

**South Shore Baptist Church  
Hingham, Massachusetts**

**Constitution  
And  
Doctrinal Statement**

**“Revised Constitution”**  
This printing, June 9, 1999  
“Fifth Revision”

## **Chapter 1 The Church**

### **1.1 NATURE**

1. Universal: Various metaphors are used in Scripture to describe the Church: the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the New Jerusalem, the New Israel, the Pillar and Bulwark of Truth, the Household of God, the Bride of Christ. Each reveals an aspect of its nature. Essentially, the Church consists of all those living, dead, and yet unborn, who have been or shall be reconciled to God through the redemptive work of Christ Jesus, a work of grace applied by the Holy Spirit and received through faith.
2. Local: The term “Church” is also used to designate a local congregation of people professing faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and gathered together for worship, fellowship, and ministry. While the Church is by nature an organism rather than an organization, organization is necessary to the development of the organism.

### **1.2 NAME**

The name of this congregation, both as Church and as corporation, shall be “South Shore Baptist Church of Hingham, Massachusetts.”

### **1.3 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Church shall be to glorify the triune God in worship, study of His Word, fellowship, and propagation of the Gospel of Christ at home and abroad.

### **1.4 GOVERNMENT**

The government of this Church shall be congregational. While celebrating our oneness in Christ with those congregations of all denominations and associations that faithfully proclaim the Gospel of Christ, this congregation shall preserve its freedom in Christ to elect its officers without interference from any ecclesiastical or political authority.

## **Chapter 2 Members**

### **2.1 NATURE**

Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is membership in the Body of Christ. It means that one now belongs to God, is submissive to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, animated by the power of the Holy Spirit, a possessor of great and precious promises, and has a high and holy calling.

### **2.2 QUALIFICATIONS**

Those who desire to become members of the Church shall give public profession of personal faith in Jesus Christ and of their personal identification with Jesus Christ’s death, burial and resurrection by believers’ immersion in water. In addition, each member of the Church must submit to the Doctrinal Statement.

### **2.3 ADMISSION**

The name of the applicant, with the recommendation of the Elders, shall be presented to a regular or special business meeting of the Church and by a two-thirds majority vote, the new member shall be received with full privileges and responsibilities. All regular members who are eighteen years or older are eligible to vote at business meetings of the Church.

## **2.4 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS**

To glorify God through:

1. Faithful attendance at worship services of the Church.
2. Actively participating in the Christian Education program.
3. Giving of resources in a faithful fashion of both financial resources and of talents.
4. Fellowship – Supporting and encouraging others in the Church fellowship.
5. Outreach – Supporting outreach programs of evangelism and missions ministries.
6. Attending and voting at business meetings of the Church.

## **2.5 STATUS**

Active members are those who regularly participate in the worship, study, fellowship and outreach ministries of the church. Only active members of the Church may vote and serve as its Elders or officers. The Elders shall review the membership roll annually and make any necessary recommendation for change in status. A two-thirds majority of those present and voting at an Annual Meeting shall be required in order to transfer a member to the inactive membership list.

Notification of a change in membership status will be in writing and will include wording that such member may apply to the Elders for reinstatement as active member.

Transfer: Letters may be granted to members to enable them to transfer their membership to other Christian churches by application to the clerk, provided: The member is in good standing or, if inactive, is so described in the letter.

## **1.6 THE CATEGORIES OF MEMBERS**

1. Regular Membership: Privileges include the right to vote at all business meetings and being eligible to serve as Church officers and overseeing committee members and members of its other ministry committees.
2. Inactive Membership: Those members who do not attend Church or participate in church related activities for more than one year, shall be deemed inactive. If after a second year of inactive membership the status has not changed, these inactive members will no longer be kept on the mailing lists and they will be encouraged to notify the Church of their status. The pastoral staff will follow up each case individually and will notify the church at the next following Annual Business Meeting of those inactive members who have resigned from membership. Those who have not responded to queries will be eligible for consideration by the Board of Elders (with recommendation from the pastoral staff) to be dropped from the rolls. This action will be recommended by the Board of Elders at the next business meeting and if so voted by members attending, the inactive members so voted will be notified in writing. Such persons who have been dropped from the rolls may apply to the Board of Elders for reinstatement.

## **2.7 DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS**

The procedure outlined by Christ in Matthew 18:15-20 shall be encouraged in all cases when one member detects sin in the life of another member. In application, when sin is observed, a private meeting should be arranged to lovingly confront the member. If the member refuses to listen, then one or two witnesses should be taken along in an attempt to bring about an understanding of the sin, counsel and restoration of the member. The process of restoration should be kept in as limited a circle as possible. All parties concerned shall express a spirit of gentleness and a desire to bear the burdens of the troubled member (Galatians 6:1 & 2).

If these attempts are unsuccessful, then the Elders should be informed concerning the sin. The Elders shall serve as the board of appeal on such issues. The board shall investigate the issue in a fair and equitable fashion. The Elders will call the member(s) and other witnesses to a meeting of the board. If a member fails to appear before the Elders, or heed the counsel of the Elders, the Elders may recommend disciplinary action to be taken against the offending member, and may recommend removal from church membership. (Matthew 18:17; I Corinthians 5:11-13; II Thessalonians 3:6-14). Any action involving removal from membership shall require a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at a business meeting.

## **2.8 DISCIPLINE OF PASTORS AND ELDERS**

When a member detects sin in the life of an Elder or Pastor, the procedure outlined in the first paragraph under 2.7 should be followed. If a resolution cannot be effected, then such accusations of sin against a Pastor or an Elder must be supported in writing by two or three witnesses and given to the Board of Elders (I Timothy 5:19). The disinterested members of the Board of Elders shall call a meeting and request in writing that the Pastor or Elder in question be present. The meeting shall be a hearing on the matter in the presence of witnesses, the Elder or Pastor in question, and all other parties involved, to verify the accusations.

After hearing all the evidence, the disinterested members of the Board of Elders shall determine in a fair and equitable fashion whether action is warranted. This should be accomplished in a reasonable time period. If the involved party(ies) fail to heed the recommendation of the Board of Elders or to appear before the Board, and thus the issue remains unresolved, the Board of Elders may appoint an experienced mediator to review the matter and make an incontestable finding of facts. The Board of Elders shall notify the congregation of the use of a mediator and the issues involved. If as a result of the mediator's findings in the matter the Board of Elders believes that a recommendation for dismissal from church membership is appropriate, a three-fourths vote of the membership present at a business meeting shall be required.

## **Chapter 3 Pastors**

### **3.1 ELECTION**

The election of a Pastor unless otherwise provided, shall be for a term not specified, and shall require at least a three-fourths vote of those active members present and voting at a regular or special business meeting.

### **3.2 ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION**

If a Pastor is called prior to ordination, the current Conservative Baptist Association of America procedures for ordination shall normally be followed, unless other provision is made, agreeable both to the Pastor and the Church. For services of ordination and installation of a Pastor, see appendix.

### **3.3 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SENIOR PASTOR**

The Senior Pastor's duties and responsibilities shall include the following:

1. To be the spiritual leader and overseer of the congregation.
2. To be a member of the Board of Elders with voting privileges and an *ex officio* member of all other committees and ministries, without voting privileges, except when appointed as an official member of a specific committee such as the chairmanship of a Pastoral Staff Nominating Committee.

3. To lead the members of the church in proclaiming the Word within the church and to the community, through evangelism and discipleship.
4. To oversee all congregational services by coordinating, planning, and evaluating all aspects of the worship ministry and chair the worship committee.
5. To lead at all appropriate worship services or arrange for someone else to perform this function, with the approval of the Board of Elders.
6. To plan and provide for the observance of the church ordinances.
7. To make recommendations to the Elder Board regarding the need, selection and termination of all pastoral staff members and to determine their duties and to evaluate their performance annually.
8. To hire and supervise other members of the church staff as set forth in the Manual of Methods and Procedures.
9. To work with and lead the pastoral staff in providing administrative and spiritual leadership for the total church program.
10. To counsel with and assist in training Elder Board members for their responsibilities.
11. To direct the Church in a caring ministry for persons within the congregation and the community.
12. To conduct funeral services and wedding ceremonies, in accordance with the church Manual of Methods and Procedures, delegating to others on the pastoral staff responsibilities in this area where appropriate.
13. To counsel with those in the congregation who seek his assistance and delegate to others this responsibility when appropriate.

### **3.4 THE PASTORAL STAFF**

The Pastoral Staff shall consist of such Associate Pastors and Assistant Pastors as justified by the needs and finances of the Church. The pastoral staff shall be responsible to the Senior Pastor; their duties and responsibilities will be defined by the Senior Pastor with the approval of the Board of Elders. Each member of the pastoral staff may be appointed by the Board upon recommendation by the Senior Pastor as an *ex officio* member of a council or committee, with voting privileges.

### **3.5 THE CHURCH STAFF**

The Church Staff shall consist of administrative and support personal, as justified by the needs and finances of the Church. The Church staff shall be responsible to the Pastor or his designated staff representative.

### **3.6 DISSOLUTION**

When any change in the relationship is decided upon by either Church or Pastor, the other party shall be entitled to a two-month notice of such change.

## **Chapter 4 Overseeing Elders**

### **4.1 QUALIFICATIONS**

Elders shall be mature Christian men of exemplary life reflecting love, holiness and Christian leadership in relation to home, church and community. They must possess the spiritual gifts necessary for their office as set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and whose lives meet the standards of Titus 1:7-9 and I Peter 5:1-5. An Elder shall have been a regular member for at least three years before taking office.

## **4.2 ELECTION**

The number of Elders serving shall normally not be less than nine. If the growth or nature of the ministry requires, the number may be increased in accordance with the Manual of Methods and Procedures. Elders shall be elected for a three-year term, with one-third of the members elected each year. Vacancies in unexpired terms may be filled for the duration of the term. The election of an Elder shall require affirmative vote by at least a three-fourths majority of those present and voting at a regular or special business meeting. No Elder may serve for more than three consecutive years unless this be waived by a separate three-fourths vote of the congregation. Such extensions shall be for a one-year term only.

## **4.3 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. To annually elect a chairman and such other officers as they shall deem necessary for the orderly conduct of their work.
2. To encourage one another in the faithful discharge of their duties.
3. To assist the Senior Pastor in evaluating and guiding the spiritual life of the Church.
4. To conduct an annual review of the Senior Pastor and to recommend compensation for him.
5. To examine prospective members and candidates for baptism and to make recommendations to the congregation regarding the applicants.
6. To communicate regularly with the membership on the state and direction of the spiritual life of the church.
7. To assist the Pastors in the administration of the ordinance of communion.
8. To encourage, hold accountable and, when necessary, coordinate the work of all boards, committees and other organizations of the church.
9. To present annually the nominating committee to the congregation.
10. To be the ultimate appellate board when disagreements and differences arise between boards, committees and members.
11. To help a new ministry find a board or committee from which it can gain encouragement and to which it is accountable.
12. In conjunction with the Finance Committee, to review budgets prepared by the Finance Committee for overall appropriateness in carrying out the ministries of the Church.
13. To assign responsibility for any endowment or memorial funds to a board or committee.
14. The Chairman shall serve as President of the Corporation.
15. To serve as trustees of the Corporation.
16. To assure compliance by the church with applicable civil laws and regulations while holding the Scriptures as highest authority.
17. To be the ultimate appellate board, subject to membership ratification, of issues of discipline involving members.
18. To carry out such other duties as prescribed by the Constitution or by vote of the church.

#### **4.4 ELDER EMERITUS (I)**

From time to time upon the recommendation of the Board of Elders, the Church may honor selected former Elders who have given years of faithful service to the Church and to our Lord. These individuals shall have evidenced a willingness to remain active in Elder affairs even though circumstances may prevent full participation. Elder Emeriti shall have all the rights and privileges of elected Elders except that they may not vote at Elder meetings.

## **Chapter 5 Diaconate**

### **QUALIFICATIONS (SEE 4.1)**

#### **5.1 ELECTION**

Elections shall be held annually to elect Deacons/Deaconesses to serve on the Diaconate.

Church members shall elect, at each Annual Meeting, a sufficient number of Deacons/Deaconesses to meet the needs of the caring ministries of the church, not to exceed fifteen. The usual term of office will be for three years. The election of a Deacon/Deaconess shall require at least a three-fourths vote of those present and voting at a regular or special meeting of the church.

#### **5.2 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The office of Deacon/Deaconess as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy, compassion, witness and service, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. The duties and responsibilities of the Diaconate shall be as follows:

1. To minister to those in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any in distress.
2. Administration of Funds. The Deacon Board shall administer and disburse monies from any funds, which may be established for educational purposes, or any other funds which have been deemed to be under the jurisdiction of the Board of Deacons.
3. To visit the members of the congregation.
4. To hold in trust the Deacons' Fund, and disburse the same for relief of the needy, giving precedence to members of the congregation.
5. To assist in preparing for the ordinances of the Church.
6. To assist the Elders in examining prospective members and candidates for baptism.
7. To carry out such other duties as may be delegated by the Elders with the approval of the congregation.

The members of the Deacon Board will oversee but not necessarily be limited to the following ministries: A ministry to the shut-ins and those who are sick; a ministry to the more elderly members of the church; administration of educational and memorial gift funds that have been placed under its jurisdiction.

## **Chapter 6 Other Offices**

## **6.1 GENERAL**

All other offices shall come under the general oversight of the Board of Elders, and shall be elected at the Annual Meeting by a vote of at least three-fourths of those present and voting, to a term of one year.

## **6.2 MODERATOR OF THE CONGREGATION**

The Moderator shall preside at the business meetings of the Church.

## **6.3 CLERK**

The Clerk shall keep a record of the proceedings of the congregation in its business meetings, which records shall be open for inspection by the active members of the Church. The Clerk shall keep a register of all the members of the Church, notify members of their election or appointment to special duties, shall issue letters of dismissal and all certificates granted by the Church, shall preserve all documents coming to hand and, at the expiration of office, shall turn the same over to his/her successor.

## **6.4 TREASURER**

The Treasurer shall receive all monies and disburse the same as directed by the Church or as otherwise provided for in these by-laws. He/she shall keep an account of all receipts and shall present vouchers of authority for all expenditures. The Treasurer shall present a financial statement at the close of each quarter and issue a monthly report to the Board of Elders. At the expiration of office he/she shall turn the books, papers and funds over to his/her successor. The Treasurer shall be a member of the Stewardship and/or Finance Committee. The Treasurer will insure that custodial and account reconciliation duties are separated between the Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer.

## **6.5 ASSISTANT TREASURER**

The Assistant Treasurer shall assist the Treasurer in performing his/her duties and shall be a member of the Stewardship and/or Finance Committee.

## **6.6 FINANCIAL SECRETARY**

The Financial Secretary shall be directly responsible to the Finance Committee and shall initially receive all monies of the Church, shall keep an account of all receipts, and shall deposit such funds in the Church's bank account. The Financial Secretary is also responsible for keeping individual records of donations. The Financial Secretary shall be a member of the Finance Committee.

## **6.7 MISSIONS TREASURER**

The Missions Treasurer shall disburse monies designated for Missions in accordance with the missionary budget and shall be a member of the Missions Committee as well as the Finance Committee.

## **6.8 AUDITOR**

The Auditor shall examine the accounts of all officers and organizations within the Church and shall present a written record of such examination at the Annual Meeting of the Church.

## **6.9 SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT**

(or other designated Sunday School title)

The Sunday School Superintendent shall direct all departments of the Sunday School (Nursery through Adult) that are not superintended by a member of the pastoral staff, shall be responsible for the assignment of curriculum, classes and students, and for the appointment and training of teachers by agreement with the Board of Elders and Pastor. The preceding responsibilities shall be coordinated with the policies established by the Christian Education Committee. The Sunday School Superintendent shall serve as a member of the Christian Education Committee.

## **Chapter 7 Boards**

### **7.1 BOARD OF ELDERS**

The Board of Elders shall consist of the Pastor and Overseeing Elders of the Church. It shall normally meet once a month to worship God and to pray for the Church of Christ, to receive reports and to transact business. An Overseeing Elder elected annually by the Board shall serve as Chairman; he may call a special meeting of the Board when he judges it necessary, and shall do so when requested by any two members of the Board. A quorum of the Board shall be one-half the Overseeing Elders.

### **7.2 DIACONTE**

The Diaconate shall consist of the Deacons and Deaconesses of the Church and an Overseeing Elder appointed by the Board of Elders. It shall normally meet once a month to worship God and to pray for the Church of Christ, to receive reports and to transact business. The Chairman may call a special meeting of the Board when he/she judges it necessary, and shall do so when requested by any two members of the Board. (A quorum of the Board shall be one-half of the Deacons or Deaconesses.)

## **Chapter 8 Committees**

### **8.1 GENERAL**

1. Overseeing Committees: Overseeing Committees shall oversee, review and support the work of the Ministry Committees under their care, shall normally meet monthly for worship, prayer and business, and shall submit monthly minutes with a summary paragraph to the Board of Elders. At-large members shall serve three-year terms with one-third of the members elected every year. No member shall serve more than three consecutive years unless this be waived by a special three-fourths vote of those present and voting at a regular or special business meeting. An Elder shall serve as an advisor to each Overseeing Committee. He will be ex-officio and a non-voting member. One of the members of the committee shall serve as Chairman. The number of at-large members indicated in paragraph 8.2 is a guideline and can be revised as deemed necessary by the Board of Elders.
2. Ministry Committees: Ministry Committees shall be constituted and disbanded by the Board of Elders as needed, and shall be directly responsible to those Overseeing Committees to which they may be assigned. They shall be charged with a specific task or ministry, its presentation to its Overseeing Committee, and control of expenditures within the approved budget. They shall normally meet monthly for worship, prayer and business, and shall submit monthly minutes with a summary paragraph to their Overseeing Committee.

### **8.2 OVERSEEING COMMITTEES**

1. Christian Education: This committee shall oversee, promote, and have responsibility for Christian Education in the Church, including the preparation of a budget for this ministry, its presentation to the Finance Committee,

and the control of expenditures within the approved budget. It shall consist of an Elder, *ex-officio*, the Superintendent of the Sunday School, and six at-large members.

2. Evangelism and Discipleship: This committee shall oversee, promote, and have responsibility for evangelism and discipleship in the Church, including the preparation of a budget for this ministry, its presentation to the Finance Committee, and the control of expenditures within the approved budget. It shall consist of a Pastor, an Elder and at-large members appointed by the Board of Elders.
3. Fellowship: This committee shall oversee, promote, and have responsibility for fellowship in the Church, including the preparation of a budget for this ministry, its presentation to the Finance Committee and the control of expenditures within the approved budget. It shall consist of an Elder, *ex-officio*, and nine at-large members.
4. Missions: this committee shall oversee, promote, and have responsibility for the Missions Program of the Church, including interviewing and recommending missions candidates for support, preparation of a Missions budget, submission, first to the Finance Committee, then to the congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting, and the control of expenditures within the approved budget. It shall consist of an Elder, *ex-officio*, the Missions Treasurer, and six at-large members.
5. Stewardship: This committee shall oversee, promote, and have responsibility for the property and the associated budget of the church; also plan for the maintenance, improvement and security of all church property. The committee shall consist of an Elder, *ex-officio*, the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer, and eight at-large members.
6. Worship: This committee shall assist the Senior Pastor in overseeing, promoting, and have responsibility for worship services in this Church, including preparation of a budget, its presentation of a budget, its presentation to the Finance Committee, and the control of expenditures within the approved budget. This committee shall be chaired by the Senior Pastor and six at-large members, including pastoral staff as deemed necessary by the Senior Pastor.
7. Finance: This committee shall develop financial plans and programs designed to provide the means of supporting the Church's ministry, considering the proposed budgets of all the committees (except Missions), preparing the consolidated budgets (including its own) for presentation, first to the Board of Elders, then to the congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting. This committee shall consist of the Treasurer, the Financial Secretary, the Missions Treasurer and an Elder, *ex-officio*, and two at-large members.

### 8.3 AD HOC

1. Nominating Committee: This committee shall prepare a slate of nominees for each office, board and overseeing committee, and their chairpersons, except the chairman of the Board of Elders, which board will elect its own chairman, and shall present the slate of nominees (first to the Elders, then to the congregation) in advance of the Annual Meeting, for approval at the meeting. It shall also assist in the recruitment of members of the Ministry Committees, as needed. It shall consist of two Overseeing Elders, one appointed by the Chairman of the Board of Elders to be Chairman, and three at-large members of the congregation, each member of this committee being nominated by the Board of Elders. The at-large members will be presented for election at a business meeting.
2. Pastoral Search Committee: This committee shall be responsible for presenting a suitable candidate for the position of Senior Pastor. The Elders shall nominate three Elders, one of whom shall be nominated for the position of Chairman, and two members of the congregation. The nominees shall be presented for confirmation by a secret ballot at a business meeting of the Church. The committee shall be responsible for filling the pulpit in the interim. A candidate shall be presented first to the Elders for their approval. With the Elders' concurrence the committee shall present the candidate for approval by secret ballot to the congregation at a special business meeting.

3. Pastoral Staff Search Committee: This committee shall be responsible for selection of candidates for the Pastoral Staff except for the Senior Pastor. It shall be appointed by the Elders and consist of the Senior Pastor who shall serve as chairman, two other Elders, and two members of the congregation at large. With the concurrence of the Elders, the committee shall present the candidate to the congregation at a regular or special business meeting for its approval by secret ballot.
4. Special Committees: Committees may be formed from time to time as requested and approved by the Board of Elders to care for specific issues. Examples include: Constitution Review, Fiftieth Anniversary and Building Committees.

## **Chapter 9 Meetings**

### **9.1 ANNUAL MEETING**

The Annual Meeting of the Church for the election of officers and the transaction of any other business shall be held at a time determined by the Elders as soon as is reasonable after the close of the fiscal year. A warrant stating the specific nature of the business to be transacted shall be prepared by the Elders and shall be publicly posted at least one week before said meeting. The fiscal year of the Church shall begin May 1 and continue through April 30 of the following year.

### **9.2 QUARTERLY BUSINESS MEETING**

Quarterly Business Meetings of the Church shall be held in September, December and March, when quarterly reports of the various committees and officers of the Church shall be presented. A warrant stating the specific nature of the business to be transacted shall be publicly posted at least one week before said meeting. Any business relative to the Church and not negated by the terms of these by-laws may be transacted at such meetings.

### **9.3 SPECIAL MEETINGS**

Special Meetings may be called by the Senior Pastor, the Elders, or any ten (10) members qualified to vote in such meetings. A warrant stating the specific nature of the business to be transacted shall be publicly posted at least one week before said meeting and shall be announced from the pulpit at each morning worship service preceding said meeting. No other business shall be transacted except that specifically stated in the warrant.

### **9.4 QUORUM**

Seventy-five (75) voting members shall constitute a quorum for the Annual Meeting and thirty (30) voting members shall constitute a quorum for Quarterly Business and Special Meetings.

### **9.5 MAJORITY VOTE**

Except as noted elsewhere, a simple majority of all members present and voting shall be required for any motion to carry.

## **Chapter 10 Amendments**

### **10.1 AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION**

The Constitution may be altered at any Annual Meeting or Quarterly Business Meeting of the Church, provided the proposed amendment or revision be inserted in the warrant calling the meeting, and that it receives three-quarters of the votes cast.

### **10.2 AMENDMENT OF DOCTRINAL STATEMENT**

The Doctrinal Statement may not be amended except by a favorable vote of 90 percent of all present at two regularly called business meetings of the Church.



## South Shore Baptist Church Doctrinal Statement

### 1. The Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men uniquely inspired by God, and is a perfect collection of spiritual instruction.<sup>1</sup> Its author is God, its aim is salvation<sup>2</sup> and its content is pure truth without error.<sup>3</sup> The Bible reveals everything we need to learn from God for life, godliness and salvation.<sup>4</sup> Therefore it forever remains the true center of Christian unity<sup>5</sup> and the supreme standard by which all human behavior, belief, and opinion should be tested.<sup>6</sup>

### 2. The True God

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God. God is the infinite, personal spirit who gave his Hebrew name as Yahweh (or the LORD). He is the all-powerful maker and sovereign ruler of heaven and earth who guides everything according to his perfect plan.<sup>7</sup> He is infinitely glorious in his love and holiness<sup>8</sup> and worthy of all our honor, confidence, and love.<sup>9</sup> In the unity of the one God there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup> Each of these three is fully God,<sup>11</sup> and each performs distinct and harmonious roles in the great work of redemption.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. The Creation, Fall and Depravity of Mankind

We believe that the first man and woman were created holy and in the image of God. Their purpose was to glorify God and enjoy him forever in loving and joyful obedience under his holy law.<sup>13</sup> By willful disobedience, though, they fell from that holy and blessed condition.<sup>14</sup> As a result all people sin and inherit a sinful nature at birth<sup>15</sup>—not that they are forced to sin, but they choose to<sup>16</sup> because their fallen nature completely lacks the holiness required by the law of God, and instead actively inclines them toward evil. Therefore all mankind is under the just sentence of eternal punishment<sup>17</sup> without defense or excuse.<sup>18</sup>

### 4. Jesus Christ and the Gospel

We believe the Gospel is the good news that salvation from sin is solely by grace<sup>19</sup> through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.<sup>20</sup> The Father appointed him to be born of a virgin, fully taking upon himself our nature, yet without sin.<sup>21</sup> He honored God's law by his personal obedience<sup>22</sup> and, by his death on the cross, he made a full atonement for us by satisfying God's wrath against our sins.<sup>23</sup> He rose bodily from the dead on the third day, and he is now enthroned in heaven.<sup>24</sup> As our advocate before the Father he combines tender compassion with the full perfection of God so that he is in every way qualified to be a suitable, sympathetic and all-sufficient Savior.<sup>25</sup>

## 5. The Freeness of Salvation

We believe that, through the gospel, the blessings of salvation are freely offered to all<sup>26</sup> and that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a heartfelt, penitent, and obedient faith.<sup>27</sup> Nothing prevents the salvation of even the greatest sinner but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel.<sup>28</sup> This rejection only increases his guilt and condemnation.<sup>29</sup> Christ's love and command compel us to persuasively present the gospel to everyone while displaying God's glory in lives transformed by his love and grace.<sup>30</sup>

## 6. Grace in Regeneration

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again.<sup>31</sup> Regeneration is the supernatural renewal of the sinner by the creation of a new, holy orientation of the inner person.<sup>32</sup> It is accomplished in a manner beyond our understanding by the power of the Holy Spirit, through God's word which is living and active,<sup>33</sup> so that it brings about our voluntary obedience to the gospel.<sup>34</sup> The distinctive evidence of regeneration is in its holy fruits such as repentance, faith, and love.<sup>35</sup>

## 7. Repentance and Faith

We believe that repentance and faith are requirements and are also inseparable gifts of grace formed in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God.<sup>36</sup> In repentance we are deeply convinced of our helplessness, guilt, and doom, and of the way of salvation by Christ.<sup>37</sup> We are enabled to turn to God with genuine sorrow, confession, and pleas for mercy.<sup>38</sup> By faith we also wholeheartedly receive Jesus Christ as our King and rely on him as the only and all-sufficient Savior.<sup>39</sup>

## 8. Justification

We believe that the great blessing which Christ<sup>40</sup> secures for believers is justification.<sup>41</sup> Justification includes the forgiveness of sin<sup>42</sup> and the promise of eternal life without compromising God's righteousness.<sup>43</sup> It is given not on the basis of any good works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus.<sup>44</sup> God imputes, or credits, the perfect righteousness of Christ to everyone who trusts in him.<sup>45</sup> Justification brings us into a state of peace and favor with God and obtains for us every other blessing we need now and for eternity.<sup>46</sup>

## 9. Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is the lifelong process<sup>47</sup> by which God renews us in his holy image, enabling us to overcome sin and grow in love and obedience.<sup>48</sup> It is a gradual process. Sanctification begins in regeneration.<sup>49</sup> It is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, as we continually use God's appointed means—especially the word of God, self-examination, fellowship, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.<sup>50</sup>

## 10. The Perseverance of the Saints

We believe that all who are real Christians, those elected by God, endure to the end<sup>51</sup> and that their persevering devotion and obedience to Christ is the mark which differentiates them from those who profess faith in a merely superficial way.<sup>52</sup> Real Christians may, for a time, fall into temptation and sin so that they dishonor their Master, bring grief and chastisement upon themselves and bring confusion and shame upon their brothers and sisters in Christ. They will, however, be restored to repentance so that their new nature prevails.<sup>53</sup> God watches over their welfare by a special providence<sup>54</sup> and keeps them by his power through faith that leads to salvation.<sup>55</sup>

## 11. God's Purpose of Grace

We believe that election is the eternal plan of God, in which he sovereignly and graciously chooses to regenerate, sanctify, and save sinners.<sup>56</sup> Election is perfectly consistent with responsible, free human choice, because God plans not only a person's salvation, but also all the circumstances that lead to it.<sup>57</sup> And so election encourages human effort.<sup>58</sup> Election is a glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable.<sup>59</sup> It excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy.<sup>60</sup> Election may be recognized by its results in all who truly believe the gospel.<sup>61</sup> It is the foundation of Christian assurance<sup>62</sup> and making certain of it demands and deserves our utmost diligence.<sup>63</sup>

## 12. The Law, Love and the Gospel

We believe that the law of God is the eternal, unchanging rule of right and wrong which is written both on human hearts and, more clearly, in the Bible.<sup>64</sup> The law is summarized in the great commandments to love the Lord with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>65</sup> The law is holy, just and good and all people owe it perfect obedience.<sup>66</sup> The only reason people can't keep it is because of their love of sin, so through the law we become conscious of sin.<sup>67</sup> To rescue us from this perversity is a chief purpose of the gospel, which restores us to genuine obedience to the holy law through Christ.<sup>68</sup>

## 13. A Gospel Church

We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers<sup>69</sup> associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel,<sup>70</sup> observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper,<sup>71</sup> governed by his teaching,<sup>72</sup> gathering on the Lord's Day for public observance of the means of grace,<sup>73</sup> giving to the work of the gospel, proclaiming the good news to the nations<sup>74</sup> and exercising the gifts, rights, responsibilities, and privileges invested in them by his word.<sup>75</sup> The only two church offices established in Scripture are elder (also called pastor, bishop, or overseer) and deacon<sup>76</sup> whose qualifications and duties are defined in the epistles to Timothy and Titus. As members of the body of Christ, all believers are called to join themselves to a local gospel church.<sup>77</sup>

## 14. Baptism

We believe that baptism is commanded by Christ for all Christians<sup>78</sup> and that it is the immersion in water of a believer<sup>79</sup> into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>80</sup> It shows, by means of a solemn and beautiful symbol, both our union by faith with the crucified, buried and risen Savior, and our death to sin and resurrection into a new life.<sup>81</sup>

## **15. The Lord's Supper**

We believe that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper in which a church, by reverent use of bread and cup, with self-examination, regularly commemorates the sacrificial love of Christ in his crucifixion as he commanded us.<sup>82</sup> In the Lord's Supper we commune with and are nourished spiritually by Christ through faith in his word, confirming our devotion to the Lord and to one another.<sup>83</sup>

## **16. Civil Government**

We believe that civil government is instituted by God for the interests and good order of human society.<sup>84</sup> Its leaders are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed<sup>85</sup> except only in matters opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>86</sup> who is the King of kings and Lord of lords.<sup>87</sup> Church and state are to be kept separate as having different functions under God. Each should fulfill its duties free from control or sponsorship by the other.

## **17. The Righteous and the Unrighteous**

We believe that only those who through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and are being sanctified by the Spirit of our God are truly righteous in his view.<sup>88</sup> There is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the unrighteous<sup>89</sup> and all those who continue in unrepentance and unbelief are, in his sight, wicked and under his curse.<sup>90</sup> This distinction continues to hold both in life and after death.<sup>91</sup>

## **18. The World to Come**

We believe that the end of the world is approaching, though God has not revealed its exact time.<sup>92</sup> At the end of the age Christ will descend from heaven.<sup>93</sup> He will raise the dead from the grave for final judgment.<sup>94</sup> A solemn separation will take place:<sup>95</sup> the unrighteous will be assigned to endless punishment and the righteous to endless joy in a new heaven and new earth.<sup>96</sup> This judgment will fix forever the final state of people in heaven or hell in accordance with God's righteousness.<sup>97</sup> Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

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## Notes

1. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Sam. 23:2; Acts 1:16; 3:21; John 10:35; Luke 16:29-31; Psa. 19:10-11; Rom. 3:1-2
2. 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Acts 11:14; Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:16; John 5:38-39
3. Prov. 30:5-6; John 17:17; Rev. 22:18-19; Rom. 3:4; 1 Cor. 2:12-13
4. Rom. 2:12; John 12:47-48; 1 Cor. 2:1-7; 4:3-4; 2 Pet. 1:3-4; Luke 10:10-16; 12:47-48
5. Phil. 3:15-16; Eph. 4:3-6; Phil. 1:27, 2:1-2; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 4:8-11
6. 1 John 4:1; Isa. 8:20; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Cor. 8:5; Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:6; Jude 3-5; Eph. 6:17; Phil. 1:9-11; 2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Cor. 4:6
7. Isa. 44:6-8; Exod. 6:2-3; John 4:24; Psa. 33:6; 83:18; 135:6; 147:5; Heb. 3:4; Rom. 1:20; Eph. 1:11; Jer. 10:10
8. Exod. 15:11; Isa. 6:3; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Rev. 4:6-8
9. Mark 12:30; Rev. 4:11; Matt. 10:37; Jer. 2:12-13
10. Matt. 28:19; John 15:26; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14
11. John 10:30; 5:17; 14:6-14; 17:5, 10; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 2:10-11; Phil. 2:5-6
12. Eph. 2:18; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-5; comp. 2, 7
13. Gen. 1:27-31; Eccl. 7:29; Acts 17:26; Gen. 2:16-17
14. Gen. 3:6-24; Rom. 5:12
15. Rom. 5:19; John 3:6; Psa. 51:5; Rom. 5:15-19; 8:7
16. Isa. 53:6; Gen. 6:12; Rom. 3:9-18
17. Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 1:18, 32; 2:1-16; Gal. 3:10; Matt. 15:18-20
18. Ezek. 18:19-20; Rom. 1:20; 3:19; Gal. 3:22
19. Eph. 2:5; Matt. 19:10; 1 John 4:10; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; Acts 15:11
20. John 3:16; 1:1-14; Heb. 4:14; 12:24
21. Phil. 2:6-7; Heb. 2:9, 14; 2 Cor. 5:21
22. John 8:46; Phil. 2:8; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 3:21
23. Isa. 53:4-5; Matt. 20:28; Rom. 4:25; 3:21-26; 1 John 4:10; 2:2; 1 Cor. 15:1-3; Heb. 9:13-15
24. Heb. 1:3, 8; 8:1; Col. 3:1-4
25. Heb. 7:25; Col. 2:9; Heb. 2:18; 7:26; Psa. 89:19
26. Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17; Luke 14:17-24
27. Rom. 16:26; Mark 1:15; Rom. 1:15-17
28. John 5:40; Matt. 23:37; Rom. 9:32; Prov. 1:24; Acts 13:46
29. John 3:19; Matt. 11:20; Luke 19:27; 2 Thess. 1:8
30. Matt. 5:13-16; 28:18-20; John 17:20-23; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:22-25; 2 Cor. 5:11, 14-15, 19-20
31. John 3:3, 6-7; 1 Cor. 2:14; Rev. 3:17-19; 21:27
32. 2 Cor. 5:17; Ezek. 36:26; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 2:28-29; 5:5; 1 John 4:7
33. John 3:8; 1:13; James 1:16-18; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 2:13
34. 1 Pet. 1:22-25; 1 John 5:1; Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:9-11
35. Eph. 5:9; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 5:16-23; Eph. 3:14-21; Matt. 3:8-10; 7:20; 1 John 5:4, 18
36. Mark 1:15; Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8; 1 John 5:1
37. John 16:8; Acts 2:37-38; 16:30-31
38. Luke 18:13; 15:18-21; James 4:7-10; 2 Cor. 7:11; Rom. 10:12-13; Psa. 51
39. Rom. 10:9-11; Acts 3:22-23; Heb. 4:14; Psa. 2:6; Heb. 1:8; 8:1-2; 2 Tim. 1:12
40. John 1:16; Eph. 3:8
41. Acts 13:39; Isa. 53:11-12; Rom. 8:1
42. Rom. 5:9; Zech. 13:1; Matt. 9:6; Acts 10:43
43. Rom. 5:17, 21; Titus 3:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:7; 1 John 2:25, 5:11-12;
44. Rom. 4:4-5; 5:21; 6:23; Phil. 3:7-9
45. Rom. 5:19; 3:24-26; 4:23-25; 1 John 2:12
46. Rom. 5:1-3, 11; 1 Cor. 1:30-31; Matt. 6:33; 1 Tim. 4:8
47. Prov. 4:18; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1; 2 Pet. 1:5-8; Phil. 3:12-16
48. 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23; 2 Cor. 7:1; 13:9; Eph. 1:4
49. Rom. 8:5; John 3:6; Phil. 1:9-11; Eph. 1:13-14
50. Phil. 2:12-13; John 14:15-17, 26; Eph. 1:13; 4:11-12, 30; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 13:5; Luke 11:35; 9:23; Heb. 10:24-25; Ephesians 4:12-16; Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:18
51. John 8:31; Hebrews 3:6, 14; 1 John 2:27-28; 3:9; 5:18
52. 1 John 2:19; John 13:18; Matt. 13:20-21; John 6:66-69; Job 17:9
53. 2 Sam. 12:14; Psa. 32:3-4; 51:10-12; Matt. 26:70-75; Luke 22:32; Eph. 4:30; 1 John 5:3-5
54. Rom. 8:28; Matt. 6:30-33; Jer. 32:40; Psa. 121:3; 91:11-12
55. Phil. 1:6; 2:12-13; Jude 24-25; Heb. 1:14; 2 Kings 6:16; Heb. 13:5; 1 John 4:4; Rom. 16:20
56. 2 Tim. 1:8-9; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; Rom. 11:5-6; John 15:16; 1 John 4:19
57. 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Acts 13:48; John 10:16; Matt. 20:16; Acts 15:14
58. 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Cor. 9:22; Rom. 8:28-30; John 6:37-40; 2 Pet. 1:10
59. Exod. 33:18-19; Matt. 20:15; Eph. 1:11; Rom. 9:23-24; Jer. 31:3; Rom. 11:28-29; James 1:17-18; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 11:32-36

60. 1 Cor. 4:7; 1:26-31; Rom. 3:27; 4:16; Col. 3:12; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; 15:10; 1 Pet. 5:10; Acts 1:24; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Luke 18:7; John 15:16; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:12
61. 1 Thess. 1:4-10; 1 John 2:3-6
62. Rom. 8:28-30; Isa. 42:16, 46:3-4; Rom. 11:29
63. 2 Pet. 1:10-11; Phil. 3:12; Heb. 6:11
64. Exod. 20:1-17; Rom. 3:31; Matt. 5:17; Luke 16:17; Rom. 3:20; 4:15
65. Deut. 6:4-5; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 7:12; 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37; Romans 13:7-10; Galatians 6:10; 1 John 5:1-3
66. Matt. 5:17-21; Rom. 7:7, 12, 14, 22; Gal. 3:21; Psa. 119; John 7:19; Rom. 3:19-20; 7:7-11
67. Rom. 8:7-8; Josh. 24:19; Jer. 13:23; John 6:44; 5:44
68. Rom. 8:2, 4; 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 1:5; Heb. 8:10; Jude 20-21; Heb. 12:14; Matt. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 12:28
69. 1 Cor. 1:1-6; Matt. 18:17; Acts 5:11-13; 8:12; 10:47-48; 1 Cor. 4:17; 14:23; 3 John 9; 1 Tim. 3:5
70. Acts 2:41-42; 2 Cor. 8:5; Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 5:12-13
71. 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 3:6; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:6; 2 Cor. 2:7; 1 Cor. 4:17
72. Matt. 28:20; John 14:15; 15:12; 1 John 4:21; John 14:21; 1 Thess. 4:2; 2 John 6; Gal. 6:2; all the Epistles
73. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10; Heb. 10:24-25
74. 1 Cor. 9:4-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 3 John 5-8; Phil. 4:14-20
75. Eph. 4:7; 1 Cor. 14:12; Phil. 1:27; 1 Cor. 12:14
76. Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; 15:22; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1
77. Matt. 16:18-19; 18:17-18; Rom. 12:4-10; 1 Cor. 12:25-27; Heb. 10:24-25, 13:17
78. Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42, 8:12-13, 36-39; Rom. 6:3-5; Galatians 3:26-27;
79. Acts 8:36-39; Matt. 3:5-6; John 3:22-23; 4:1-2; Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 16:32-34; 18:8
80. Matt. 28:19; Acts 10:47-48, 19:1-6; Gal. 3:27-28
81. Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:20-21; Acts 22:16
82. 1 Cor. 11:26; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20
83. 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:27-30
84. Rom. 13:1-7; Deut. 16:18; 2 Sam. 23:2-4; Exod. 18:21-23; Jer. 30:21
85. Matt. 22:21; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13; 1 Tim. 2:1-8
86. Acts 5:29; Matt. 10:28; Dan. 3:15-18; 6:7-10; Acts 4:18-20
87. Matt. 23:10; Rom. 14:4; Rev. 19:16; Psa. 72:11; Psa. 2; Rom. 14:9-13
88. Rom. 1:17; 7:6; 1 John 2:29; 3:7; Rom. 6:18, 22; 1 Cor. 11:32; Prov. 11:31; 1 Pet. 4:17-18
89. Mal. 3:18; Prov. 12:26; Isa. 5:20; Gen. 18:23; Jer. 15:19-21; Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 6:16
90. 1 John 5:19; Gal. 3:10; John 3:36; Isa. 57:21; Psa. 10:4; Isa 55:6-7; Eph. 2:1-3
91. Prov. 14:32; Luke 16:25; John 8:21-24; Prov. 10:24; Luke 12:4-5; 9:23-26; John 12:25-26; Eccl. 3:17; Matt. 7:13-14
92. 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; Heb. 1:10-12; Matt. 24:35; 1 John 2:17; Matt. 28:20; 13:39-40; 2 Pet. 3:3-13
93. Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; Heb. 9:28; Acts 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-11
94. Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:12-59; Luke 14:14; Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; 6:40; 11:25-26; 2 Thess. 1:8-10; Acts 10:42
95. Matt. 13: 37-43, 49; 24:30-31; 25:31-33
96. Matt. 25:35-41; Rev. 22:11-12; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Mark 9:43-48; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jude 7; Phil. 3:19; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; John 4:36; 2 Cor. 4:18
97. Rom. 3:5-6; 2 Thess. 1:6-12; Heb. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 4:5; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:2-16; Rev. 20:10-15; 1 John 2:28; 4:17