

ARTICLE II

CONFESSION OF FAITH

We believe the Bible is God's complete, written revelation. The sixty-six canonical books of the Old and New Testaments were inspired by God and written by Spirit-directed men. The Scriptures are without error in the original manuscripts, and providentially preserved. They are therefore infallible and supremely authoritative in all matters to which they speak. The Bible is sufficient and trustworthy for life, faith, conduct, and practice.

We believe there is but one true interpretation of Scripture, although there may be several applications. The true meaning lies in the text and is that which the divinely-guided author willed to convey. It is recoverable through a humble and careful application of the literal (grammatical-historical-contextual) method of interpretation of a text, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in the community of Christ. The Holy Spirit illumines the text, enabling the reader to embrace the significance of that which God has communicated and to see the glory of Christ in the Word of God.

We believe God is spirit and eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They execute distinct but mutually responsive roles. They are co-equals in essence and infinite perfections. They dwell in unity and sovereignly act to create, rule, sustain, save, and judge. We believe God's knowledge is exhaustive – that he fully knows the past, present, and future independent of human decisions and actions. God is majestic in holiness, all-powerful and beautiful beyond description. He is transcendent above and immanent throughout everything he has made. He is self-existent, immutable, and works all things according to the counsel of his will in order to bring glory to himself. Since this personal God is our Maker and Redeemer, He is worthy of our worship, confidence, and obedience.

We believe in God the Father. He is infinite and perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. The Father does everything in accordance with his perfect will, though his sovereignty neither eliminates nor minimizes our personal responsibility. He concerns himself mercifully and justly in the affairs of humanity. He hears and answers prayer, and saves from sin and death all who come to him through Jesus Christ.

We believe in God the Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God's eternal Son. God the Son has precisely the same nature, attributes, and perfections as God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. As true God and true man he is the preeminent revelation of God. In the fullness of time, God sent His Son, who emptied himself of his eternal glory, was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, provided a substitutionary atonement by his blood shed on the cross, was buried, and was raised bodily from the dead. After his resurrection he appeared to his disciples and ascended into heaven where he sits at the right hand of the Father. He will return from heaven in glory. Jesus is the only mediator between God and humanity – no one comes to the Father except through him. He is the Head of the church and intercedes with the Father as high priest and advocate on our behalf.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit. He was sent by the Father and the Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus Christ and implements Christ's work of redemption. He regenerates, indwells, and seals us at conversion, securing us in Christ forever. Spirit baptism into the Body of Christ also takes place at conversion. The Holy Spirit fills, sanctifies, leads, comforts, and intercedes for us, manifesting his presence by advancing our progress in holiness and empowering us for godly living and service. He distributes spiritual gifts to believers as he wills for the common good. No gift signifies his baptism or filling, nor does any gift provide authoritative revelation beyond what has already been revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Life in the Spirit includes trials and does not guarantee physical health, material wealth, nor confirming outward signs.

We believe humankind, male and female, was uniquely created by God in his image. God made us to exercise responsible dominion over the earth, to enjoy a relationship with Him forever, and to bring Him glory. God calls all people to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves. Because people bear God's image, human life has intrinsic worth and dignity and is therefore precious from beginning, at fertilization, until death when our spirit returns to God who gave it. God established marriage to be a lifelong covenant relationship between one man and one woman. Marriage so defined is sanctioned by God as the only legitimate context for intimate sexual expression, and is the foundation for human family.

We believe sin is a rebellious determination to place our will ahead of God's will. God created Adam and Eve free from sin. When they sinned, death entered the world. God's image was marred, but not lost. Adam and Eve were separated from God, and their now fallen, sinful nature passed to all of humanity. We are all sinners by nature and choice and enter this world spiritually dead, utterly helpless to free ourselves from sin's guilt or to reconcile ourselves to God. Those who do not repent and receive God's gracious gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ remain spiritually dead and will spend eternity apart from God's presence.

We believe God provides and offers eternal salvation. Salvation is based upon God's sovereign grace and secured by the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Apart from his death there is no means of salvation. We are saved by grace through personal faith, not by human merit, works, or ritual. Salvation provides us with justification, sanctification, and glorification. Salvation results in personal transformation and calls us to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

We believe Jesus Christ is building his church. The church universal began on Pentecost and is composed of all persons who have been born again by the Holy Spirit. We believe the church universal expresses itself in local assemblies of believers who have associated themselves together for the advance of the gospel, worship, instruction, service, and accountable community. In our faith tradition, local church membership is open to those who have been baptized [immersed] upon a credible confession of faith. Jesus gave the local church two ordinances: believer's baptism by immersion to publicly declare personal faith, and the Lord's Supper to proclaim his death until he returns.

We believe in the priesthood of believers. Each of us is free to worship God according to conscience and is responsible to him in matters of faith. Each of us is free to minister for the common good. Each local congregation is free to govern itself and to foster interdependent relationships with other churches. Each local congregation is free from state regulation, except for health and safety issues. The New Testament includes two local church offices: elders (biblically qualified males; also known as pastors and overseers) who serve in areas of leadership, and deacons, (biblically qualified males and females) who serve in areas of compassion and church management.

We believe God created a host of spirit beings known as angels, cherubim and seraphim. These majestic beings possess great power and intellect. They were created to serve God and those who inherit salvation. Satan (the Devil) is a powerful angelic being who led a revolt against God. Those spirits (demons) who followed him in his rebellion now deceive, seduce people to evil, and promote destruction upon the earth. They are the world rulers of Satan's dark realm, energizing the world's rebellion against God. Jesus Christ defeated Satan and his demonic followers by his cross. In this present age, Jesus is plundering Satan's domain, and will, one day, cast Satan and his followers into the Lake of Fire forever.

We believe that Jesus Christ will return from heaven with his saints at the end of this present age to establish his millennial kingdom on earth. He will come personally and physically in power and great glory on a day known only to God. All people, both the saved and the lost, will be raised bodily to stand before their great Judge, Jesus Christ. All will be accountable to him for the things done in the body, whether good or bad, and all will receive just rewards and punishments. Those who have accepted God's gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ will be conformed to His body of glory and will receive their glorious inheritance in God's Kingdom. All who did not receive Jesus in their lifetime will be condemned for their unbelief and cast into eternal punishment. We look forward to the eternal state, a new heaven and a new earth, where we will enjoy God's presence forevermore.