

ARTICLE V

STATEMENT OF FAITH

1. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the verbally inspired Word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible and God breathed. (II Timothy 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:20, 21; Matthew 5:18; John 16:12, 13)

2. THE GODHEAD

We believe in one Triune God, eternally existing in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - CO-eternal in being, CO-identical in nature, CO-equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections. (Deuteronomy 6:4; II Corinthians 13:14)

3. THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

a. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men. (John 1:1, 2, 14; Luke 1:35)

b. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice; and that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead. (Romans 3:24, 25; I Peter 2:24; Ephesians 1:7; I Peter 1:3-5)

c. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God, where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate. (Acts 1:9, 10; Hebrews 9:24; 7:25; Romans 8:34; I John 2:1, 2)

4. THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

a. We believe that the Holy Spirit is a person possessing all the attributes of God. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and of judgment; and, He is the Supernatural Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling and sealing them into the day of redemption. (John 16:8-11; II Corinthians 3:6; I Corinthians 12:12-14; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13, 14)

b. We believe that He is the Divine Teacher who guides believers into all truth; and that it is the privilege and duty of all the saved to be filled with the Spirit. (John 16:13; Ephesians 5:18)

5. THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF MAN

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that in Adam's sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God; and that man is totally depraved and of himself utterly unable to remedy his lost condition. (Genesis 1:26, 27; Romans 3:22, 23; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3, 12)

6. SALVATION

We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins. (Ephesians 2:8-10; John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; I Peter 1:18, 19)

7. THE ASSURANCE OF BELIEVER'S SALVATION

a. We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1,38,39; I Corinthians 1:4-8; I Peter 1:5)

b. We believe that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word; which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian Liberty as an occasion to the flesh. (Romans 13:13, 14; Galatians 5:13; Titus 2:11-15)

8. SEPARATION

We believe that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord, and that separation from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices and associations is commanded of God. (I John 2:15-17; II John verses 9-11; II Corinthians 6:14-17; 7:1)

9. **MISSIONS**

We believe that it is the duty (Acts 23:1) of the saved to witness by life and by word to the truths of Holy Scripture and to seek to proclaim the Gospel to all mankind. (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; II Corinthians 5:19, 20)

10. **THE MINISTRY AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

a. We believe that the Holy Spirit alone administers spiritual gifts to the church, not to glorify Himself or the gifts by ostentatious displays, but to glorify Christ and implement His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith. (John 16:13; Acts 1:8; I Corinthians 12:4-11; II Corinthians 3:18)

b. We believe that the Holy Spirit is sovereign in bestowing all of His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today. We believe that the bestowal and Biblical use of all spiritual gifts is in order until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We emphasize that the Biblical description and prescription for the use of any spiritual gift must be followed at all times and that people are not to bring disorder to the local body. Respect for the pastoral/elder oversight regarding the exercise of gifts is necessary at all times. Proper Biblical instruction should precede the use of any gift by believers in the church.

(I Corinthians 12-14; 13:8-13; Hebrews 13:17)

c. We believe that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith, in accord with His own will, for the sick and afflicted. (John 15:7; I John 5:14, 15; James 5:13-16)

11. **THE CHURCH**

We believe that the church, which is the body and the espoused bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons of this present age. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 5:25-27; I Corinthians 12:12-14; II Corinthians 11:2)

12. **DISPENSATIONALISM**

We believe in the dispensational view of Bible interpretation, that is that God has worked in various ways and through various peoples during different time periods to bring His salvation message to people, but reject the extreme teaching known as "Hyperdispensationalism", such as that which opposes either the Lord's table or water baptism as a Scriptural means of testimony for the church in this age. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:41, 42; 18:8; I Corinthians 11:23-26)

13. **THE WORK AND JUDGMENT OF SATAN**

We believe that Satan is a person, the author of sin and the cause of the fall; that he is the open and declared enemy of God and man; and he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire. (Job 1:6, 7; Isaiah 14:12-17; Matthew 4:2-11; 25:41; Revelation 20:10)

14. **THE RAPTURE AND SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST**

We believe in the "Blessed Hope", the personal imminent, pre-tribulation and pre-millennial coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His redeemed ones; and in His subsequent return to earth, with His saints to establish His Millennial Kingdom. (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1-6; I Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Revelation 3:10)

15. **THE ETERNAL STATE**

a. We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment. (Matthew 25:46; John 5:28, 29; 11:25, 26; Revelation 20:5, 6, 12, 13)

b. We believe that the souls of the redeemed are at death absent from the body and present with the Lord, where in conscious bliss they await the first resurrection, when spirit, soul and body are reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord. (Luke 23:43; Revelation 20:4-6; II Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 3:21; I Thessalonians 4:16,17)

c. We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain, after death, in conscious misery until the resurrection of the lost when with soul and body reunited they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment, and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment. (Luke 16:19-26; Matthew 25:41-46; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Jude verses 6, 7; Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 20:11-15)

16. **CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

We believe in and practice local church discipline of a sinning, unrepentant believer who is a part of this local assembly. (Matthew 18:15-18; Romans 16:17; I Corinthians 5; II Corinthians 2:5-7; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 5:11; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15; I Timothy 5:20; Titus 3:10; II John 1:9, 10) These sins are defined by Scripture and include irresolvable disputes between members, persistent teaching of false doctrines, and continuing immorality and disorderliness. The procedure to be used is outlined in Matthew 18:15-18 and I Corinthians 5. The intent of church discipline is to restore a sinning brother or sister to functional capacity in the local body (Galatians 6:1) and to maintain the holiness of the local assembly (I Peter 1:14-17). We must assure the sinning believer of the riches of God's love and the sufficiency of God's forgiveness as we earnestly petition the person to turn from their sin. At the same time, the fact that God will judge his or her actions in His own time must be stressed (Hebrews 10:26-31).

17. **MARRIAGE**

We believe that the institution of marriage was intended by God to be a permanent, lifelong relationship between *one* man and *one* woman in covenant commitment, regardless of trials, sickness, financial reverses or emotional stresses that may ensue and is therefore the only legitimate marriage (Matthew 19:5, 6). *God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female, and these distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen. 1:26,27).*

We believe marriage is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ *and His eternal Bride, the Church (Eph. 5:21-33)*, and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. *Thus, any marriage ceremony at Grace Community Church is considered to be a Christian worship service in honor of the Lord God Almighty. Being biblical worship services, weddings on church property shall be officiated by one or more ordained or licensed ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ who subscribe to our statement of faith, entirely, and are approved to perform such service by the Council of Elders of Grace Community Church. The man and the woman being married must subscribe to, in faith and conduct, the statement of faith of Grace Community Church. They must be members of Grace Community Church. We do not do weddings for those outside of the aforementioned parameters. Grace Community Church reserves the right to decline the availability of its facilities or ministries for any wedding if it is determined that one or both parties are not biblically and/or legally qualified to marry or meet the above criteria. Such determinations may be made by a pastor or the Council of Elders of Grace Community Church, subject to the biblical beliefs of the church. No minister or employee of the church shall officiate at any marriage on campus unless such marriage is consistent with our statement of faith.*

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, *bigamy, polygamy*, adultery and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sexual intimacy. *We do not consider any relationship, behavior or activity as stated in the previous sentence to be legitimate in the eyes of God, and thus they cannot constitute a biblical marriage as set forth by Almighty God, even though the local, state or federal government might consider them to be legally binding as such.* We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. (Gen. 1:26,27; 2:24; 19:5,13; 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom 1: 26-29; I Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4). We believe that these are not unforgivable sins *for the truly repentant person.*

We believe that other alternative relationships such as "common law", "domestic partner", "significant other", etc. are not sanctioned marriage relationships under God and as such do not qualify for the recognition of a marriage.

18. **DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE**

We believe that divorce in the Scriptures is permitted only because of man's sin. Christ clearly teaches this in Matthew 19:3-9. Divorce according to God's law was allowed only because of "hardness of heart".

We believe that although Jesus permitted divorce in some situations, God hates divorce and with His help a marriage can survive the worst sins. (Hosea 1-3; Malachi 2:14-16)

We believe that there are 2 grounds for divorce. The only New Testament grounds for divorce are sexual sin or desertion by an unbeliever (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:12-15).

We believe that those who divorce on any other grounds have sinned against God and their partner, and if they remarry it is adultery (1 Thess. 4:1-8; Mark 10:11-12; 1 Cor. 7:10-11; Matthew 5:23-24).

We believe that remarriage is permitted for the faithful partner when the divorce was on biblical grounds (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:10-15).

We believe and practice that those who pursue a divorce on unbiblical grounds are subject to church discipline (Matt. 18:15-17).

We believe that if the divorce was unbiblical and the guilty party repents (2 Cor. 7:9, 10), God's grace is active at that point and a sign of their repentance will be the implementation of 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 which would involve reconciliation with the former spouse if possible (Deut. 24:1-4). If a remarriage is unbiblical, leading to a state of adultery, God's grace is activated through repentance before Him and restoration to the local church body (2 Corinthians 2:1-11).

19. CREATION

We believe that the Triune God, for His own glory, without the use of pre-existing materials, brought into being the whole visible and invisible universe (Genesis 1:1-2; John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Hebrews 11:3). God, who exists independently of His creation, in six literal days (actual 24-hour periods of time) completed His creation work by filling the heavens with the sun, moon, stars, and other heavenly bodies in their mature form, and He accomplished all of His earthly creation work, including the creation of mankind in this time frame (Gen. 1:1-2:2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ex. 31:12-17). The proper interpretation of other passages of Scripture is dependent upon the correct interpretation of the Genesis account of Creation. In addition, we believe that the earth is relatively young, being created roughly 6,000 years ago as was the testimony of the church for the first 18 centuries.

Evidence for the literal 6-Day/Young earth view which we espouse:

1. The Bible clearly teaches that God created the heavens and the earth and all that they contain in six literal, 24-hour days a few thousand years ago. The Hebrew word for a "day" in Genesis is "Yom." The normal sense of the word throughout Scripture is a 24-hour period of time. To the Hebrew, a "Yom" was from sundown to sundown, this being emphasized in the Genesis account where we repeatedly see the wording "and it was evening and morning" in reference to one 24-hour cycle.

2. The statement of Exodus 20:11 explicitly refers to a literal 24-hour day, ruling out all attempts to fit in thousands, million, and even billions of years in Genesis 1.

3. The Bible teaches that death and a worldwide curse upon all things was a result of Man's sin (Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12). The gap, day-age or theistic theories of creation put death before the Fall of man, thus contradicting Scripture.

4. Jesus supported a young earth view, placing the creation of man at the very beginning of time: "But from the beginning of creation, God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE" (Mark 10:6). Christ's view corresponds with the genealogical records from the beginning of the creation event.

5. The words of communication of the human author as inspired by the Holy Spirit in the Genesis account would have been received by the readers of that time in the normal natural sense, leaving no room for anything other than a six literal day viewpoint. There is no hint in Scripture, whatsoever, that the Holy Spirit intended to describe events that involved indefinite periods of time.

6. God created vegetation, animals, man, and astronomical structures in a mature state, thus giving it the appearance of being old. God's continuing catastrophic judgment upon the world and the universe since the Fall has left the scars of destruction and the appearance of age upon creation.

7. The order of creation substantiates a literal six-day creation event. For instance, vegetation was created on Day 3 while the sun, moon and stars were created on Day 4. Only a literal six-day creation event can account for the sustaining of vegetation.

20. The Nashville Statement

As the Scriptures clearly teach:

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and His bride, the church. (Matt. 19:4-6; Gen. 2:21-25; Eph. 5:31)

WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage. (Lev. 18:19-25; 2 Sam. 11:1-12:15; Prov. 7; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 1 Cor. 7)

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

Article 3

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in His own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female. (Gen. 1; 26-28; Matt. 19:4; Mark. 10:6-9)

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing. (Gen. 1:26-31)

WE DENY that such differences are a result of The Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

Article 5

WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God's design for self-conception as male or female. (Gen. 1:26-31)

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.

Article 6

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in His words about "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known. (Matt. 19:12; Gen. 1:26-31)

WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

Article 7

WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture. (Lev. 18:19-25; Josh. 1:8, 9; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17)

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption.

Article 8

WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life. (1 Thess. 4:3-8; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 2:11; Titus 2:11-12)

WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God's original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

Article 9

WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality - a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality. (Lev. 18:19-25; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10)

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

Article 10

WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

(1 John 3:4; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Tim. 2:15; Jude 7, 8)

WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

Article 11

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female. (Eph. 4:15; Col. 3:1-11)

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God's design of His image-bearers as male and female.

Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. (1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 4:17-24; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:17-21)

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

Article 13

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender self-conceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female. (Rom. 6:1-7; Gal. 2:20; 5:24-25)

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God's revealed will.

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ's death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and supreme treasure. (1 Tim. 1:15, 16)

WE DENY that the Lord's arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.