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Doctrinal Statement
Pastor, Holly Tree Chapel, 2015

I. The Scriptures

I believe that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for teaching [to show us what is right], reproof [to show us what is wrong], correction [to show us how to get right], and for training in righteousness [to show us how to stay right]; that the [person] of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God used forty writers, over a period of 1,600 years, to write the very words of Scripture, in the historical, poetical, doctrinal and prophetic writings. The original manuscripts were without error and are designed to magnify the persona and work of Jesus Christ. God used a dual authorship to write Scripture---God Himself using the volition and faculties of human authors without coercion and human authors exercising their volition and faculties without injury to the divine message.

II. The Godhead

I believe that the Godhead exists eternally in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and these three are One God, having precisely the same nature, attributes, and perfections, and are worthy of our worship. “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

III. Mankind, Created by God, and Fallen

I believe that mankind was originally created in the image of God; we fell through choosing to sin; we lost our spiritual life, becoming dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:2); and became subject to the ruler of this world (Satan). Spiritual death, or total depravity of human nature, has been transmitted to the entire human race (except Jesus Christ). Every person is born into the world with a sin nature, with no divine life, and unchangeable apart from divine grace. “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23-24). “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

IV. Angels, both Fallen and Unfallen

I believe that God created sinless, spiritual beings called angels; a great company of them kept their holy estate and are before the throne of God, from where they are sent out as ministering spirits (Luke 15:10; Ephesians 1:21; Revelation 7:12). They are incorporeal (no physical body); they are greater than mankind in knowledge, although not omniscient; they are stronger than mankind, although not omnipotent; they are more noble than mankind, although not omnipresent.

“Lucifer, son of the morning” was the highest angel, and sinned through pride, thereby becoming Satan; a great company of angels followed him in his moral fall; some of whom became demons, active agents and associates in the prosecution of his unholy purposes; some are “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness until the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6; Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11; I Timothy 3:6).

Satan is the originator of sin, and that under the permission of Almighty God, he, through subtlety, led our first parents into transgression, thereby accomplishing their moral fall, and subjecting them and us to everlasting punishment. He has been judged at the Cross of Christ, although continuing to rule as ‘the god of this world’ (Colossians 2:15; Revelation 20:1-3, 10).

V. The First Coming (“Advent”) of Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ came as pre-announced in the prophecies of Scripture. He came as the eternal Son of God, manifesting God to mankind, fulfilling prophecy, and becoming our Redeemer. He was born of the virgin Mary, receiving a sinless human nature, and remained sinless throughout His life on earth. He retained His absolute deity, limiting Himself to the sphere of the human (Philippians 2:5-11), and yet sometimes operating in the sphere of the divine. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1-4).

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

I believe that He came first to Israel as their Messiah-King, and being rejected, gave His life as a ransom for all, the divinely provided sacrificial Lamb which takes away the sin of the world (John 1:36), bearing our judgment against sin. He died, and arose from the dead in bodily form, which is the pattern of that body which will ultimately be given to all believers (Philippians 3:20-21). I believe that He departed the earth, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of His Father (Revelation 5:11-14), where He never ceases to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

VI. Salvation is Only Through Jesus Christ

I believe that because of the universal death through sin, no one, including you and me, can enter the Kingdom of God (“Heaven”) unless born again (John 3:5); and no degree of self-reformation, no degree of moral attainment (‘good works’), no degree

of cultural advancement, and no baptism or other ordinance can save us. Our redemption is secured only by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was made sin for us, dying in our place. We cannot save ourselves, no matter what we do by way of repentance, feelings, faith, good works, sincere efforts, or submission to church doctrine or dogma. The new birth is a spiritual birth of the believer that comes only through faith in the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

VII. The Extent of Salvation

I believe that when an unregenerate person exercises faith in Christ, he passes immediately out of spiritual death into spiritual life, is justified from all things, and is accepted before the Father. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we exult in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

VIII. Sanctification

I believe sanctification is a 'setting-apart' unto God. Since the believer is in Christ, he is set apart unto God as Christ is set apart unto God. However, mankind retains a sin nature, which cannot be eradicated in this life. Therefore, while the standing of the Christian in Christ is a standing in perfection, our present state is not perfect. Therefore, a process of sanctification and spiritual growth is necessary for us to 'grow in grace' and to be walking in a way that reveals the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:19-23).

When we see our Lord Jesus we shall 'be like Him' (I John 3:2; Revelation 1:13-17)).

IX. Eternal Perseverance of the Saints

I believe that because of the eternal purpose of God, His unmerited favor which He has bestowed upon believers, and on the grounds of the propitiatory blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus was given as a free gift, and because of the regenerating, abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all who are saved, we who are saved will be kept saved forever. God will chasten His children for sin, and correct His children

in love, but having taken the initiative to save them, He will keep them saved forever. “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (John 5:24).

X. The Holy Spirit

I believe the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, omnipresent from all eternity, taking His residence in this world on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), according to the divine promises, and dwells in every believer, uniting all to Christ in one body. The ministry of the Holy Spirit not only involves indwelling and filling believers, but He restrains evil, and convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11). He seals us unto the day of redemption, baptizing us into the body of Christ, empowering us, teaching us, and giving us gifts for useful service. “For by one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (I Corinthians 12:13).

XI. The Church, the Body or Bride of Christ

I believe the Church comprises all members of the body and bride of Christ, which began at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The Church is distinct from Israel. Members of the Church are those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ, regardless of local church membership. “There is one body, and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:4).

XII. The Ordinances

I believe water baptism and the Lord’s Supper are the only sacraments and ordinances of the Church, and they are a scriptural means of testimony for the Church. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (I Corinthians 11:26).

XIII. The Christian Walk

I believe we are called to live a holy life. Our sanctification is practically described as abstaining from sexual immorality in all of its forms (I Thessalonians 4:1-8). We are called to walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh, living in the power of the Holy Spirit. “...That in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

XIV. The Great Commission

I believe we are commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ to “go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

XV. The Eternal [‘Timeless’] State

I believe that at death, the spirits and souls of all who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation will pass immediately into His presence and remain in conscious awareness until the resurrection of their glorified body, when both spirit, soul and body are reunited in a glorious body, forever (I Thessalonians 4:13-17; Philippians 3:20-21)..

Unbelieving persons will remain in conscious awareness of condemnation and judgment until the final judgment takes place, which is called the ‘Great White Throne Judgment.’ “And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-15).

But for believing Christians, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:1-4).

“Therefore comfort one another with these words” (I Thessalonians 4:17).