to separate from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices, and associations, and to refrain from all immodest and immoderate appearances, piercings, and bodily markings. (Lev. 19:28; Rom. 12:1-2; 14:13; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 6:14; 7:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11). This does not mean that pierced ears or even a tattoo are unscriptural, but that as a body of Christian we MUST walk in a way which represents Christ...not the world. If having a tattoo is generally "viewed" with a stigma in the community in which we live, then we encourage believers to not get tattoos. If they already have them, then we

encourage them to do what they can (within reason) to avoid showing it off or drawing attention to it. If Paul was willing to never again eat meat if it offended a brother, then we believe and teach that we should we show at least the same level of discretion in limiting our freedoms for the sake of love and the furtherance of the kingdom. However, unless such behavior become a true and genuine stumbling block or cause of unnecessary persecution from the world, we have no such "rule" in the church. - 1Cor. 11:16.

L. The Second Advent of Christ.

We believe in that blessed hope, the personal, imminent return of Christ, Who will rapture His church prior to the seven-year tribulation period. At the end of the Tribulation, Christ will personally and visibly return with His saints, to establish His earthly Messianic Kingdom which was promised to the nation of Israel. (Ps. 89:3-4; Dan. 2:31-45; Zech. 14:4-11; 1 Thess. 1:10;4:13-18; Titus 2:13; Rev. 3:10; 19:11-16; 20:1-6)

M. The Eternal State.

1. We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment. (Matt. 25:46; John 5:28, 29; 11:25-26; Rev. 20:5-6, 12-13).

2. We believe that the souls of the redeemed are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord, where in conscious bliss they await the first resurrection, when spirit, soul, and body are reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord. (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Rev. 20:4-6)

3. We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain, after death, in conscious punishment and torment until the second resurrection, when with soul and body reunited, they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment, and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment and torment. (Matt. 25:41-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-26; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Rev. 20:11-15)

N. The Person of Satan.

We believe that Satan is a person, in that he is a literal being. He used to be a covering cherub (Ezek. 28:16) but through questioning the goodness of God's heart, he fell out of trust with God and took it upon himself to attempt to become God's equal. As such he is the author of sin and the inciter of the Fall of Man. He is the open and declared enemy of God and man; and that he shall be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire. (Job 1:6-7; Isa. 14:12-17; Matt. 4:2-11; 25:41; Rev. 20:10)

O. Civil Government.

We believe that God has ordained and created all authority consisting of three basic institutions:

- (1) the home
- (2) the church

(3) the state.

Every person is subject to these authorities, but all (including the authorities themselves) are answerable to God and governed by His Word. God has given each institution specific Biblical responsibilities and balanced those responsibilities with the understanding that no institution has the right to infringe upon the other.

As an example of this, the church has no authority to dictate one's governing of their home, so long as that governing is not in clear violation to God's established Word.

The state has clear jurisdiction in many arenas of life, but cannot dictate biblical obedience. For example, the certain Jews were allowed to preside over the religious affairs of the Jewish population in Rome. When these Jews who carried Roman authority, told the apostles to no longer preach in Jesus' name, they proceeded to preach anyway. When confronted concerning their disobedience to the law, the apostles said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" - Acts 5:28,29.

We believe that the home, the church, and the state are equal and sovereign in their respective Biblically assigned spheres of responsibility under God. (Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 5:22-24; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 2:13-14)

P. Human Sexuality.

1. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, rape, multiple partners and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex.

2. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 19:5, 13; Gen. 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1: 26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4)

a) The only exception to this is done by way of permission not commandment. We believe it may be necessary to choose between one gender or another if a child is born a hermaphrodite. In such cases we believe that so long as it is necessary for the health and life of the child, such surgery is an acceptable solution.

3. We believe that the only Scriptural marriage is the joining of one naturally born man and one naturally born woman. (Gen. 2:24; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23)

3. We believe that sexual intercourse was God's design and gift to mankind and that its purpose is both for pro-creation, enjoyment and intimacy between a husband and wife who love each other and willingly participate.

4. We do not impose rules concerning what kind of sexual activity Christian marriage partners engage in so long as it is not abusive, dangerous or physically harmful. This being said we do not openly condone any "form" of sexual activity in a marriage other than sexual union in its most basic and obvious meaning. The reason we do not take a stance on various potential activities is because the Bible is silent on these points. The

only place where "other" forms of union are directly addressed and condemned is when they are engaged in outside of the covenant of marriage of a man and a woman.

5. We believe that withholding sexual intercourse for any reason except health, exhaustion or fasting (with consent of your mate) is sin for it is not walking in love.

6. We believe that it is also sin to be insensitive to the emotions and needs of a spouse and that demanding sexual intercourse is also sin for it also is not walking in love.

7. We believe that a healthy marriage should engage in sexual activity regularly both for intimacy, health and to ward off susceptibility to temptations outside of the marriage.

If there are extenuating circumstances in which any believer in our church has a question regarding any of the above please address an elder if you are a man and an elder's wife if you are a woman.

Q. Family Relationships

1. We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home, church and society. The husband is to be the leader of the home, and men are to be the leaders (pastors and deacons) of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination by the church. (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:4-5, 12)

2. 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.

3. Children are an heritage from the Lord. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values and leading them, through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline, including Scriptural corporal correction. (Gen. 1:26-28; Ex. 20:12; Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 127:3-5; Prov. 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; Mk. 10:6-12; 1 Cor. 7:1-16; Eph. 5:21-33; 6:1-4, Col. 3:18-21; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 3:1-7)

R. Separation, Divorce and Remarriage.

Separation is only allowed for females in scripture and it's conditions are clearly stated in the following verses.

"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife." ~ 1Cor. 7:10-11

This passage shows that it is God's desire that a Christian marriage remain intact. however, if a woman goes ahead and separates (not divorces) from her husband she is still married to him and is not to attempt to marry another regardless of what the laws of the state allow. her only recourse is to remain separated or rejoin her husband. To the husband it says, "do not put away your wife". This, at the time, was the male version of

separation. In that day men were the sole owners of property in a marriage, so if a man was to "separate from his wife" it would be by sending her away from HIS house. So in effect Paul says, men are NOT allowed to separate from their wives.

We believe this is a provision from God for His precious daughters. Historically women have had fewer rights and privileges both in the home and sanctioned by the law, so here God grants them a freedom which he desires that they do not use, but that they are allowed. Ultimately we believe the heart of this allowance was to protect the woman from danger or abuse, but we do not teach this because the passage does not even hint that this is a reason.

We believe that God disapproves of and forbids divorce in all but a two cases and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies.

Divorce is allowed if the believer is married to a non-believer who leaves them.

Divorce "may" be allowed for a believer married to another believer who is living in unrepentant adultery and that only if all biblical methods of reconciliation have been extinguished and rejected. however, we believe it to be in the best interest of both parties for the believer who is still living in fellowship with God to remain unmarried in prayerful hope of the eventual restoration of the spouse.

Divorce and remarriage is regarded as adultery in ALL other cases and it should be understood that they remain in a state of continual adultery until they remove themselves from relations with the extra-marital person.

Although divorced and remarried persons or divorced persons may hold positions of service in the church and be greatly used of God for Christian service, they may not be considered for the offices of pastor or deacon. (Mal. 2:14-17; Matt. 19:3-12; Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6)

S. Abortion.

We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. Abortion is murder. We reject any teaching that abortions of pregnancies due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control are acceptable. The laws of the land have nearly always provided for the protection of the mother in cases where the outcome required one or the other to die. We do not press this issue, even though there is much precedence for not doing so throughout the Bible (Job 3:16; Ps. 51:5; 139:14-16; Isa. 44:24; 49:1, 5; Jer. 1:5; 20:15-18; Luke 1:44).

T. Euthanasia.

We believe that the direct taking of an innocent human life is a moral evil, regardless of the intention. Life is a gift of God and must be respected from conception until natural death. Thus we believe that an act or omission which, of itself or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder contrary to the will of God. Discontinuing medical procedures that are extraordinary or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be a legitimate refusal of over-zealous treatment, these are man-

made contrivances and are therefore a method of attempting to control or at least delay the inevitable. (Ex. 20:13, 23:7; Matt. 5:21; Acts 17:28)

U. Love.

We believe that we should demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow believers, but also toward both 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, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the taking of revenge, or the threat or the 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. (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:44-48; Luke 6:31; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:9-10; 17-21; 13:8-10; Phil. 2:2-4; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Titus 3:2; 1 John 3:17-18)

V. Lawsuits Between Believers.

We believe that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander. If the one who caused the damages does not have insurance the scriptures are clear that we should rather allow ourselves to suffer the loss than to pursue legal action (1 Cor. 6:1-8; Eph. 4:31-32).

In virtually every case, when a Christian seeks their "rights" whether civil or moral, they loose innocents. Taking matters to court require that you hold onto an offense and not let it go until legal action is adjudicated by the men of this world. Paul considers this an utter failure on the part of the church and he does so not to condemn the wounded, mistreated or abused, but to protect them. Giving into a "need for justice" is harmful, unloving, does NOT produce repentance or reconciliation and ultimately creates additional harm to all parties involved. Love requires that we let the issue go and accept the wrong.

W. Missions.

We believe that God has given the church a great commission to proclaim the Gospel to all nations. As ambassadors of Christ, we must use all available means to evangelize where God has planted us. We should also seek God for opportunities to go to the foreign nations and support in prayer, teaching and finances those who go. (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20)

X. Giving.

We believe that every Christian, as a steward of that portion of God's wealth entrusted to him, is obligated to financially support his local church. We believe that God established the tithe as a basis for giving, under the Old Covenant but that Paul never rescinded that

decree but in fact made direct connections with it in his writings about the local support of those who minister the Word to the saints - 1 Cor. 9:13,14.

There is a great difference between tithe, offerings, alms and collections. 2 Cor. 9 is often misused to teach against the tithe in preference of giving whatever makes you happy, but such is NOT what Paul was addressing in that chapter. Paul was in fact making a special collection for the Jewish community who were suffering a famine and so it has absolutely nothing to do with local giving.

We also teach that every Christian should also give other offerings to the church for the relief of those in need, and the spread of the Gospel.

We believe that a Christian relinquishes all rights to direct the use or placement of any money given once it is given to the church. (Gen. 14:20; Prov. 3:9-10; Acts 4:34-37; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 John 3:17)

PURPOSE OF ORDINATION

The process of "regular ordination" is a man made process and is therefore not a doctrinally required or supported idea of Living Grace Fellowship Corp. This section in the byLaws regarding "Regular Ordination" strictly serves the purpose of meeting local, state and federal requirement as pertaining to minister's recognized "right" to perform certain ceremonies, for which various laws require a minister to be "ordained".

We do not believe that the scriptures require any formal ceremonies whatsoever - not even in religious worship. In keeping with this, all marriage ceremonies are for the comfort and enjoyment of the couple and those close to them. All funerals are for the comfort and closure of those who were close. In neither case however, is a ceremony prescribed, described or in ANY WAY required by scripture.

Concerning Marriage:

- Marriage is seen as something two people commit to for life in the presence of God and that ONLY between two believers of opposite gender.
- God alone joins them together - no man or state or government has this power - it belongs to Him alone.
- In keeping with this only God could separate.

Knowing this, we do not believe doctrinally that a marriage ceremony is even necessary and in some cases is probably detrimental.

We do NOT believe that a minister of the Gospel needs to even be present much less officiate over the ceremony.

Nevertheless, in keeping with Federal, state and local laws we hereby recognize that any person ordained by our church has been vested by this church with the right to "marry" as recognized by the law.

Concerning Funerals:

We do not believe the scriptures to say anything by way of command concerning funerals, other than what Jesus said, "Let the dead bury the dead".

- Physical death is not the end and is therefore entirely a corporeal matter.
- There is no method commanded for disposal of the body.
- There is no required ceremony of grieving or celebration.
- Any ceremony DOES NOT need to be performed by a minister of the Gospel "ordained" or otherwise. In fact, in our opinion it would likely be better for a friend or family member to preside.

Nevertheless, if in the view of the family and friends of the deceased there is a desire for a minister to officiate over some form of ceremony we have no objection and so vest all those who are ordained by our church with the right to "bury" as recognized by the law.

ORDINATION QUALIFICATIONS

Source of Calling:

We believe that God is the author and delegator of all authority - spiritual or otherwise. As such, all authority is designated by Him and exists for His glory alone - Colossians 1:16. Only God can actually transfer or delegate authority for it is His alone to give.

The only people we will currently consider for ordination are those who are called **as gifts** in the body of Christ. The difference between those called as gifts and those who have gifts is briefly outlined in the following passages:

- I Cor. 12:4-6
 - Verse 4 mentions that everyone in the Body of Christ have received a gift given by the Holy Spirit and are identified by name in verses 7-11.
 - Verse 5 explains that everyone in Christ's body has a place in the body - "ministry" and that these ministries are given by Jesus Christ the Lord of the body. These are described in metaphorical terms in verses 12-27.
 - The basic words for ministry were general terms all derived from the same root word in the New Testament and was as generally applied then as it is today. It was used for the following:
 - Deacons - Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:8,12
 - The ministry of all believers - Acts 6:4; II Cor. 5:18
 - An individual's specific "sphere" of spiritual authority and responsibility given to Apostles, prophets, teachers...etc.- Acts 20:24; 21:19; Rm. 11:13; Col. 4:17; II Tim. 4:5

- Verse 6 describes those who **are gifts** given to the Body of Christ by the Father and are described in verses 28-29.
- I Cor. 12:29-30 reveal those who have a gift as opposed to those who **are** gifts. This designation is made clear by the words...
 - **Are all**...Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists...etc.
 - Do **all have**...gifts of healings, tongues...etc.
- Anywhere the word "gifts" is used in reference to everyone having one, it is an expression of the gifts given by the Holy Spirit. [See Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 12:7-11; I Peter 4:10-11.]
- Anywhere the word gift if used in reference to special people given to the Body of Christ for it's maturity and growth, these concern those who are appointed by the Father **as gifts** to the body. [See I Cor. 12:29, 30; Eph. 4:11-16]
- The concept of people being given as gifts is not unprecedented in scripture - See Numbers 3:9 & 8:19.

So it is that any member of this church or its peripheral ministries who gives evidence of a genuine call of God as a gift to His body for the work of the ministry and possesses the qualifications for that particular calling as outline below may be considered for ordination as a minister of the Gospel by this church.

MEANS OF RECOGNIZING THOSE WHO CAN BE "ORDAINED"

Living Grace Fellowship Corp recognizes that the Bible mentions several callings which are appointed by God (people given as gifts) for the work of the ministry. At present we are only interested in officially recognizing those which are necessary for compliance with the law. As such, Living Grace Fellowship Corp recognizes the appointing of Elders (Pastors), Prophets, Deacons & Teachers. These individual New Testament "callings" are outlined below, showing their Biblical definitions as well as the requirements of each, as we currently understand them. These definitions and requirements therefore will serve as the definitions and requirements which need to be met by any individual in order for Living Grace Fellowship Corp to consider them for conveying the status of "Regular Ordination".

Elders (Pastors):

(NOTE: If it after an elder has been appointed in our church, it become apparent that he did not previously have and does not currently maintain any and all of the REQUIREMENTS to hold this office as listed below, it WILL be grounds from immediate suspension of his office and duties for whatever time is deemed necessary by the elders if not indefinitely. This will immediately affect any compensation currently enjoyed by the elder though the other elders my consider offering a temporary gift to help sustain him until he is otherwise employed.)

- Elders are known by several New Testament names:
 - Presbytery – I Tim. 4:14
 - Bishops – Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:7; I Peter 2:25
 - Overseer - Titus 1:6,7; Acts 20:28

- Shepherd - I Peter 2:25
- Pastor - Eph. 4:11
- It is a position directly appointed by God (Holy Spirit) though it is recognized by and those called are formally "appointed" to their position by a local body of believers.

*"From Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus and **called for the elders** of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner ... Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which **the Holy Spirit has made you overseers**, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." - **Act 20:28***

*"If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, **do you appoint** those who are least esteemed by the church **to judge**?" - **I Cor. 6:4***

*"For this reason I left you in Crete, that **you should** set in order the things that are lacking, and **appoint elders** in every city as I commanded you" - **Titus 1:5***

- Four of the primary purposes and functions of Elders are to...
 - **Shepherd** - This word "Shepherd" essentially means to - *feed, tend, lead and rule the flock.* - **Acts 20:28**
 - **Judge** - To judge the brethren. This does not carry with it any degree of natural judicial power as would a Judge presiding over a natural civil court, but only in things pertaining to the scriptural instruction and disciplining of those within the flock of their care. - **I Cor. 6:4**
 - **Be examples** to the flock - I Peter. 5:3
 - **Teach** - To **teach doctrine** in accordance with the Holy Bible. **I Tim. 5:17.**
 - We believe that ALL elders are required to teach. The idea of non-teaching elders comes from a misunderstanding of I Tim. 5:17.

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine." - I Tim. 5:17

We believe the key word in this verse is "labor". This word means to toil hard or painstakingly. So the verse does not mean that there are elders who teach and those who do not - it only recognizes the need to honor with greater pay, those whose labor in the Word of God is more thorough and occupies more of their time.

- They must **HAVE** (not working on) the following characteristics according to I Tim 2:11-14; 3:2-7; I Cor. 11:3-11; 14:33-38 and Titus 1:6-9.
 - They must be male.
 - Unable to have a defaming accusation stick in regards to their general character.
 - Monogamous and devoted to his wife (if married).
 - We do not believe marriage to be a pre-requisite, because even Paul, Timothy and as far as we know Titus were not married men, yet they were

leaders of equal authority who had authority to appoint (by the leading of the Holy Spirit) men to this very office.

- Even tempered. Not able to be easily aroused to anger nor succumb to irrational or uncontrollable emotional outbursts.
- Moderate in opinions and passions.
- Propriety of person and demeanor. It is a propriety of inner life, uttering and expressing itself outwardly. A life lived with the intent of placing no cause of stumbling before others.
- Kind to and a friend of strangers.
- Able to teach (not necessarily gifted, but able).
- Not addicted to wine *or by extension* to any consumable.
- A non-violent person. Figuratively this word can mean one who by reproachful and upbraiding language wounds the conscience of his brethren, a contentious person, a quarreler.
- Not greedy for money *or by extension* any other temporal gain.
- Gentle, patient and moderate in behavior.
- Not disposed to fight, not contentious or quarrelsome.
- One who maintains and presides well over his own household.
 - The word "rule" is *proistēmi*, and means "to superintend, to preside over." This means to oversee, manage and stand before them in all things and in all ways.
 - This passage is clearly stating the responsibility of ALL men, but what is absolutely REQUIRED behavior in an elder.
 - It is also clear from this passage that an elder cannot be presided over by this household. He must lead in such a way as to evoke from his household a reverence and respect and deference to his will and rule.
 - He cannot be treated dismissively by anyone in his household and by his wife and children in particular.
 - He must not be the puppet, of anyone in his household.
 - His teaching should NEVER reflect the views of his wife or children, in that they must never lead the church from the sidelines.
 - He must NEVER allow his wife or children to influence how or if he commands his office of elder or any of the functions, administrations, duties, responsibilities, relationships or any other part of his called office.
 - This point is of such import that it may be grounds for immediate removal from his position by the other elders until further notice if not indefinitely.
 - The word "own" is *idios*, "the bishop's own, private, peculiar household, as contrasted to the household of God.
 - The word "house" is masculine, *oikos*, "household." By which is meant not the physical structure but the internal community within his domicile. The elder is to superintend and preside over his wife, children and even servants if they have them.

- The word "subjection" is *hupotagē*, "obedience, subjection."
- The words, "with all gravity," are to be construed with the bishops having their children in obedience.
 - Expositors quotes Dean Bernard's comment to the effect that this is hardly a grace of childhood. The former authority translates, "with the strictest regard to propriety."
 - Thayer defines the word as "that characteristic of a person or thing which entitles to reverence or respect, dignity, gravity, majesty, sanctity."
 - Children of elders MUST therefore be examples even as are their fathers. This is the father's responsibility.
 - Elder's children should be well mannered, quick to obey, respectful of all authority, not given to outbursts of passion but conducting themselves with all decorum, with known social considerations in check and with all propriety.
 - In short, the children of elders should not give people pause as to the authority he has in his home.
- The word "well" is *kalōs*, "beautifully, finely, excellently, well."
- The word "church" is *ekklēsia*, "a called-out body of individuals who assemble in a certain place"; in the Christian sense, the Mystical Body of Christ, composed of believing sinners called into salvation. The word is also used of a local church or assembly.
- If the wife or children of an elder are given to disruptive behaviors, unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment, petty bickering, back-biting, gossip, divulging of private or sensitive information concerning the church or any of the congregation or any other repetitive or ongoing sins, that elder will be required to step down until such situations are resolved in a way that can be **clearly** demonstrated **before all parties** involved that said conflict or sin has been put behind them. If the elder in question will not willingly step down with dignity, he will be summarily removed from that office with little prospect of return. Also, contingent on the circumstances, he may be required to leave the church entirely. It will be determined by the other elders on a per situation basis as to whether the particulars of why this stepping down is necessary needs to be formally announce to the whole congregation, to a private effected group within the congregation or at all. That having been said, the other elders MUST be sensitive to the Holy Spirit to not overwhelm the sheep UNNECESSARILY nor give forth unnecessary details concerning the transgression(-s) especially those details which may be defamatory.
- The ensuing translation is..."*Presiding over his own household in a beautiful manner, holding children within the sphere of obedience, doing so with the strictest regard to propriety. Indeed, if a person does not know how to preside over his own household, how is it possible that he take care of God's assembly?*"

- One who, if he has children, teaches, trains and expects them to live in willing and honorable submission to parental and (*by extension*) all authority. To hold their parents in reverence, dignity, majesty, sanctity and respect. (See above)
- Must not be a new convert or young in the faith. **He must be a proven and established Christian with real and verifiable history as testimony.**
- He must have a good reputation in the world. This is subjective, but at very least it means an elder cannot have a bad reputation in the world. It means to have an excellent character, both genuine and approved by those who would otherwise attempt to find fault.
- Loving and practicing what is good (Titus 1:8). It combines not only the liking to be kind but also the actual doing of good.
- Equitable in character.
- Holy, righteous, unpolluted with wickedness, right as conformed to God and His laws. Loyal. Piousness without pretentiousness.
- One who knows, adheres and is true to the Holy Word of God and is able to exhort and convince disputers by means of skill and accuracy in the scriptures.

Prophet – The “office” of a prophet is not administrative in that it does not carry with it inherent ecclesiastical authority. It DOES, however, carry authority in that it is the “office” used to directly speak God’s inspired utterances via the Holy Spirit to the church. This DOES NOT always have to do with foretelling future events, but is more commonly expressed by inspired extemporaneous preaching and teaching.

Prophecy is to speak to edification, exhortation & comfort. – I Cor. 14:13 & Acts 5:31-33

- The earth has always had prophets - Luke 1:70-72
- The characteristics & signs of a Prophet are:
 - A) Reveal Jesus & bring men to Jesus - Luke 1:76-79
 - B) God reveals Himself to them.
 - In Num 12:6-8 NKJV
“Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. (7) Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. (8) I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?"
 - It appears by this statement that **THE** prerequisite of being a Prophet is God making Himself known to them.
 - If taken very literally then the revealing of Himself will be by way of a vision and furthermore God will speak to him in a dream.

- That the method of revelation is not set in stones seems evident though, in that God dealt with Moses differently. Regardless of the method God uses - His revealing Himself to them and speaking to them seems to be the pivotal issue and pre-qualifier.

Examples:

Moses – Burning bush (His holiness & His Name revealed) Ex. 3
 In cleft of the rock (God’s Goodness revealed) Ex. 33:8-23

- It should also be noted that God revealing something to a person in a vision or dream is altogether different (and less) than Him revealing HIMSELF to them. The word “known” in verse 6 is יָדָע yāda’ and means to know relationally. It is a synonym for the Greek word ginnskō which God uses for those He “knows” (i.e. His children or sheep – 2Tim. 2:19 & Jn. 10:14). It is the same word used for Adam knowing his wife – Gen 4:1 and is therefore a very intimate and vulnerable knowing.

One way or the other prophets “know” Him. It was to a prophet (namely Moses) that God first revealed His true name – אֲנִי הָיָאֵה hāyāh: “I AM” – Ex. 3:14.

C) Miracles CAN be an indicator (with exception of in their own country – See Point "D") but this seems more indicative of an O.T. Prophet than a N.T. Prophet:

- Luke 7:14-28
- John 6:14

D) Prophets are not received by their own:

- Matt. 13:57
- Mk. 6:2-6,7
- Luke 4:23-27
- Luke 11:45-52 (Lawgivers – “fence laws”)
- Mark 6:2-6
- Acts 7:51-54
- Matt. 23:29-37

E) Discernment, Insight & Revelation (including inspired words & teaching)
 - accompanied by searching & diligent study:

- 1 Cor. 13:2
- Luke 7:39 (discernment & Insight)
- John 4:16-19
- Acts 13:1-3
- Eph. 2:18-22
- Eph. 3:1-5
- Heb. 1:1

- Jas. 5:10
- 2 Pet. 1:19-21 – Direct inspiration – revelation
- 1 Pet. 1:10-12
- Rev. 10:7
- 2 Chron. 20:20
- Rev 22:6

F) Warnings & foresight:

- Luke 24:44-45 (Listed many times but verse is comprehensive)
- Acts 3:18-24
- Acts 11:27-30 & 21:10-14 - Agabus

G) Spirit and Authority of Prophecy:

- 1 Cor. 14:32

H) Prophecy (whether from a prophet or just the gift of)

- 1Tim. 4:14
- Rev. 19:10 WNT

I) Women as prophetesses:

- Luke 2:36-38 WNT

Teachers - Beyond having an obvious gifting, the only known requirements are ones which the Lord expects of all His ministers. - II Tim. 2:21-26

- If they are teaching both genders they must be men.
- If they are teaching women and/or children, they may be women or men.
 - We believe that a woman's group would be best lead by a woman, though entertaining male teachers from time to time would be appropriate so long as there are at least 3 women present.
 - We believe that the instruction of children is a God given gift to women, though men may receive such a gift and in such cases (if confirmed) may be utilized, but in normal situations, women are much preferred in this role.
- They must have a gift which enables them to create understanding in the heart. Rom. 12:7.
 - The word **διδάσκω** *didaskō*, has inherent in it, the calculation **to influence the understanding of the person who is taught**. This therefore serves as a benchmark for ascertaining if one has been given as a Teacher or even if they have the gift of teaching.
 - The counterparts to this word are **ἀκούω** *akoúō*, meaning to hear for the purpose of understanding & **μανθάνω** *manthánō*, meaning to learn, from which **μαθητής** *mathētēs*, meaning learner, pupil, disciple is derived. The one "teaches" *didaskei*, and the other **μαθητεύω** *mathēteúō*, learns or assimilates as part of himself (Mt. 4:23; 9:35; 11:1; 24:14; Lk. 20:1; Acts 5:42; 15:35).
- They must live what they teach - II Tim. 2:6
- They must hold true to the doctrine received of the Apostles.

- Run from youthful passions - do not entertain them at all.
- Pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with other Christians of a pure heart.
- They must not quarrel or debate over silly questions, genealogies or non-essential doctrines.
- Gentle and sincere.
- Able to correct with humility those who contradict sound doctrine.

METHOD OF ORDINATION

At Living Grace Fellowship Corp, since we see no established criteria for recognizing (or ordaining) anyone in scripture, we will utilize the only known biblical example of commissioning people into full time service of the Gospel as gifts to the body as our guide.

"Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away." - Acts 13:1-3

As such we believe the following:

- The word "separate" here is the Greek word ἀφορίζω *aphorizō* which simply means to separate by boundary - to appoint. We will use the term "appoint" from here on out in place of the word "separate".
- Those appointing God's chosen into His service must first themselves be called into service as gifts to the body. (See the difference between having a gift and being a gift in I Cor. 12:29-31 as mentioned above).
- "Ministering to the Lord" is a phrase which makes a deliberate reference back to the priestly service in the temple under the old covenant. So in this case it would mean that those who appoint others into God's service as gifts in the body must be those who are busy, doing the work to which they were called and appointed as gifts. They must be actively ministering to God's people within the capacity of their individual callings and appointments.
- While the teachers and prophets here were said to be fasting, we do not believe it does so by way of command. Nevertheless, in times when it may be done so, a fast of undefined duration will likely, in most cases, be done in seeking the Lord concerning these matters.
- It should be noted that the Prophets and Teachers here were not seeking the Lord concerning the calling of Paul and Barnabas. Instead, the Holy Spirit spoke to them AS they were ministering to the Lord by means of service and fasting.
- As the Lord directs we will separate unto the ministry those He chooses.
- Once God has spoken, we will fast and pray for and with them prior to "appointing them into the ministry".
- Appointing into the work will be signified by the laying on of hands of those who are locally called as gifts in the body. Their being sent out into the work in which God will

direct them will be performed in the presence of the whole local body of believers **if possible**.

- We will offer them letters of commendation (Certificates of Ordination) not entirely dissimilar in purpose to those mentioned by Paul and Barnabas. - Acts 15:23; I Cor. 16:3; II Cor. 3:1.

Summary Statements:

1. As stated above, Living Grace Fellowship Corp intends to only ordain those whom the Lord directs us to ordain (appoint) to being gifts in the body for it's development and growth.
2. Within this group are two groups for consideration:
 - Those whom the Lord directly instructs us.
 - Those who seek us out, believing they are so called of God.
3. Even if we sense the call of God upon a life, **we will not appoint anyone** into the ministry who do not meet the God given definitions and requirements for that appointment as listed above.
4. Once the above criteria are met, we will pray for and in many cases fast with and over those to be appointed prior to sending them out.
5. They will be sent out, whenever possible, in the presence of all local congregational believers, by the laying on of the hands of the elders and other gifts in the local body.

TO ADD - the ordination counsel reserves the right to require ...etc. proofs of calling, history, medical & legal history, finger printed...etc.

The gifts... (not finished yet)

- We believe there are those who are given as a gift to the body and are placed in the body to energize it (a wording based upon the meaning of the word *enérġēma* in 1Cor. 12:6) and equip them for the work of ministry Eph. 4:11-13. This is also understood from the difference in terms in I Cor. 12:29,30 - "Are all" vs. "do all have".
- We believe that everyone within the body has a grace gift from God which they are to minister to each other as the Spirit wills. Though this probably sounds very Charismatic we do not push nor unduly focus on the expression of the gifts, but neither would we ever deliberately hinder or forbid their expression. (Rom. 12; I Cor. 14:39) We also, judge every expression of a gift by the written Word of God.
- We do not believe that any of the gifts give the right for a woman to teach doctrine to the body as a whole and specifically not to the men. A gift given by God will never lead a person to violate scriptural mandates.