Bright Christian Church

Statement of Faith / What We Believe

Revised 4-1-26

Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith The Bible. We believe the 66 books of the Bible, in both Old and New Testaments, are given by God's inspiration and that in the original writings they are without error (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We believe the Scriptures originated with God but were written using humans as the means and thus speak with the authority of God while reflecting the backgrounds, cultures, styles, and vocabularies of the human authors (2 Peter 1:12-21). They are the unique, reliable, and the final authority on all matters of Christian faith and practice.

God. We believe in one true God, creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:26; Matt. 4:1-10; 28:18-20).

The Father. We believe in God the Father, the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, who is eternal, sovereign, and full of love and mercy. He is the source of all life, the one who sustains and governs all things according to His will. Scripture reveals Him as the one true God, worthy of all worship and praise. (Genesis 1:1, Romans 11:36, Psalm 145:17). As our Heavenly Father, He invites His people into a personal relationship with Him, showing His love through His Son, Jesus Christ, and His work in the Holy Spirit. Through His grace, He provides salvation and calls all believers to live in fellowship with Him, reflecting His holiness and love. (John 1:12, John 16:27)

Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and, in His incarnation was also fully man; having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (Matt. 1:18-23). He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures (Isaiah 53; Acts 4:8-12). We believe He was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, and now acts as the only mediator between God and people (Hebrews 9:11-15).

The Holy Spirit. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as the third person of the Trinity, is to apply to people the saving work of Christ. He does this by bringing conviction of a person's need for the forgiveness of Christ (Jn. 16:7-11). He regenerates their heart and then indwells them when they believe and are baptized (Acts 2:38; Col. 2:9-12; Romans 6:1-5). His ongoing work is to guide, lead, and empower the believer for godly living and service (Jn 14:15-17; Jn. 16:12-15).

Humanity. We believe that people were created in the image of God for a loving relationship with God in His eternal kingdom (Genesis 1:26). However, beginning with the first man & woman (Adam and Eve), we have all rebelled against God and chosen to go our own independent way (Gen. 3:1-1-19; 8:20-21). Mankind is thereby alienated from God and now suffers the corruption of our nature because of our sin (Rm. 3:23). The effects of this fall upon our intended relationship with God can only be reversed through faith in Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and life in God's eternal Kingdom (Rm. 6:23).

Salvation. We believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save us from the eternal penalty of our sin – separation from God (Acts 4:11-12). No amount of good works or human effort can restore us from our state of eternal alienation from God. It is only by God's grace that we are saved from this state of alienation, and this grace is appropriated by a change of heart toward God's authority in our lives and by faith in Jesus to forgive our sins (Ephesians 2:8-9). The Biblical pattern for expressing one's personal decision to place faith in Jesus Christ and turn from sin involves water baptism by immersion, which re-enacts the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Rm. 6_1-4; Gal. 3:26-27; Colossians 2:9-12). Baptism is the concrete means by which we entrust and commit ourselves to God through Christ in a visible, historical moment.

The Church. We believe that there is only one true Church universally composed of all people who have been regenerated and forgiven by Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:1-6). It is reflected by a diversity of believers working and serving together, using their gifts to build one another up, forming the parts of the body of Christ, the Church. Scripture commands believers to gather together in local congregations for the scriptural teaching, fellowship, prayer, mutual encouragement, worship of God, and disciple-making (Acts 2:42-47; Matt. 28:18-20; Heb. 10:19-25). Wherever God's people meet in obedience to this command, there is the local expression of the church. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Head of the Church, and that every local church has the obligation under Christ to decide and govern its own affairs in obedient submission to the will of God, the Word of God, and the Spirit of God (Eph. 4:15, 23).

Relationships. We believe that God made us for relationships, with God himself and with our fellow human beings (Phil. 2:1-4). We emphasize the two greatest commandments which are to love God with all of one's heart, mind, soul, and strength; and to love others as we love ourselves (Matt 22:37-40). Our love for others is the clearest demonstration to the world that we are true disciples (Jn. 13:34-35). Love and truth are the answers God has provided to the many problems faced by humanity (John 1:14). God's love for us and His empowerment in us is to love others as He loves us.

Discipleship and Faithfulness. We believe that the distinguishing characteristic of those who live in God's kingdom is Christ-likeness. Discipleship is the fundamental ministry of the local church which facilitates the development of such people. Love for others displayed in ministering to the poor, reaching out to people who are spiritually lost, serving others, practicing forgiveness, and the like are all signs of the presence of God's kingdom and ministry of the Holy Spirit (1 Jn. 2:6). Those with genuine faith are known by the fruit of their lives and their pattern of faithfulness to Jesus and His commandments (Matt. 7:15-20). Thus, the local church becomes a counter-culture community, whose members live Christ-centered lives (Acts 2:42-47).

Baptism by Immersion: The Bible teaches baptism by immersion is more than important, it is essential. Baptism is a command of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20), a response of a repentant believer (Acts 2:37-38), a union with Jesus' death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5), the pledge of a clear conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:20-22), and a physical act that should accompany belief, repentance, and confession (Galatians 3:26-27; Colossians 2:9-12).

Eternal Security: We believe that when God saves people, they still have free will by which they can apostate themselves – rejecting Jesus and denying God (1 Tim. 4:1-2). We also believe that a person is saved by grace through faith and that we can know we have a saving faith by the spiritual fruit of our lives and by the pattern of faithfulness evidenced (Ephesians 2:8-9). We hold to the belief that the church is to reach out to those who seem to be losing the way by teaching the necessity of faithfulness as the mark of genuine salvation, while at the same time showing respect for those who hold different theological perspectives. We will teach and uphold the importance of salvation by grace through faith. With love and concern, we will reach out to all who seem to be losing the way. We commit to holding the discussion of this important issue in respectful, non-divisive ways that will not hinder the Lord's work.

Leadership in the Local Church: We believe it is important to appoint leaders in our churches according to biblical criteria. The Bible describes the standard role of qualified men to be appointed to lead the local church as elders and as preachers/pastors/teachers 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Eph. 4:11-13). We believe that these standard roles were designed by God to be a lasting leadership structure. They were put in place so that the local church could carry on, as God intended, based upon apostolic instruction. We uphold servant leadership, where church leaders live with a willingness to lay their lives down for those under their care. Only biblically qualified men are to serve as elders/overseers and as pastors/preachers/teachers in the local church.

Spiritual Gifts: We believe that God provides His followers with spiritual gifts which empower them to serve according to His will for their lives. These gifts are uniquely given so that each member can serve effectively in an area of God's choosing, consistent with His calling upon the believer's life, and in manner that builds up the body of Christ and edifies other believers. At the same time, a few areas of teaching, within some churches, have caused more division than the subject speaking in tongues, healings, and performing miracles. While we believe in the supernatural power of our God to communicate beyond our limitations, to heal us of all infirmities, and to humble us with demonstrations of His power over heaven and earth; we also recognize the nature of man to allow divisions to arise in the church. Therefore, we will not encourage the false practice or promotion of tongues in any gatherings of this church body. We will not tolerate discussions of this false teaching which come up in a divisive way or in a manner which would hinder the Lord's work or cause His name to be slandered. All spiritual gifts must be used to edify Christ and His church, not the individual members. The false teaching of speaking in a spiritual or heavenly tongue is not from the Lord.

End Times: We believe that we must be united in keys areas related to our understanding of the end times: 1) the resurrection of the dead, 2) a literal return of Christ, 3) the final judgment by God, 4) hell, and 5) heaven (Matt. 25:31-46). We believe people will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation (Matt 10:32-33). To be eternally separated from God is eternal death in Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life in Heaven. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence (Rm. 6:23). Beyond our acceptance of the key biblical truths described above, a discussion of the "end times" is not a salvation issue and should in no way hinder the Lord's work in and through His Church.

Communion: We take communion every week, following the example of the early church, because it provides us a reminder of the foundational teachings of our faith related to the death, resurrection, ascension, and promised heavenly hope of communing one future day with Jesus in heaven (Matt. 26:26-27; Lk 22:7-20; Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7). It is a distinctive of our churches that we take communion every week, but we do not believe that one must take communion every week – it is our choice. We choose to partake of the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis to be constantly brought back to Christ the center of our faith, His atoning death, His future coming, and God's grace.