

The Gathering Church Statement of Faith, Bylaws, and Policies

The following is a statement of our position of basic Christian doctrines. As once stated by a great missionary, "There are certain basic Christian truths about which there must be agreement. On all other doctrines there should be liberty. In all things there must be charity." It is our resolution to take an uncompromising stand on the essential doctrines of the faith, and extend "the right hand of fellowship" to all who hold to them. It is also our resolution to protect the liberty of Christians to hold different perspectives on the "non-essential" doctrines.

There are doctrines we may consider non-essential, but which are important. We therefore make known our belief on these, while presenting them with tolerance toward those who may hold a different position. We are committed to truth and accuracy in doctrine, but also understand that one can hold right doctrines and still do damage to the body of Christ by causing divisions over the non-essentials. We are therefore just as committed to the essential Christian character, believing that "In all things there must be charity." As the apostle stated, "The goal of our instruction is love, from a pure heart and a sincere faith" (I Timothy 1:5). That, too, is our goal and commitment as we promote the following teachings that we hold as truth:

On the Person of Jesus

There is only one true God, Who is revealed in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the Word (Logos) of God. The Word was with God in the beginning, which states His pre-existence as one with God. "By Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth" (Colossians 1:16), therefore making Jesus the Creator. Jesus Christ is the Purpose of God found in all of creation. He is the Father's delight and desire, and the Father is looking for the reflection of His Son in all created things. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. In the beginning, it was the ultimate purpose of God for all things to be summed up in Christ (Ephesians 1:10).

Jesus Christ, Who pre-existed with God in the form of God, emptied Himself to become fully a man that He might be the propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Through His propitiatory sacrifice made on the cross, all who believe in Him and His sacrifice have their sins remitted and are restored to the fellowship with God lost by man's transgression.

Jesus was born of a virgin, by the seed of the Holy Spirit. His virgin birth is a testimony that only the Spirit can beget that which is Spirit. Those of the new creation are not solely of human origin, but are born from above by the Holy Spirit. The resurrection of Jesus' physical body after His crucifixion was literal, as will be the resurrection of both the just and the unjust on the Day of Judgment.

"There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5). All who seek restoration and fellowship with God must go through Jesus and

cannot approach God through any person, spirit or doctrine. It is also a supreme presumption for any person or institution to seek to be mediator for others in place of Christ Jesus Himself.

The apostolic commission was for His followers to labor until Christ was formed in His church, to present every person complete in Christ, and to manifest the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. When Jesus is lifted up, He will draw all people to Himself. We consider it the primary purpose of the church to esteem and exalt Jesus in every way. It is the focus and devotion of MorningStar Ministries to know and preach Him, and not ourselves. We pray for the grace to continually respond to His call to return to our first Love, that we might passionately devote ourselves to pleasing Him in all things while preparing for His return.

On Man

We believe that man was created by God from the dust of the earth, without sin or the knowledge of good and evil. The first man, Adam, transgressed the command of God, and as God had warned, the process of death entered him and all of his descendants because of that transgression. Therefore, all have sinned and are worthy of the sentence of death. Because of our unrighteousness, we are unable to approach a holy God, except through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. Through Jesus, we not only can come before the Throne of Grace, but we may approach it boldly since our confidence is not in ourselves, but in the Lord Jesus.

On the Atonement

Because all have sinned and are therefore under the sentence of death, all must trust in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus for the remission of sins. There is no other way to reconcile with God or escape from eternal judgment, except through the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus.

Those who trust in Jesus Christ have access to the Throne of Grace by His sacrifice and by His sacrifice alone. Good works are acceptable to God only as a love offering given to Him because of His worthiness, and have no bearing on our acceptance, standing or approval, all of which were accomplished by the cross. Good works offered for the purpose of acceptance, standing or approval are therefore an affront to the cross by which all of these things were gained for us by Jesus. Good works are not offered for His approval, but for His joy and glory, and must be offered through the Son (1 Peter 2:5) in obedience to Him. Therefore, the goal of our service is obedience and not sacrifice.

On the New Birth

Believing in our hearts that Jesus is the Son of God and in His propitiation made for our salvation results in a regeneration and renewal that constitutes our new birth into new creations. Although this does not imply immediate perfection in our temporal life or lifestyle, it does mean that true faith will result in a radical change in us. Being "born again" implies a new beginning, not an ending. Christian maturity in faith, truth and life is a process. Even so, this process must begin with spiritual regeneration or new birth. While it is possible to change our behavior without regeneration, changing our hearts requires the new birth, and it is our hearts upon which God looks.

On the Purpose of Faith

True faith is of the heart and not just the mind (Romans 10:10). God's purpose in requiring faith for salvation is to raise our focus and concentration above the temporal to the One who is eternal. Therefore, the gospel that is able to save souls must be preached in the power of the Spirit of God. The gospel is not dependent upon human eloquence or persuasion that may change minds, but cannot change hearts. Only the Spirit of God can reveal the Son of God, and only the Son of God can reveal the Father.

On the Authority of Scripture

We believe in the Divine inspiration and authority of the 66 books of the Holy Bible as the complete canon of God's testimony to mankind. We are committed to esteeming Scripture as the very Word of God, inerrant in its original form. We do not accept any doctrine which contradicts Scripture.

We understand that there are many practices and doctrines that are considered orthodox which do not contradict the Scripture, but which are not directly addressed in His Word. We are committed to giving liberty in the belief and practice of these teachings, but we will endeavor to maintain the simplicity of the biblical testimony and its stated practices as we are given grace to perceive them. We do not accept any spiritual experience as having its source in the Holy Spirit that does not have a precedent in Scripture. We do not accept any revelation, vision, dream, prophecy or discernment as truth which contradicts Scripture, or cannot be verified by it. We do not believe that any other writings have the same authority as the canon of Scripture.

On the Lord's Supper

We acknowledge the ordinance of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Jesus and as a testimony of our communion (common-union) with Him in His body, the church. We consider it a holy ordinance, but we do not accept the teaching that communion is for the purpose of remitting sins, which Scripture testifies is based solely in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross (Hebrews 9:25-28).

On Water Baptism

We believe that water baptism should be by immersion and accomplished immediately after commitment to the Lordship of Jesus and His atoning sacrifice for our sin. This ordinance is a personal and public statement of faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ on our behalf, and is a commitment to lay down our lives to be one with Him in His death, burial and resurrection.

On the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" is an additional impartation which may be subsequent to regeneration (see Acts 8:15-17 and 19:1-6). This baptism is usually accompanied by the gifts of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, etc.

We believe that this gift is presently available to all who believe (Acts 2:38-39), but is not essential for salvation or regeneration. While these are accomplished by the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7), there were disciples who did not even know that there was a Holy Spirit. Just as Paul made it a priority to instruct those believers and pray for them to receive this gift, we are committed to doing the same.

The purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is to impart spiritual power to the believer to be a witness (Acts 1:8, 5:32). This baptism is to be distinguished from being filled with the Spirit (Acts 4:31, 7:55, 13:9,52), which can be a special and repeated empowering for specific purposes.

We believe that when Christians truly have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, they should begin to take on His nature and fruit, becoming "helpers" and "comforters", leading others into truth, and testifying of Jesus.

On the Present Ministry of the Holy Spirit

We believe that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8) and that His ministry in and through the church by the Holy Spirit has not changed from the beginning. We accept, acknowledge, encourage and seek all of the biblical gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit as present and vital for the church to accomplish her full purpose today.

On the Second Coming of Christ

We believe in the literal, physical return of the Lord Jesus Christ to take authority and rule on earth. We believe that those who are alive and remain at the return of our Lord will be changed and caught up to be with Him in the air. Those who have died in the faith will be resurrected and precede those who are alive in being changed and caught up to be with Him. We believe in the literal, physical resurrection of both the just and the unjust for the Day of Judgment. For those of us who have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on our behalf, this resurrection is for eternal life in fellowship with God. Those who are not justified by faith in Jesus are resurrected for an eternal judgment.

On Marriage and Civil Union

This local church affirms the biblical truths that marriage is the first divine institution, essentially rooted in the created order, uniting one man and one woman in an exclusive covenant commitment for their joint lifetime, for their good and for the welfare of any children who may be conceived and born into this union. Marriage is based on the truth that men and women are complementary, the biological fact that reproduction depends on a man and a woman, and the lived experience that children need both a mother and a father. Re-defining marriage to fit popular norms rejects these truths. By encouraging the norms of true marriage - man-woman monogamy, sexual exclusivity, and permanence - the state strengthens civil society and promotes human flourishing, including the well-being of children.

Christian marriage is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His Church, as illustrated by the wedding of a Christian man and woman in this exclusive and permanent covenant relationship. As such, this local Church believes that Christian wedding ceremonies on Church property are spiritual observances of worship of God who created this divine institution. As worship services, weddings on Church property shall be officiated by one or more ordained ministers of the gospel approved by the pastor.

The Church may decline to make its facilities or ministers available for any wedding if it is determined that one or both of the parties are not biblically qualified to marry. Such determinations may be made by the pastor and/or the board of elders. The Church may also decline to participate in or recognize in any manner and marriage, co-called marriage, civil union, commitment ceremony or other activity which may, directly or indirectly affirm, approve or communicate behavior or beliefs which are contrary to the Church's beliefs about biblical morality. Such actions would violate the religious conscience of this Body and its members. We must obey God, who is Lord of our conscience.

No minister [or employee] of the Church shall officiate at any marriage or similar ceremony unless such an event or ceremony is consistent with this policy. No minister [or employee] of the

Church shall officiate at any civil union or commitment ceremony that is not approved by the Church as being consistent with this policy.

APPENDIX:

It is the policy of the Gathering including all Pastors and those in leadership to perform marriage ceremonies before God in accordance with Scripture. We do not perform legally binding marriages recognized by the state. Therefore for those individuals who wish to have their marriage recognized by the state need to do so according to the laws in the state of North Carolina in addition to the marriage ceremony that is conducted by the Gathering.

On Use of Facilities

All real property facilities of The Gathering Church (collectively, the "Church Facilities"), whether leased, rented, or owned, including without limitation its sanctuary auditorium, fellowship hall, gymnasium, educational facilities, conference rooms and other meeting rooms or facilities used for the mission of the Church, wherever located, when used by the Church, its ministers, officers, staff or employees or its congregation members or Church attendees, and if used by other persons or groups with the permission of the Church or the ministerial or administrative staff of the Church, shall be used solely for purposes consistent or compatible with the mission, faith and doctrine of the Church, as defined in its Articles of Incorporation, Constitution and Bylaws, or in Statements of Faith adopted by the local Church from time to time, it being acknowledged and understood that the Church Facilities are intended not to be facilities of "public accommodation" as defined by law, but are facilities owned or leased by the Church, a North Carolina Non-Profit Corporation, dedicated solely for such permitted uses.

The Church's facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of Church members. The Church desires that its facilities be used for the fellowship of the Body of Christ and always to God's glory and His worship, although the facilities are not generally open to the public, we do on occasion make our facilities available to non members, both individual and groups, after approval by the Church consistent with this policy.

Facility use will not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs, or advancing, advocating, or engaging in practices that conflict with the Church's faith or moral teachings, which are summarized in, among other places, the Church's Statement of Faith, Bylaws and other policies or statements of faith adopted by the Church. Nor may facilities be used for activities that express viewpoints that contradict, or are deemed by the pastor to be inconsistent or incompatible with the Church's faith or moral teachings, The Church designates the pastor as its final decision-maker on whether a person or group is allowed to use Church facilities for particular activities.

The restricted facility use policy is necessary for two important reasons. First, the Church may not in good conscience materially cooperate or participate in activities or beliefs that are

contrary to its faith. Allowing its facilities to be used for purposes that contradict the Church's beliefs would be viewed by some as material cooperation with that activity and complicity in that viewpoint, and would be a grave violation of the faith and religious practice of the Body and its individual members (See 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Second, it is very important to the Church that it presents a consistent message to the community, which the Church staff and members conscientiously maintain as part of their witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To allow facilities to be used by groups or persons who express beliefs or engage in practices contrary to the Church's faith would have a severe negative impact on the message that the Church strives to promote. It could also be a source of confusion and scandal to Church members and the community because they may reasonably perceive that by allowing use of our facilities, the Church is in agreement with the beliefs or practices of the persons or groups using Church facilities.

Therefore, in no event shall persons or groups who hold, advance, or advocate beliefs, or advance, advocate, or engage in practices that contradict the Church's faith use any Church facility. Nor may facilities be used in any way that contradicts the Church's faith (See Colossians 3:17).

The foregoing policy shall apply to any ceremony, whether or not recognized by law, involving persons of the same birth gender or transsexual persons, including a civil union, commitment ceremony, or so-called same sex marriage.