**A Contemporary Statement of Faith**

***The Holy Scriptures***

The Old and New Testaments in their original manuscripts and their entirety (plenary) are inspired by God (lit. “God-breathed;” 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21), extending to the very letters of the words themselves (Matt 5:18). Therefore, they are infallible, inerrant, historically reliable, scientifically accurate and authoritative for our lives. (John 16:13; 17:17).

They are to be interpreted in accordance with the grammar, historical-cultural setting, theology, literary genre, and meaning of the words, respecting both the immediate and broader context. This method is the same way language should be understood in its normal everyday usage to determine the author’s intended meaning.

***The Purpose of God During Our Age***

To glorify Himself by revealing His manifold wisdom (Eph 3:8-11, 21) through the building of Christ’s Church and ultimately His kingdom (Matt 16:18; 2 Tim 4:18) through making disciples (evangelizing) (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 14:21) and maturing (establishing) and multiplying local churches worldwide (Acts 13:1-3; 14:21-23; 15:41; 16:5).

***The Mission of a Local Church***

To glorify God (Eph 3:21) by growing as a family of God (1 Tim 3:15) – an extended spiritual family of fully devoted disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 28:19-20) through evangelizing unbelieversby proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:22-38, 47) and establishing believers by instruction in the apostles’ teaching (Rom 1:11; 16:25) by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) in order that every believer within our church will participate in building up our church (Eph 4:11-16),worshipping our God (Rom 12:1), and reaching out to our community (Col 4:5-6) so that we will assist Christ in building His Church (Matt 16:18) through establishing/strengthening existing and new churches (Acts 16:5) locally and worldwide (Acts 13:1-3)

***The Apostles’ Preaching Proclaimed to Evangelize Unbelievers***

God**1** is the loving Creator and Ruler of the world, Who created man**2**to rule over the world on His behalf (Genesis 1:1, 27-28)

All mankind, beginning with Adam and Eve’s yielding to temptation by Satan,**3**has rebelled against God and tried to live our lives independent of Him (Romans 3:10-12)

God’s punishment for our rebellion against Him is death and judgment (Hebrews 9:27)

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ,**4**into the world to take our punishment on Himself in dying on a cross(1 Peter 3:18)

God raised Jesus back to life**5**who then ascended into heaven and will one day return**6**to judge the world and reign over His kingdom forever (Acts 17:31)

*There are two ways to live:*

**Our Own Way:**

Continue to reject Jesus Christ as our Savior, Lord and Life, and live our lives our own way.

Result: Condemned by God, facing death and judgment,

or

**God’s New Way:**

*Turn* to the Lord Jesus Christ as our Hope, beginning a personal relationship with Him,

*Trust* in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, relying on His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of our sins, and

*Travel* with the Lord Jesus Christ as our Life, allowing His Spirit who will come to live in us to live His life out through us.**7**

Result: Our sins forgiven, reconciled to God, and given eternal life (John 3:36; 1 John 5:11-13)

***The Apostles’ Teaching Taught to Establish Believers***

*Who we are:*

*Individually* - A saint, slave of righteousness, citizen of heaven, and child of God (1 Cor 1:2; Rom 1:7; 6:18; Phil 3:20; John 1:12; Gal 4:5-7)

*Corporately*- The household of God (an extended spiritual family), flock of God, body of Christ and temple of God**8**(1 Tim 3:15; Acts 20:28; Eph 1:22-23; 2:21-22)

*How we are to live:*

Be publicly baptized,**9** symbolizing our union with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection, ascension and seating at the right hand of the Father, and His church (Matt 28:19; Rom 6:3-5)

Walk worthy of our calling by laying aside the old self, renewing our minds, and putting on the new self, relying on Christ to live His life through us**10** (Eph 4:1, 22-24; Rom 12:2; 13:12-14; Col 3:5-17; Gal 2:20)

*Resulting in:*

-Godly character in general:

-*Individually*: The Fruit of the Spirit and beyond (Gal 5:22-23; Eph 4:2-3, 25-5:21)

-*Corporately*: Faith, hope and love (1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thes 1:3)

-A proper relationship to:

*God*:

-Know, fear/love, obey, worship, glorify, serve, and trust Him (Phil 3:8; Prov 1:7; Mk 12:30; 1 Cor 10:31; Rom 12:1; Jn 14:15; Heb 12:28; 11:6)

-Remember the Lord through observing the Lord’s Supper**11**(1 Cor 11:23-26)

*Our church family members*:

- Be devoted to one another in brotherly love (Rom 12:10; Heb 10:25)

- Build up one another with our gifts, talents and abilities**12**(Eph 4:12-16; 1 Pet 4:10)

- Imitate and obey our leadership **13**(1 Cor 11:1; Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Pet 5:3)

*Our individual family members*:

-Wives are to submit to and respect their husbands (Eph 5:22-24, 33; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:1-6)

-Husbands are to love, nourish and cherish their wives (Eph 5:25-33; Col 3:19; 1 Pet 3:7)

-Children are to honor and obey their parents (Eph 6:1-3; Col 3:20)

-Fathers are to carefully bring up their children in the Lord (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21)

*The world*:

-Employees are to submit to employers, doing their work unto the Lord (Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-25; 1 Pet 2:18)

-Employers are to treat employees justly and fairly (Eph 6:10; Col 4:1)

-Citizens are to submit to, pray for and honor governing authorities (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Tim 2:1-8; 1 Pet 2:13-17)

-Conduct ourselves with wisdom as we pray for and reach out to non-Christians (Col 4:5-6; 1 Pet 3:13-15)

-Turn away from false teachers and those who cause dissensions (Rom 16:17; Titus 3:10; 2 Pet 3:17)

-Be alert, strong, resist and flee from the devil (Eph 6:10-18; Jam 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8-9)

Be a faithful steward of our time, talents and treasures while watching with anticipation for Christ’s return (Eph 5:15-17; 1 Pet 4:10; Matt 6:19-21; Titus 2:13)

**Sustaining Orthodoxy**

**1The Trinity**

There is only one God (Deut 6:4), not many gods (Ex 20:3). God is one being in essence existing in three co-equal and co-eternal persons, equal in their divine nature, but distinct in their personhood. These three persons are known as God the Father (Rom 1:7), God the Son (John 8:58) and God the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4). They together comprise what is known as the Trinity (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2). It is this God who created the heavens and the earth in literal six 24-hour days (Gen 1:1-31).

**2Man**

Man and woman were created by God in His image to rule over the world on His behalf (Gen 1:26-28). Adam chose to rebel against God, disobeying His specifically revealed will, and his spirit died in that day (Gen 2:17; 3:1-7). As descendants of Adam and Eve we are born spiritually dead and unable to initiate or accomplish our salvation (Eph 2:1-3; Rom 3:9-12). Sin, the falling short of God’s standard for us (Rom 3:23), and its consequences of death and judgment (Heb 9:27), have been imputed to all mankind because we were seminally present in Adam when he sinned (Rom 5:12), and consequently we all sin by what we do that we should not do (commission – 1 John 3:4; 5:17), and what we don’t do that we should do (omission).

**3Angels and Satan**

In his original state Satan was known as Lucifer, an angel having a position of highest honor before God and full of wisdom, perfect in beauty and blameless (Ez 28:12-15). Due to his sin of pride, he was cast away from God’s presence (Ez 28:16). He took with him a host of angels that are subsequently called demons (Matt 12:24). Satan and his demons can inflict disease (Job 1:12), deceive people (Gen 3:1-5; Rev 20:10), accuse the brethren (Rev 12:10), and oppose the work of God (1 Thes 2:18).

**4Jesus Christ**

Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is the promised seed from of old (Gen 3:15), the son of Abraham (Gen 22:18), son of David (2 Sam 7:16), the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15) and the exact representation of His being (Heb 1:3).  He is fully human as well as fully God. He was born of a virgin (Gal 4:4), experienced human growth (Luke 2:42-50), and yet was without sin (Heb 4:15).

**5Resurrection**

The death and resurrection of Christ is the heart of the gospel (1 Cor 15:1-6). If Christ was not raised from the dead, we are still in our sins (1 Cor 15:14, 17). Evidence for the resurrection includes an empty tomb (John 20:1-6), the grave cloths left behind (John 20:7), and His numerous appearances in a body that retained its scars from crucifixion (John 20:27; Acts 1:3).

**6Last Things**

While death is something every person will face (Heb 9:27), it is not annihilation. For the Christian, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8). They will be rewarded accordingly to their works (1 Cor 3:12-15).  The non-Christian will face judgment for their sins and live in hell, a place of everlasting punishment (Rev 20:11-15; Matt 25:30, 46). The present creation will be destroyed and the new heaven and new earth will begin (2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12; Rev 21-22).

**7Salvation**

Jesus Christ’s atonement (His death on the cross for mankind’s sin) was foreshadowed in Israel’s sacrificial system (Lev 4:14-21). Mankind’s depravity and God’s justice demands a sacrifice for sin (Rom 3:21-26). Christ’s death is that once for all sacrifice (1 Cor 5:7). There are important terms in the Bible that explain Christ’s death on the cross for our sin:

-*Substitution*: He died in our place, taking on Himself the punishment due us (1 Cor 15:3);

-*Redemption*: He bought our freedom from sin and the law (Gal 3:13; 4:5; 1 Pet 1:18-19);

-*Reconciliation*: He provided our reconciliation to God by His death in the cross (Rom 5:10);

-*Propitiation*: His death satisfied all the righteous demands of God (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17);

-*Forgiveness*: His death forgave the debt of our past, present and future sins (Col 2:13);

-*Justification*: We are declared righteous by God as a gift on the basis of His blood (Rom 3:24).

*-Regeneration:* He gives us life so that we are born again (Tit 3:5; Jn 3:3, 5; 1 Pet 1:23; 23).

These blessings are secured for us by believing – trusting, relying upon – Christ and His death on our behalf (John 3:16, 36; Rom 4:5; 5:1). Once we believe in Christ we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph 1:13), delivered from the domain from darkness and transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col 1:13), and made alive, raised up, seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph 2:5-6).

It is by faith alone in Christ and His death and life that we are saved (Rom 5:10; Eph 2:8-9). Common synonyms for faith are relying, trusting, receiving or believing on Christ (John 1:12; 3:16). Faith involves understanding the truths of the gospel, a conviction of their truthfulness, and trusting in the person of Christ.

**8The Church**

The term “church” is used two ways in Scripture. One is in reference to the universal church (Matt 16:18), comprised of all those who have trusted in Christ for salvation since Pentecost (Acts 2:41) and around the world. The term is more commonly used in reference to local churches, under the oversight of qualified leadership (Acts 14:23; 1 Pet 5:1-3) and gathered together as an extended spiritual family (1 Tim 3:15) to worship God, build up each other, and reach out to the lost.

**9Baptism**

Water baptism is an outward symbolic act reflecting the inward reality of our spiritual baptism that takes place the moment we place our faith in Christ (1 Cor 12:13). Specifically, it is symbolic of our union with Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Rom 6:3-5). It is an act of obedience to Christ by believers (Matt 28:19) as a public testimony to be done subsequent to our salvation (Acts 2:41).

**10Spiritual Growth**

Our spiritual growth is the lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus Christ. A term associated with our spiritual growth is sanctification, meaning “to be set apart,” though there are actually three aspects to it.:

-*Positional* sanctification: This occurs at the moment of our salvation when we are declared “saints” (Rom 1:7);

-*Ultimate* sanctification: This occurs at death when we stand before Christ blameless (1 Thes 3:12-13; 5:23-24);

-*Progressive* sanctification: The ongoing process of growing in Christlikeness (1 Pet 1:15-16).

**11The Lord’s Supper**

The Lord’s Supper was instituted by Christ of the eve of His crucifixion, instructing His followers to observe it until His return (Matt 26:26-29). It is to be done in remembrance of Him (1 Cor 11:24-25), the bread and cup being only symbolic of His body and blood being sacrificed on our behalf. It contributes nothing whatsoever to our salvation.

**12Spiritual Gifts**

Spiritual gifts are divine enablements given by God at the moment of salvation for service to Christ (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:1-31; 1 Pet 4:10-11). Certain individuals are also “gifts” to the church for its maturing (Eph 4:10-11).

**13The Leadership of a Local Church**

Three leadership roles can be identified in the Scriptures:

-*Pastors* are to preach the gospel and establish new and existing churches and the people within them (Acts 14:21-23; Titus 1:5);

-*Elders* are to be an example to and oversee/shepherd the flock of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Pet 5:1-4);

-*Deacons* are to serve the elders by receiving delegated tasks that free the elders to concentrate on the most vital aspects of their ministry (1 Tim 3:8, 12).

Given these responsibilities, church leadership is to be selected on the basis of:

- Their knowledge of God and His Word and holding fast to the faith;

- Their character in 1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9 beyond general character qualities;

- Their proven skills and faithfulness in evangelizing unbelievers, establishing believers, and shepherding the flock