

What We Believe

By Pastor Randy Moll

The summary statements which follow are not offered as a new confession of faith. We have a public confession of faith in our unqualified subscription to the creeds and confessions contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as a true and right exposition of the teaching of God's Word. Nor are they offered to replace the use of Luther's Small Catechism for instruction in the Christian Faith; we continue to use Luther's Small and Large Catechisms for instruction and edification in our study of God's Word. The statements which follow are offered only as an outline and summary of the teaching of the Bible on various subjects so that we may be clear on what we believe and teach and that we might provide the Scriptural basis for these teachings.

As such, it is hoped that the following statements will be read and studied with a Bible in hand to diligently search the Scriptures and verify that these things are indeed so (Acts 17:11).

WORD OF GOD

We believe that each and every word, as well as the entirety and whole, of the Holy Scriptures was given by inspiration of God and is, therefore, the true and unerring Word of God (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:13; John 10:35; 17:17; 2 Samuel 23:1-2).

We also believe that the Word of God has not been lost or corrupted, but has been faithfully preserved by God down through the centuries as a witness to all the nations (Psalm 119:89; Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25; Matthew 24:14,35). We believe that it is still accurately recorded in the Hebrew and Greek texts and manuscripts commonly used and accepted by the Church down through the centuries and that it can be read and studied in faithful Bible translations such as the King James Version, the Modern English Version and the New King James Version. We discourage the use of texts and translations of the Bible which are unfaithful and would change, add to or take away from the Word of God (Deuteronomy 4:2; Jeremiah 23:28; Matthew 5:18-19; Revelation 22:18-19).

Since all of Holy Scripture is God's true and unerring Word, we teach that the Bible is to be the source and judge of all Christian doctrine. What is not in accord with God's Word is not to be taught as Christian doctrine (Isaiah 8:20; Jeremiah 23:28-32; Psalm 119:128; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Acts 17:11).

The Bible is also its own interpreter; thus, passage interpretations which are not in agreement with other clear passages of Holy Scripture are to be rejected (2 Peter 1:20-21; Isaiah 8:20).

We teach that the Bible is to be diligently studied and heard; for it reveals to mankind the only way of salvation, which is through faith in Christ Jesus, and it guides the Christian in living according to God's Holy will (John 5:39; 20:31; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Psalm 119:105).

GOD

We believe that there is only one true God (Isaiah 44:6; 1 Corinthians 8:4). This God (called the LORD or JEHOVAH) is one divine Being or Essence, but three distinct Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (thus the name, Triune or Three/One God), each being eternal and equal in power and majesty because each Person is the LORD God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; 1 John 5:7; Isaiah 48:16-17; John 1:1; Colossians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 4:14).

We believe that no one can worship or serve the Triune God except he believes that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God and the Savior of mankind from sin and its consequences (John 3:18,36; 5:23; 14:6; 1 John 2:23; 5:11-12). Hence, all who deny the Trinity of God (that God is three Persons) or the Unity of God (that God is one divine Being), or who do not trust in Jesus Christ, the Son, for salvation, do not worship and serve the true God.

CREATION

We believe that the LORD God created the heavens, the earth, and all things in six normal-length days; that this occurred only about six thousand years ago (ca. B.C. 4,000) rather than millions and billions of years ago; that all things were originally created good

and without sin; and that God created and still preserves all things by His almighty Word (Genesis 1-2; Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 33:6; 139:13-16; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2-3; 11:3; Old Testament genealogical records). We, therefore, reject all teaching and theory which contradicts the Biblical record of creation, including atheistic and theistic evolution and other (falsely called “scientific”) theories which suggest that the earth and life came to exist by chance over millions or billions of years.

ANGELS

We believe that the LORD God, when He created the heavens and the earth, also created a great number of angels to carry out His commands and do His will (Nehemiah 9:6; Exodus 20:11; Colossians 1:16; Psalm 104:4; 103:20-21; Daniel 7:10). These angels are spirits of great power and strength (Psalm 103:20; 2 Kings 19:35). We believe that a large number of these angels sinned and fell away from the LORD God shortly after creation and that the devil and the other evil angels who fell away with him are reserved unto the judgment of eternal torment in hell (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Matthew 25:41). Until the last day, these evil spirits continue to oppose God and His will and seek the destruction of God’s works (Genesis 3:1ff.; Revelation 12; John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Job 1-2; Matthew 4:1-11). The great number of angels who remained faithful to the LORD God are now confirmed in their holy estate and continue to carry out God’s commands and serve the needs of Christians (Hebrews 1:14; Matthew 18:10; 25:31; Psalm 91:11-12; 103:20-21).

MAN

We believe that the first man and woman were created by God (Adam’s body from the dust of the ground, and Eve’s from the rib of Adam); that they were given a rational and immortal soul (not being unintelligent or brutish) and were created for eternal life; and that they were created in the image of the LORD God, having a knowledge of God and His will and being righteous and holy in thoughts, desires, words and deeds (Genesis 1:26-28,31; 2:7,18-25; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10).

We believe that Adam and Eve sinned as described in Genesis, chapter three; that, as a result of this sin, all men are conceived and born in sin and are inclined to evil (having lost the image of God); that, as sinners, all of mankind stands condemned by God’s holy Law to eternal suffering in hell; and that all people, as they are by nature, are unable to

do God-pleasing works or reconcile themselves to God and thus escape His wrath and punishment (Psalm 51:5; Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Romans 3:10-20,23; 5:12,18-19; Galatians 3:10; James 2:10-11; Ezekiel 18:20; Romans 6:23; Isaiah 64:6; John 3:6; 15:5-6; Psalm 49:7-9).

JESUS CHRIST AND REDEMPTION

We believe that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God from eternity, and also true man, being conceived by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, lived a sinless and holy life under God's Law in the stead of all mankind and then suffered and died upon the cross, paying the just penalty for the sins of all people, and rose again from the dead on the third day (John 1:1,14; Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25; Galatians 4:4-5; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21-24; 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). We believe that Jesus Christ, by His holy life and innocent sufferings and death in our stead, has redeemed and made atonement to God for the sins all people (Hebrews 2:14-17; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Colossians 1:19-22; Galatians 3:10,13; Romans 3:23-26; 4:25; 5:6-11,18-19; John 1:29; 1 John 2:1-2; Isaiah 53).

JUSTIFICATION

We believe that, for the sake of Jesus Christ's holy life and innocent sufferings and death upon the cross for the sins of the world, God's just wrath is propitiated and satisfied and God offers pardon and forgiveness to all in the Gospel (1 John 2:1-2; Ephesians 1:6-7; 2 Corinthians 5:19,21; Romans 3:23-26; 4:25; 5:18-19). God justifies people, forgives them, reconciles them and counts them righteous in His sight when they receive in faith the Gospel promise offering forgiveness and life eternal in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:28; 4:5; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 10:43). We reject as false all teachings which would make a man's justification dependent upon his own works and merits, his own will or decision, or any justification apart from God-wrought faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ Jesus for the sins of all (Ephesians 2:8-10; Galatians 2:16; John 1:12-13).

FAITH IN CHRIST

We believe that it is through faith alone — and not of works — that a sinner receives the

forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation which Christ Jesus won for all by His innocent sufferings and death upon the cross. Such faith, which is also a gracious gift of God worked by the Holy Spirit, is to believe and apply to one's self the Gospel promise, the good news that God is gracious to us and forgives our sins for the sake of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work (John 3:16; Galatians 2:16; Romans 1:16-17; 3:20-28; 4:3-8; 5:1-2; Ephesians 2:8-9,11-18; Philippians 1:6,29; Colossians 2:12). We also believe that no one can be saved without such faith in Christ, for all who do not believe the Gospel message and trust in Christ alone for their salvation remain guilty in their sins and will be condemned to eternal suffering in hell, having rejected the only salvation provided by God — that won by the atoning sacrifice of His Son for the sins of the world (John 3:18,36; 8:24; Mark 16:15-16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

CONVERSION

We believe that conversion is the turning of a lost and condemned sinner from unbelief to faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. This occurs when a man, condemned by the Law of God, is brought to faith in the Gospel and believes that God, for the sake of Christ's redemption, is gracious to him and forgives all his sins (Acts 2:37ff.; 3:19; 11:21; 16:29-34; 26:18; Titus 3:3-7; Isaiah 55:7). We believe that conversion is entirely the result of God's gracious working in us; for man, as he is by nature, is spiritually blind, dead and an enemy of God and, therefore, cannot by his own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ as Savior or come to Him (Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 3:10-18; Genesis 6:5; 8:21; John 1:12-13; 3:3-6; 6:44,63,65; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 12:3; Colossians 2:11-15; Philippians 1:29; Jeremiah 31:18; 1 Peter 1:2-5, 23-25). We, therefore, reject as false all teaching which attributes a man's conversion to his own will or decision rather than to God's grace alone, and also any teaching which would limit God's gracious desire and work for the salvation of all men.

REPENTANCE

We believe that true repentance consists of a troubled conscience (godly sorrow) over one's sins and sinfulness and of faith in God's mercy and forgiveness for the sake of Jesus Christ and His innocent sufferings and death upon the cross for our sins and the sins of the whole world. It is a coming to the knowledge and conviction of one's utter sinfulness and of the punishment of God justly deserved; and it is a turning to God in faith, trusting that He will mercifully forgive our sins and accept us as His own dear

children for the sake of Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross (Psalm 51; Psalm 32; Romans 3:9-28; Mark 1:4, 15; Acts 2:36ff.; 3:19; 20:17-21; 26:20; Isaiah 55:6-7; Luke 24:45-47; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10; Ephesians 1:3ff.; 2 Peter 3:9). We also teach that a fruit of genuine repentance is a new and amended life lived for our God and Savior (Luke 3:3, 7-17; Acts 26:20; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Romans 6:1ff.; 1 John 1:5-10; 2:1-6; Isaiah 1:16-20; Ephesians 2:8-10).

We believe that a true Christian lives his life here in this world in continual and daily repentance; that is, acknowledging his sins and failures to the LORD God and receiving His mercy and forgiveness for Christ's sake — as well as the needed help and strength to amend his life and live for the LORD God (1 John 1:8 — 2:2; Psalm 32; Psalm 51; Psalm 86:5; Ephesians 1:15-23; Philippians 4:13). We, therefore, reject the false teaching that true believers do not sin and thus do not need to continue in repentance, or that God cannot bring a fallen believer back to repentance or will not forgive the sins of those who have fallen and returned to repentance.

GOOD WORKS

We believe that, while good works cannot justify a man in the sight of God or merit God's grace and favor, good works are commanded by God in the Holy Scriptures (Romans 3:10-20,28,31; 10:4; 12:1-2; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-14; Psalm 119:1-5,35). Good works are those things a child of God does, speaks or thinks as a fruit of saving faith in Christ Jesus which are in accord with God's commandments, are for the glory of God and the benefit of his neighbor, and are motivated by love for God and neighbor (Psalm 119:9,133; Psalm 19:14; Proverbs 12:5; Deuteronomy 10:12-13; Matthew 15:9; 22:36-40; John 14:15; Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 13:1-3; Luke 10:25-37). We believe and teach that no man can perform such works unless he first has faith in Christ as Savior and is regenerated by the Holy Spirit (John 15:1-5; Hebrews 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-8). Good works of believers are acceptable in God's sight only for Christ's sake — because God, for the sake of Jesus Christ's innocent sufferings and death, pardons the sins and impure motives of His children (Isaiah 64:6; 1 John 1:7ff.).

MEANS OF GRACE

We believe that God offers, gives and assures to men the forgiveness of sins and eternal

salvation which Christ won for all by His innocent sufferings and death on the cross through certain means: namely, the Word of the Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Through these means, God the Holy Spirit graciously tells us of Christ Jesus and the salvation He won for us and all people by His atoning sacrifice upon the cross; and He assures us that, for Christ's sake and through faith in His name, we are forgiven of all sins and have everlasting life in heaven (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Romans 1:16-17; 10:15; Acts 2:38-39; 22:16; Colossians 2:11-15; 1 Peter 3:21; Matthew 28:19; 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29; 10:16-17). We believe that it is through these means of grace that the Holy Spirit creates and sustains saving faith in men's hearts (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:2,23-25; 2:2; John 3:5-6; Titus 3:5; Colossians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 11:23ff.; Philippians 1:6).

GOSPEL

We believe that the Gospel is the good news of man's redemption in Christ Jesus. It is the proclamation that Christ died for all sins and rose again and that God, for the sake of Christ's innocent sufferings and death upon the cross, forgives sins and offers and gives everlasting life through faith in Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:16-17; 10:15; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Luke 24:46-47; Colossians 1:19-23; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 Timothy 1:15; 2:3-7; John 3:14-16). We reject the teaching that the Gospel is a new law requiring love and good deeds for our fellow man.

BAPTISM

We believe that Baptism has been instituted by God to be a means whereby He offers, gives and assures to an individual the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation which Christ won for all by His innocent sufferings and death upon the cross (Colossians 2:11-15; 1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 3:26-29). In Christian Baptism, water is applied (by sprinkling, pouring or immersing) in the name of the Triune God (Matthew 28:19); and through Baptism, the Holy Spirit works to create and preserve saving faith in Christ Jesus, thus washing away sins and giving eternal salvation to all who believe (John 3:5; Titus 3:5; Acts 22:16; Mark 16:16).

We believe that all people are to be baptized — including infants and children, for they too can be brought to believe — and that those who reject Baptism forfeit the

forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation which God wills to give them through Baptism (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38-39; Luke 18:15-17; John 3:5-6; Matthew 18:6; Luke 7:30).

LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that, when the Lord's Supper is observed according to Christ's institution, Jesus offers and gives to those who partake of the bread and the cup (wine) in His Supper His body and blood which were given and shed upon the cross as the atoning sacrifice for the remission of all sins — indeed, the Scriptures say in 1 Corinthians 11:23ff.: “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.” (Cf. Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29; 10:16.)

Those who partake of Christ's Supper with a penitent heart and faith in Christ's words receive through this new covenant meal the forgiveness of sins and the eternal salvation won for them by Christ's atoning sacrifice, but those who partake of Christ's Supper in impenitence and without faith in Christ and His words partake of the Supper to their own condemnation, not discerning the Lord's body and treating the blood of the covenant by which they were redeemed as an unholy thing (Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32; Hebrews 10:29). Therefore, we receive at the Lord's Table only those who profess the true Christian doctrine and are able to examine themselves; and we exclude others who have not yet been instructed in the true Christian Faith or who continue to live in open disobedience to God's Word (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Romans 16:17; Ephesians 5:11).

PRAYER

We believe that prayer is an act of worship in which Christians call upon the LORD God with their hearts and voices, offering up praise and thanksgiving to God and making requests of Him (Psalm 5:1-3; 19:14; 103:1; 95:1-6; 96:1-13). Though prayer is not a means of grace, it is a great privilege that God gives to those who trust in Christ Jesus for their salvation (1 John 5:11-15; Romans 8:15; John 16:23). Since God commands His children to come to Him in prayer, and promises to answer the prayers of those who have saving faith in Christ Jesus, we believe that every true Christian should pray regularly and in all things (Matthew 7:7-8; Psalm 50:15; Philippians 4:6; Isaiah 65:24; Psalm 65:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).

HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

We believe that there is only one Holy Christian Church and that this Church is made up only of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, of those who have despaired of their own righteousness before God and trust that God is gracious to them and forgives all their sins for the sake of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work (Matthew 16:16-18; Ephesians 2:8-22; 4:4-6; 5:23-32; 1:22-23; Romans 12:4-5; 8:9; Philippians 3:8-9). We believe that this Church is invisible in that God only, and not man, can see faith in the heart (1 Samuel 16:7; Luke 17:20-21; 2 Timothy 2:19). Nevertheless, the Holy Christian Church does and will continue to exist in this world wherever the saving Gospel is still in use and the Sacraments are rightly administered (Matthew 16:18; 1 Kings 19:8-18; Isaiah 55:10-11; Romans 1:16-17; 10:17). We reject as false the claim that Christ's Church in this world is to be identified with any particular denomination or church body.

LOCAL CHURCHES

We believe that the Holy Scriptures speak, not only of the Holy Christian Church, which is made up of all believers in Christ; they also speak of local churches or congregations of believers and command Christians in every locality to gather together with other faithful Christians and form congregations where they may establish the public ministry and mutually care for and encourage their fellow believers in the true and saving faith (2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; Revelation 1-3; Acts 2:41-47; 14:23; 20:28; Titus 1:5; Jeremiah 23:3-4; Hebrews 10:23-25; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 4:1-16;

Matthew 18:15-20). Though the Bible speaks of one Church, made up of all true believers, and of local churches, there are not two kinds of churches; for even in the local churches, only the believers are truly members of Christ's Church in that place (1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 1:7). On the Last Day, the unbelieving and hypocrites who are outwardly connected with Christ's Church in this world will be separated from the believing and cast into the fires of hell (Matthew 13:24-43, 47-50).

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

We believe that God commands all Christians to discriminate between churches which are faithful to Christ and that which is taught in His Word (orthodox churches) and those which are not faithful to Christ and His Word (false and heterodox churches) and to practice church fellowship (joining together in those things which one would do with fellow believers, such as, worship, prayer, reception of the Lord's Supper, evangelism, mission work, etc.) only with those who are faithful to Christ and His holy Word (Matthew 28:18-20; 7:15-23; John 8:31-32; 1 John 4:1-6; Acts 2:42; Romans 16:17-18; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14-15; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 John 7-11). We, therefore, condemn as sin the syncretistic and unionistic practices of our day in which church fellowship is practiced and church union is sought without regard for full adherence to the Scriptural Doctrine.

A church's faithfulness to Christ and His Word is to be judged, not only by its acceptance of and subscription to an orthodox creed or confession but by what is actually taught and practiced in the church. Errors in both doctrine and practice will continue to trouble churches in this world (Acts 20:28-32; 1 Corinthians 11:19); but those which are faithful to Christ and His Word will, through Scriptural admonition and discipline, continue to combat and remove such error from among themselves (Matthew 18:15-18; 2 Timothy 3:13-17; 4:1-5; Titus 3:10-11).

OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY

We believe that Christ has given to His Church, the congregation of all true believers, the office of the holy ministry and has commanded that faithful men be called and ordained to preach God's Word, forgive and retain sins, and to administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper (1 Peter 2:9; Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21-23; Jeremiah 23:3-4,28; Hebrews 10:19-25; Acts 14:23; 20:28; Ephesians 4:11-12; Titus 1:5-9; 2 Timothy 4:2).

Only men meeting the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 are to be entrusted with this office.

Though the public ministry of Word and Sacrament exists by the will and command of God, those holding this office have no authority and power but the Word of God (1 Peter 4:11; Hebrews 4:12; Romans 1:16-17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Thus, obedience must be rendered to the public ministry only when the Word of God is faithfully proclaimed and applied (Hebrews 13:17; Luke 10:16).

We reject as contrary to God's will and as sinful the current practice of placing women into the public ministry or other positions or offices where they must teach or exercise authority over men (1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

CHURCH AND STATE

We believe that both the Church and the State are ordained of God — the Church for the eternal salvation of men, and the State for the maintenance of external righteousness and order among men in this world (Matthew 16:16-19; Ephesians 2:8-9, 19-22; Colossians 1:18-24; Acts 2:41-47; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14; 1 Timothy 2:2). In order that men might be saved, the Church has been commanded to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Romans 1:16-17; 10:15,17; John 18:11,36-37; 20:22-23; 1 Cor. 11:23-29; 2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:10-18). To maintain civil order and righteousness in this world, civil governments have been given power and responsibility to enact just laws, to punish evildoers (including the use of the death penalty), and to wage just wars (1 Peter 2:13-14; Psalm 82:1-4; Genesis 9:6; Romans 13:3-4).

GOD'S GRACIOUS ELECTION

We believe that God desires the salvation of all men and has already, in His divine foreknowledge and from eternity, chosen those who believe and persevere in the faith to obtain eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and that this election and choosing of God is entirely of God's grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, without any merit or worthiness on the part of men (2 Timothy 1:9; Matthew 22:14; Ephesians 1:3-14). We take comfort in the Bible's promise that all those whom God has graciously chosen before the creation of the world and brought to saving faith in Christ through the Gospel

will be preserved in that faith unto life everlasting (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:3-14; Matthew 24:22-24). This doctrine of Scripture gives to believers the assurance “that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6).

We reject as contrary to the Holy Scripture the teachings that God does not desire the salvation of all men; that He is the cause of unbelief and damnation in those who do not come to faith; or that God’s election is based upon some merit or quality in men (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 33:11; Matthew 23:37).

As to why some are saved and others are lost, we can only say with Scripture that God’s elect are saved entirely by God’s grace for Christ’s sake, and that the lost are so entirely of their own fault because they have “not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18; 12:48; Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 7:51).

FINAL JUDGMENT

We believe that, at death, the souls of believers are taken to be with their Lord and Savior in heaven, and the souls of unbelievers begin suffering the eternal torments of hell (Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; Philippians 1:23; Revelation 14:13; 1 Peter 3:19; 2 Peter 2:4-9). On the Last Day, Jesus Christ will return to judge the living and the dead; and on that Day, all the dead will be raised up (John 5:28-29; Job 19:25-27; Revelation 20:11-15; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10). The wicked and unbelieving will be cast, both body and soul, into the everlasting torments of hell; but those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation will, according to both body and soul, dwell with Christ forever, enjoying the blessings of heaven (John 5:29; Matthew 10:28; Luke 16:23-24; Isaiah 66:24; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Hebrews 9:27-28; Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 John 3:2; John 3:36; 17:24; 14:1-3; Psalm 16:11). We believe that the Day of Christ’s return is known only to God and not to man (Matthew 24:29-42; Mark 13:32; 2 Peter 3:10). Therefore, we also reject as false all contrary doctrines, such as purgatory or limbo, an earthly millennial kingdom, a secret rapture, and attempts to predict the time of Christ’s return.

ANTICHRIST

We believe that though there have been and are many antichrists who oppose Christ

and the true Word of God with their lies and false teaching, there is also one antichrist, the son of perdition, whose coming was foretold in the Scriptures (1 John 2:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:3). We also believe that this antichrist is none other than the Roman Papacy, for all the marks of this antichrist have been fulfilled in the papacy of Rome (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; Revelation 13 & 17; cf. Galatians 1:6-9).

SABBATH DAY

We believe that the Old Testament observance of the Sabbath and other holy days has been abrogated by God and is not required of believers under the new covenant (Colossians 2:16-17; Romans 14:5-6). The Commandment regarding the Sabbath Day does still require us to regularly take time to hear and learn God's Word and to worship Him (Exodus 20:8; Isaiah 58:13-14; Acts 2:42; Colossians 3:16; Psalm 119:15-16; 26:8; 111:1; 95:1-6; 96:1-2). For this reason, we have set aside Sundays and other feast days for the hearing of God's Word and for our gathering together to worship the LORD our God (Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:42). However, the observance of these certain days is a church ordinance made in Christian liberty rather than a divine command binding upon the conscience (Romans 14:5-6).

MARRIAGE AND BEARING CHILDREN

We believe that marriage is a lifelong union between one man and one woman, that marriage was instituted by God and is entered by mutual consent and promise (Matthew 19:3-6; Genesis 2:18-24; Romans 7:1-3; Luke 20:27-38; Matthew 1:18-25; Deuteronomy 22:23-24). Therefore, we teach that it is sin to violate the marriage union by unfaithfulness or desertion (Matthew 19:3-9; 5:31-32; Mark 10:6-12; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16; Hebrews 13:4; Exodus 20:14; Malachi 2:14-16). With Scripture, we also condemn as sin: fornication (sexual relationships outside the bonds of Biblical marriage), sodomy, homosexuality and bestiality (Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

We believe that children are a blessing of the LORD and that the conception and formation of a child in the womb is the result of God's creative working (Genesis 1:27-28; 25:21; 29:31; 30:22-23; Ruth 4:13; 1 Samuel 1:5,10-11,19-20; 2:21; Psalm 127:3-5; 128:1-6; 139:13-16; Ecclesiastes 11:5), and that it is God's will and command that a husband and wife seek and desire to have children (Genesis 1:28; 9:1,7; 1 Timothy

2:15; 5:14).

We also believe that human life begins at conception and that it is murder to kill or destroy the life of an unborn child (Psalm 139:13-16; Ecclesiastes 11:5; Genesis 25:21-23; Genesis 9:5-6; Exodus 20:13). Therefore, we condemn as sin abortion — in all its forms — and reject as contrary to God’s will and intention the modern views and practices which would limit and discourage Christian parents from conceiving and bearing children.

SANCTITY OF LIFE

We believe that every human life is a creation of God and that every human life is precious to God, for God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:7,21-22; 9:5-6; Psalm 139:13-16). We also believe that, except in the cases of punishing evildoers and waging just wars or taking just actions to protect life and property, God has reserved for Himself the right to end or destroy a human life (Genesis 9:5-6; Romans 13:1-4; 1 Peter 2:14; Exodus 20:13; Psalm 31:15; 39:4-5; 90:1-3; Job 14:1-12; Acts 17:24-28). Therefore, we must condemn as murder and sin the practice of abortion, euthanasia, self-inflicted death (suicide) and all other unjustified taking of human life.