

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

-Hebrews 11:1

“Splendor and majesty are before God; strength and joy are in God’s place.”

-1 Chronicles 16:27

Faith in God is a progressive, radical, world-changing calling. Following the way of our Creator into the created world requires of us faith worth studying, evolving, believing, and proclaiming. This confession is an attempt to articulate that faith. Because our limited minds will never understand God, and our beliefs are not the subject of our worship, these articles are to be seen as a starting point for dialogue, not a point of division. With most Christians through most of Christian history, we affirm the Nicene Creed.

## **I. God**

God is. God created all that was, all that is, and all that ever shall be in the visible and invisible world. God is revealed to us in three persons: Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit. All three members of the Godhead are of the same substance and are one God. *Genesis 1:26, 1 Chronicles 16:27, Isaiah 61:1, Matthew 28:19, Mark 1:10-11*

### **a. God the Creator**

God is revealed to us in the Scriptures as a loving Father, Mother, Creator, King, Judge, Healer, Sustainer, and Sovereign over all things. God is Love. God is all knowing, all loving, all good, and eternal.

*Genesis 1:1, Genesis 2:4, Psalm 145:8, Matthew 5:9-10, Ephesians 2:4*

### **b. God the Christ**

God is incarnate on this earth as Jesus Christ. Fully God and Fully human, Jesus was born of a virgin as the savior of the world. Christ invites us to build the Kingdom of God, teaches us the best way to live, redeems us of sin, and defeated all powers of hell, sin, and death in the resurrection. Jesus is co-eternal with God.

*Isaiah 53:5, Jeremiah 23:5-6, Mark 15:39, John 1:1, Hebrews 1:3*

### **c. God the Holy Spirit**

God and Jesus sent us a helper and mediator in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit connects us to God, convicts us of sin, intercedes on our behalf, and gifts us with all that is necessary to build the Kingdom of God and encourage the Body of Christ.

*Numbers 27:18, 1 Samuel 10:10, John 3:5, John 14:17, Acts 1:8*

## **II. Creation**

**a. The Created World**

In God's own way for God's own purposes, God created a beautifully intricate world, and a cosmos we can never fully comprehend. On our planet, God created time, life, water, air, weather, land, plants, and animals. God created this world and declared it "good". God is also the creator of the worlds we cannot see.

*Psalm 19, Psalm 33:6, Jeremiah 32:17, Romans 8:19, Hebrews 3:4*

**b. Humanity**

As the culmination of creation and the commissioned caretakers of the earth, God created humanity in the very image of the divine; higher than animals but lower than God. Humanity experienced the original blessing of God in creation, and each individual chose to live in a way outside of God's blessing. By our own action we hurt ourselves, others, and attempt to value our own opinions over the loving rebuke of our heavenly Parent. These actions are called sin.

*Genesis 1:28, Genesis 3:11, Psalm 139:13-14, Mark 10:6, Ephesians 2:10*

**III. Grace**

Grace, as understood in the context of the Christian faith, is the process by which God reconciles and redeems us into Holy relationship once more.

**a. Regeneration**

Regeneration is the process by which God creates in us a new life. This is the beginning of God's grace in us, begging us to be "born again", with Christ as our savior, the Holy Spirit as our Guide, and God as our loving Parent. This new life bears in us repentance.

*Genesis 17:5, Genesis 35:10, John 3:3, Ephesians 2:5-6, 1 Peter 1:22-23*

**b. Justification**

Justification is the process by which God, through the victory of Christ on the cross, acquits us of all sin and wrong. We are in relationship with God because of justification.

*Genesis 15:6, Habakkuk 2:4, Luke 23:43, Romans 5:1, Galatians 3:24*

**c. Sanctification**

Sanctification is the process by which God brings about in us practices of holiness and forms in us the character of Jesus Christ. While regeneration and justification are instant upon becoming a Christian, sanctification is a life-long process of growth.

*Deuteronomy 7:6-8, Leviticus 20:7-8, John 15:6, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Colossians 3:16*

**d. Glorification**

Glorification is the final stage of grace; the final destination of all Christians, the glory and perfection of God's eternity.

*Leviticus 10:3, Exodus 34:35, Matthew 17:2, Colossians 3:4, 1 Peter 5:4*

## IV. Our Work

### a. The Kingdom of God

Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God more than any other subject in his ministry. We understand the Kingdom of God to be two realities: the Kingdom of heaven and the Kingdom on earth. All believers are bound for an eventual home in the Kingdom of heaven upon their death, because of the victory of Christ on the cross. While still inhabiting our mortal bodies, Christ calls us to build the Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven. This is the redemptive and grace filled work of both social justice and evangelism.

*Psalm 103:19, Daniel 2:44, Matthew 16:19, John 5:24, Acts 28:31*

#### i. Social Justice

As redeemed people of faith, and the recipients of a grace beyond measure, our call on this earth is to provide food and drink to the hungry and thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, comfort the sick, and visit those in prison. All believers are to do this work, and if a Christian leaves this world worse than they found it, one might question the fruit of their salvation.

*Deuteronomy 15:7-8, Micah 6:8, Luke 4:18-19, 1 Corinthians 10:24, James 2:15-16*

#### ii. Missions

Along with practical social justice, we are a people called by Christ to go into all nations and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that Jesus has taught us. All Christians are required to do this in their daily lives, and support mission efforts. Evangelistic efforts should take special care to never impose non-biblical Western norms, the colonization of any of God's people, and should seek to find the value of all people and cultures.

*1 Chronicles 16:24, Psalm 96:3, Mark 13:10, Acts 13:47, Romans 10:14*

### b. The Body of Christ

Christ instituted the Church as a called out body of regenerate believers for the worship of God, the practice of the ordinances, and the betterment of the world. The Church is illustrated in the Bible as the body of Christ, the spouse of Christ, the light of the world, and the salt of the earth.

*Genesis 2:3, Exodus 20:8, Matthew 16:18, 1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 4:4*

#### i. The Worship of God

One of the primary purposes of the Church is the worship of God. This is carried out in our daily lives, our fellowship, our worship services, our educational pursuits, our giving, the reading of Scriptures, our music, the arts, our work in the world, in our training and exhorting of one another to godliness.

*Exodus 20:2, 1 Chronicles 16:23, John 4:24, Romans 12:1, Hebrews*

10:25

**ii. The Ordinances**

Christ instituted two ordinances in His ministry: baptism and communion.

**1. Baptism**

Baptism is the immersion of believers in water as a symbol of their death with Christ and their resurrection to walk in the newness of life. It is carried out in the name of the Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit, and serves as a powerful symbol of the work of redemption in their lives.

*Leviticus 15:10, Ezekiel 16:9, Luke 3:21, Acts 22:16, Galatians 3:27*

**2. The Lord's Supper**

Christ instituted a remembrance of Himself during His last meal on earth. Through bread and wine, we remember with the church the body and blood of Christ, shed for us on the cross. This is a solemn, powerful time for personal reflection, and worship with the gathered body of Christ. Because Christ served this meal to everyone present, including His betrayer, we should never limit anyone, even and especially non-Christians from dining at the table of grace with us.

*Genesis 14:18, Exodus 16:4, Luke 21:19, John 6:35, Acts 2:46*

**iii. The Betterment of the World**

Through social justice and missions, the Church must be in a daily pattern of making the world better.

**V. The Scriptures**

The 66 books of the Old and New Testament are a record of God's revelation to humanity. They are a treasure of God-breathed stories, law, genealogies, parables, poetry, and letters profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. The Scriptures are only below God in authority for our lives, and the believer should submit themselves to the teaching of the Bible. Our best contextual and scriptural understandings of the grand narrative the Text should guide our lives. All Scripture should be interpreted through the lens of the Gospel and words of Jesus Christ in a faithful context.

*Psalms 19:7-11, Psalm 33:4, Matthew 4:4, Romans 10:8, 2 Timothy 3:16*

**VI. Other Things**

**a. Religious Liberty**

It is the duty of every Christian to ensure that every human being is free to worship in any way they choose, as long as those practices do not impede anyone else. Christianity should never be favored by any government, and Christians

should not purposely seek special exemptions and treatment from their civil authority. Because government is ordained by God, believers must submit cheerfully to every law that is not in opposition to the Way of Jesus Christ. *Leviticus 19:34, Psalm 46:10, Mark 12:17, Galatians 5:13, 1 Peter 2:16*

**b. Creation Care**

In creation we were commissioned to be the caretakers of the whole earth. As part of that duty, we should work wherever possible to take care of the planet we were given. Climate change, the extinction of animals, and the depletion of our natural resources is the result of our sin, and we should be working to repent from and reverse these things.

*Genesis 9:13, Psalm 135:7, Matthew 6:19, Colossians 1:20, 2 Corinthians 5:17*

**c. Human Equality**

The church has often sinned in finding others to be less than human. Throughout history, we have sometimes treated diverse races in horrible, unspeakable ways. As the Church, we should repent of such things, working hard for racial reconciliation and fighting all outward and inward signs of racism. The church has also been a place where the value of women has not been fully realized as their voices have been silenced and the ugly tradition of patriarchy has appeared. This is wrong, and part of the church's work should be repentance and the full empowering of the women in our midst. As we progress, we must constantly examine ourselves and our practices to find those whom we are oppressing and those whom we silence. This requires the hard work of listening to those we do not understand, and allowing the risen Christ to continue to speak to us in new ways. If we are using the Bible to oppress people we do not understand, we have lost sight of our faith.

*Deuteronomy 10:17, Proverbs 22:2, Mark 12:31, Galatians 3:28, Hebrews 12:14*

**d. Cooperation**

Each church of Jesus Christ, in our understanding, is a fully autonomous, independent Body filled with of fully autonomous, independent priests choosing to worship, serve, and grow together. Churches may choose to work together for common fellowship, worship, social justice, advocacy, missions, and education. The bodies churches may form with one another must always submit to the autonomous churches that formed them; excluding churches from this body for any non-Gospel related issue cannot and should not be done.

*Psalm 133:1, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, Mark 6:7, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Peter 3:8*