

The Elders' Statement of Faith

This statement of faith is intentionally more specific and restrictive than the statement of faith required for membership. All Elders and Deacons adhere to this statement of faith without reservation. Furthermore, it guides which ministries and activities The Gathering will host or endorse.

The Bible: We believe that the sixty-six books Old and New Testament to be the inspired Word of God, having authority over all matters of faith and conduct, inerrant in the original copies and reliably preserved throughout the ages by God's sovereign power. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 119:105; John 16:12-13; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

The Trinity: We believe there is only one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, equal in power and glory, yet distinct in function. (Isaiah 44:8-2; Corinthians 13:14; Mark 1:9-12; Matthew 28:19; Deuteronomy 6:4)

God the Father is the sovereign creator of all things, transcendent and personal. He is all-knowing, all-present, and all-powerful, perfect in love, justice, and holiness. (Genesis 1:1, 21:33; Luke 1:37; Psalm 139; 1 John 4:16; Leviticus 11:44; 1 Corinthians 8:6)

Jesus Christ is God the Son and has always existed with God the Father. He was co-creator of all things and holds the cosmos together. Jesus was the Messiah (Christ) foretold by the Old Testament prophets. He became a man, born of the virgin Mary, yet never ceased to be fully God. He lived among us, performing many miracles and enduring all the temptations we face, yet without sin. In fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, he died in payment for our sins and was resurrected three days later. He ascended to the right hand of the Father where he remains as our intercessor and advocate. (Matthew 16:16; John 1:1-3, 14; Colossians 1:16-17; Matthew 1:23; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Corinthians 15:2-9; Acts 1:9; 2:33; 1 Timothy 2:5-6)

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, not an impersonal force. He convicts the world of sin and righteousness and baptizes all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling and guiding us in the ways of God. He replenishes and empowers us for growth, good works, and the service of God. (John 16:8-11; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Romans 8:9-16)

The Sinful Nature of Humanity: We believe that God created men and women in his image, for his purpose and good pleasure, that we might "glorify God and enjoy him forever." Through Adam's sin, humanity inherited a sinful nature and now, both by our sinful nature and individual rebellious choices, we are alienated from God. (Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 16:5-11, 139:16; Romans 3:22-23, 5:12, 11:36; Ephesians 2:1-3, 12).

Salvation: We believe that God freely offers mankind salvation from sin's penalty and destruction because of his unconditional love, granting eternal life and restoring the

Christian's intimacy with him. Christ died as a willing, atoning sacrifice to satisfy the penalty of sin and he rose from the grave to confirm his victory over sin. Through his sacrifice, we are forgiven of our sins, justified (given right-standing before God and bestowed with the righteousness of Christ), and adopted into God's family. This salvation is given by God's grace, not our good works. All that is required of us is that we believe and truly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord – and that he is our Lord – and repent of our sins, turning from them to God, out of a sincere conviction and Godly sorrow. (Romans 5:8; John 3:16; Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 15:3-6, 16-20; Romans 5:1-2, 8:15; Ephesians 2:1-10; Acts 2:38, 16:30-31; 2 Corinthians 7:10)

God's Sovereignty and Human Free Will in Salvation: *We believe* that God is completely sovereign over creation and history, yet he has sovereignty given us the ability to choose or reject him. The mystery of how these two realities coexist is beyond our comprehension, yet Scripture clearly teaches both. We intentionally avoid a strictly Calvinistic or Arminianist position, but allow the Elders to maintain a variety of perspectives.

Sanctification and Godly Living: *We believe* that, as believers, all our sins are forgiven when we are saved, yet sanctification is a life-long and daily process whereby we grow in faith and Godliness as a cooperative work with the Holy Spirit. Good works do not bring salvation, but if we are truly saved and the Holy Spirit is working in our lives, we will progress toward a godly lifestyle, growing to walk in a manner that glorifies God and is worthy of his children. Good works are an outer reflection of God's inner work. (Romans 6:12-23, 8:1-14; Colossians 1:10-14; Galatians 5:16-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; James 2:18)

Priesthood of all Believers: *We believe* that each and every believer has been given skills, abilities, and spiritual gifts by God, and that it is the believer's responsibility and privilege to discover and develop these gifts and to use them to serve others. Ministry is not reserved for a privileged few; rather every Christian is a priest and saint, called to serve God out of gratitude and with joy. (1 Peter 2:9; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 14:40)

Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: *We believe* that the Baptism of Holy Spirit, whereby we receive the full gift of the Spirit, occurs at the moment of salvation, as one of its core components. Separate from this is the Spirit's filling and empowerment which we should continually seek. We believe that all of the gifts of the Spirit are active today, but must be used in an orderly manner and be subordinated to the final authority of Scripture. Additionally, we believe that God still heals and works miraculously today, according to his will and in his manner. Physical healing is not a divine right of Christians: In his wisdom, God heals some through miracles, some through medicine, and some are not healed in this life. (James 5:14-16; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9)

The Church and Church Government: *We believe* that the universal church functions as Christ's body; the instrument he uses to accomplish his work and plans on the earth. While every believer – past, present, and future – is a part of the universal church, it is vital that every Christian commit themselves to a local congregation so that they may be edified, receive correction, and have opportunity to serve the body of Christ. While there are many different denominations and congregations, everyone that believes in Jesus as Lord and

Savior and practices Biblical Christianity is united through the body of Christ; every effort should be made to maintain unity among churches. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Hebrews 10:24-25; Galatians 6:1-2; Ephesians 4:11-14; Luke 10:27; Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:3-6)

While we believe that there are various Biblically appropriate forms of church government, The Gathering is called to be an independent church, led by a Biblically-qualified, male eldership, with a lead pastor who serves as the “first among equals,” and assisted by Biblically-qualified deacons and deaconesses.

Baptism and Communion: *We believe* that Christ established baptism and communion as the two ordinances of the church. They are outward, physical rites that are symbols of a spiritual work and reality. They are to be practiced in obedience to the commands of our Lord, but are not required for salvation. (1 Corinthians 11:24-26; Matthew 28:19)

Baptism by submersion is a symbol, first of our death and resurrection with Christ, and second of the washing away of our sins. It is to be a public confession and proclamation of our spiritual rebirth. As such, baptism should occur when a person is old enough to make a genuine confession of faith. However, we do not seek to invalidate other churches’ baptismal practices accepted in faith by the participant. (Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21; Colossians 2:12)

Communion is a symbol of Jesus’ atoning death and the establishment of the new covenant. It serves as a regular reminder of Christ’s great sacrifice and what it accomplished for us. Communion at The Gathering is available to all believers, regardless of church affiliation. (1 Corinthians 11:24-26)

Christ’s Second Coming: We believe that Jesus will literally come back to earth to establish the kingdom of God in fullness. His return should be anticipated with great hope and spur us on to Godly living, but we should not be distracted by excessive speculations regarding specifics, such as the “day or hour” of his coming. (Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-5:4; Titus 2:11-13; Matthew 24:36-39)

Judgment: We believe that after death, all men and women will be judged by God for everything they have done. The believer will be found innocent on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice, and yet we anticipate an evaluation of how we built upon the foundation Christ has given us. The unbeliever should anticipate judgment and condemnation for their rebellion against God. (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; John 3:18; Romans 2:5-6)

Heaven is the glorious eternal home for all genuine believers, where they will spend eternity in God’s presence and know eternal joy. (John 14:2-3; John 3:36)

Hell is a place of separation from God for Satan and all who reject Christ. (Revelation 20:10-15)