

A Disciple of Christ

Statement of Faith



May 1, 2023
v. 3.12
2023 Revision

STATEMENT OF FAITH

1. We believe the Bible is the divinely inspired, infallible and authoritative Word of God, fully sufficient to instruct man in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ.
2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Him we consider to be the only proper object of divine worship.
3. We believe that as a consequence of the fall, man is utterly depraved, but nevertheless able, by the light of Christ, Who 'lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' to respond to the offer of redemption by grace. We own no principle of spiritual light, life, or holiness inherent by nature in the heart of man which may serve as a basis of salvation.
4. We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united so that He is truly and properly God, and truly and properly man; we believe in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, and His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
5. We believe that regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential, and that this is of God's free grace alone, through which, upon repentance and faith, He pardons our sins and imparts to us a new life.
6. We believe in holiness of heart and life through the instantaneous baptism with the Holy Spirit subsequent to the new birth, and in His continual presence and ministry in the sanctified heart
7. We believe in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the final judgment of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, with the eternal blessedness of the righteous, and the eternal punishment of the wicked.
8. We believe in the personal and spiritual priesthood of the believer, the continuous and inward spiritual communion of the body and blood of Christ, and in the one essential baptism with the Holy Spirit for the believer.

DOCTRINE

100 GOD

- 101 We believe in one¹ eternal,² omnipresent,³ unchanging,⁴ personal⁵ God; perfect in holiness,⁶ wisdom,⁷ love,⁸ power,⁹ and justice¹⁰ without preceding cause or beginning;¹¹ creator¹² and preserver¹³ of all things, visible and invisible.
- 102 He exists as one divine being and yet as a trinity of three distinct persons, identical, inseparable, and equal in divinity, power and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.¹⁴
- 103 God revealed Himself in the past in many and various ways, though supremely in the person of Jesus Christ.¹⁵ He continues to reveal Himself today through His creation,¹⁶ the Holy Scriptures,¹⁷ and the workings of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people.¹⁸
- 104 He alone is worthy of our worship, honor, praise and thanksgiving, now and forevermore.¹⁹
-

¹Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:29

²Psalms 90:1-2; Romans 1:20

³Psalms 139:7-12

⁴James 1:17; Malachi 3:6

⁵John 14:9

⁶Isaiah 6:3; I Peter 1:15-16

⁷Romans 11:33

⁸I John 4:8

⁹I Chronicles 29:11-12; Isaiah 40:26-28; Ephesians 1:18-20

¹⁰Psalms 89:14; Romans 3:26

¹¹Psalms 93:2

¹²Genesis 1:1; Romans 11:36

¹³Psalms 104:27-30; Colossians 1:16-17

¹⁴Matthew 28:19; John 14:16, 18, 23; II Corinthians 13:14

¹⁵Hebrews 1:2; John 1:18

¹⁶Romans 1:19-20

¹⁷II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21

¹⁸Acts 8:29; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6-10

¹⁹Galatians 1:5

110 JESUS CHRIST

111 We believe that Jesus Christ, the Word who was with God and was God,¹ is the only begotten Son of God.² He was conceived by the Holy Spirit³ and born of the Virgin Mary⁴ and is the express image of the invisible God.⁵ He combines within Himself both the divine nature of God and human nature in one perfect indivisible personality, the God-man.⁶

112 He lived and suffered in the world to show the Way of Life.⁷ He was crucified and died as the atonement for the sin of the whole world,⁸ making the only provision whereby people can find forgiveness of sins and cleansing from all unrighteousness.⁹

113 He died in our place¹⁰ and raised the third day for our justification;¹¹ He ascended into heaven¹² and sits at the right hand of God, ever living as our only mediator and High Priest making intercession for us,¹³ and from there will return again to receive His church unto Himself¹⁴ and to judge the world in righteousness.¹⁵

¹John 1:1

²John 1:18; I John 4:9

³Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35

⁴Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:34

⁵Colossians 1:15

⁶John 1:14; Colossians 2:9

⁷Romans 5:10; Ephesians 5:2; I Peter 2:21

⁸Romans 3:23-25; 1 John 2:2

⁹Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13-14; Titus 2:14

¹⁰I Corinthians 15:4; 1 John 4:10

¹¹Romans 4:25; I Corinthians 15:4

¹²Acts 1:9; Ephesians 4:8

¹³Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:24

¹⁴I Thessalonians 4:15-17

¹⁵Romans 2:16; II Timothy 4:1

120 THE HOLY SPIRIT

- 121 We believe in the Holy Spirit, not as an impersonal principle or influence, but as a divine person,¹ and though distinct from the Father and Son, proceeding from both,² with whom He is equal in authority, power, glory, and titles.³
- 122 He is the divine agent in conviction of sin,⁴ regeneration,⁵ sanctification,⁶ and the believers' assurance.⁷
- 123 He is given as an indwelling Presence to every believer to be a teacher,⁸ guide,⁹ and source of comfort.¹⁰ He purifies the heart of the believer¹¹ and imparts at His own choosing spiritual gifts for service and the building up of the body of Christ.¹² He produces in believers the fruit of the Spirit¹³ so that they may conform to the image of Christ.

¹John 14:16-17, 26; 16:13-14

²John 15:26; 16:7

³Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14

⁴John 16:8

⁵John 3:5

⁶I Corinthians 6:11

⁷Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:6

⁸John 14:26

⁹John 16:13

¹⁰Acts 9:31

¹¹Acts 15:9; I John 1:9

¹²I Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:7-13

¹³Galatians 5:22-23

130 HOLY SCRIPTURE

- 131 We believe that all Scripture,¹ both of the Old and New Testaments, is given by inspiration of God, without error in all that it affirms,² and is the only infallible rule of faith and practice.³ It is fully authoritative and trustworthy, fully sufficient for all believers now and always,⁴ and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.⁵

- 132 Thus, the declarations contained in it rest on the authority of God Himself,⁶ and there can be no appeal from them to any other authority whatever. They are the only divinely authorized record of the doctrines which we are bound as Christians to believe,⁷ and of the moral principles which are to regulate our behavior.⁸ Only such doctrines as are contained in the Scripture can be regarded as Articles of Faith.⁹ The Holy Spirit, who inspired the Scripture, must ever be its true interpreter.¹⁰ Whatever any person says or does which is contrary to the Scripture, though under profession of the guidance of the Spirit, must be reckoned and accounted a delusion.¹¹
- 133 The Scripture demands of believers complete obedience¹² and is made increasingly open to those who study and obey it.¹³

¹II Timothy 3:16

²Psalm 19:7-11

³Psalm 119:4, 105

⁴Psalm 119:89; I Peter 1:25

⁵II Timothy 3:16-17

⁶I Thessalonians 2:13

⁷Romans 1:16-17

⁸Psalm 119:9

⁹John 17:17

¹⁰John 14:26; 16:13; II Peter 1:21

¹¹II Peter 1:20; I John 4:1

¹²Psalm 119:4; I Corinthians 4:2

¹³I Corinthians 2:4-5, 12

140 CREATION

- 141 We believe creation to be that free act of the triune God,¹ the Father,² Son,³ and Holy Spirit,⁴ by which in the beginning and for His own glory⁵ God made, without use of pre-existing material,⁶ the whole visible and invisible universe.⁷

¹Genesis 1:1; Genesis 1:26-27

²Hebrews 1:2

³Colossians 1:16

⁴Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30

⁵Psalm 19:1; Colossians 1:16

⁶Hebrews 11:3

⁷Nehemiah 9:6; John 1:3

150 SATAN

151 We believe in the existence of the Evil One, "that old serpent which is the Devil, and Satan,"¹ the old deceiver who by his own choice rebelled against God² and became evil, who tempted our first parents to sin,³ and who through their disobedience brought about the fall of the human race,⁴ with all its attendant degeneracy, unhappiness, and misery.⁵

152 Satan demonstrated his evil character and purpose in his perpetual opposition to Christ by the temptations in the wilderness,⁶ and to His people and to His kingdom.⁷ But Satan's power is limited,⁸ and in God's own time he will be chained and finally cast into the lake of fire.⁹

153 While Satan is active in this world, Christians through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them are able to resist Satan's temptations and have victory over him.¹⁰

¹Revelation 20:2

²Revelation 12:7-9

³Genesis 3:1-6; II Corinthians 11:3

⁴Romans 5:12, 15-19

⁵Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 8:18-22

⁶Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-15

⁷II Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2

⁸Job 1:12; 2:6; I Corinthians 10:13

⁹Revelation 20:1-3, 10

¹⁰I Corinthians 10:13; I Peter 5:8-11; I John 4:4

160 HUMANITY

- 161 The Creation: We believe that by a definite act God created man and woman in His own image, holy and capable of knowing and obeying God's will, in order to glorify God and enjoy His fellowship forever.¹
- 162 The Fall: We believe that Adam and Eve fell from this original state by a voluntary act of disobedience,² thus suffering the immediate loss of a perfect relationship with God³ and making self the center of their lives. By this act, they suffered spiritual death, and sin entered the world and death by sin, so that death passed upon all.⁴
- 163 We further believe that as a consequence of the Fall, all people are born with a nature which is thoroughly sinful⁵ and not subject to the law of God, so that only through the operation of the grace of God can they repent and call upon Him. However, by God's grace infants are not under condemnation but are heirs of salvation.⁶

¹Genesis 1:26-27, 31; 2:7; James 3:9b

²Genesis 3:6-24

³Genesis 2:17

⁴Ezekiel 18:19-20; Romans 5:12-14, 17-19; 6:23a; Psalm 51:5; 58:3

⁵Isaiah 53:6

⁶Matthew 18:3

170 SALVATION

- 171 We believe that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,¹ through the direct and immediate agency of the Holy Spirit,² persons may be reconciled to God and recovered from their fallen state through justification,³ regeneration,⁴ sanctification,⁵ and ultimately the resurrection of the body.⁶
- 172 Justification: In response to sinners repentance, surrender of themselves, and sincere faith in the power and sufficiency of Jesus' atoning death and shed blood,⁷ God pardons them from past sins and declares them righteous, not for anything they have done but because of the obedience and atoning death of Christ.⁸
- 173 Regeneration: In response to sinners' repentance, surrender of themselves, and sincere faith in the power and sufficiency of Jesus' atoning death and shed blood, God also by His gracious power makes them new creatures.⁹ By the Holy Spirit

- they are born again into the family of God¹⁰ to a new life of love to God and to people.¹¹ Their minds are enlightened to understand His truth,¹² and their wills are renewed to do His will,¹³ as He begins to conform them to His image. The evidence of this regeneration of the believer is the fruit of the Spirit.¹⁴
- 174 Sanctification: We believe that children of God at the moment of their conversion do receive the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ As they trust in Him and obey His will, they manifest more and more of the fruit of the Spirit, conform more and more to the likeness of God, and thus are being continuously sanctified.¹⁶
- 175 It is also the will of God that believers receive the fullness of the Spirit,¹⁷ which He will graciously grant in response to their full consecration to His will and their faith in Christ's promises and in His atoning death.¹⁸ Sanctification is thus a process in which the Holy Spirit continuously disciplines the believer into paths of holiness and an act in which He cleanses the heart from an imperfect relationship and state.¹⁹
- 176 We further believe that the fullness of the Holy Spirit does not make believers incapable of choosing to sin, nor even from completely falling away from God, yet it so cleanses and empowers them as to enable them to have victory over sin, to endeavor fully to love God and people, and to witness to the living Christ.²⁰

¹Galatians 1:3-5; Ephesians 2:8-9

²John 3:5; Romans 5:5

³Romans 4:25; 5:1; Titus 3:7

⁴Colossians 3:9-11; Titus 3:5

⁵II Thessalonians 2:13; I Peter 1:2

⁶I Corinthians 15:20-22 [see #191 and 192]

⁷Ephesians 1:7; I John 1:8-2:2

⁸Romans 3:23-26; II Corinthians 5:20-21

⁹II Corinthians 5:17

¹⁰Romans 8:14-16

¹¹John 3:3; I John 4:7-21

¹²John 16:12-15; Romans 12:1-2

¹³I John 2:17

¹⁴Galatians 5:22-23

¹⁵John 3:5-8; Romans 8:14-17; I Corinthians 12:13

¹⁶Galatians 5:22-25

¹⁷Acts 2:38-39; Ephesians 3:14-19; 5:18; I Thessalonians 5:23-24

¹⁸Romans 8:5; 12:1-2

¹⁹John 17:17; Romans 6:1-2, 22-23; Acts 15:8-9

²⁰II Corinthians 7:1; II Peter 2:20-22; Acts 1:8

180 THE CHURCH

181 We believe that the church is made up of all those from the apostles until now,¹ both the triumphant dead and the living,² who through response to God's gracious offer of salvation³ by repentance of their sins⁴ and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior⁵ have been born again⁶ as new creatures in Christ.⁷ This church is spiritual in nature,⁸ universal in scope,⁹ holy in character,¹⁰ and redemptive in its life and purpose.¹¹

182 Its purposes are to make disciples of all nations by its witness to the grace and love of God¹² and to live as a loving fellowship who build up one another in the grace and knowledge of God.¹³

183 The church accomplishes these purposes by its existence as particular local congregations gathered out of the world¹⁴ and as associations of congregations in larger organizations¹⁵ under the leadership and service of those called and gifted to such service.¹⁶ It worships in prayer,¹⁷ thanksgiving,¹⁸ and song;¹⁹ diligently studies the Word of God;²⁰ witnesses to and proclaims the gospel of God's Son;²¹ exercises the gifts of the Spirit;²² administers discipline;²³ and performs works of blessing and service both physical and spiritual to its members and to all in need.²⁴

¹Matthew 16:18

²I Thessalonians 4:14-17

³Ephesians 2:8-9

⁴II Chronicles 7:14; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 2:38

⁵John 1:12; Romans 5:1

⁶John 3:3

⁷II Corinthians 5:17

⁸John 4:23-24; I Peter 2:5

⁹I Corinthians 12:12-27; Hebrews 12:22-24

¹⁰Psalms 24:3-4; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7-8

¹¹Luke 24:46-48

¹²Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8

¹³Acts 2:41-47; Ephesians 4:11-16

¹⁴I Corinthians 1:2; Acts 11:22; I Thessalonians 1:1

¹⁵Romans 16:4, 16; I Corinthians 16:19; II Corinthians 8:1; Galatians 1:2, 22-23

¹⁶Ephesians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:17

¹⁷Isaiah 56:7; Luke 19:45-46; I Thessalonians 5:17; James 5:13-16

¹⁸Psalms 100:1-4; Philippians 4:6; I Thessalonians 5:18

¹⁹Psalms 100:2; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16

²⁰Acts 17:10-11; Colossians 3:16; I Peter 2:2-3

²¹Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8

²²I Corinthians 12:7-11; Ephesians 4:11-13; II Timothy 1:6

²³Matthew 18:15-17; II Corinthians 2:5-8; Galatians 6:1

²⁴Matthew 25:34-40; John 13:12-17

190 LAST THINGS

191 We believe that upon death the mortal body returns to the dust from which it came.¹ The spirits of the righteous will experience joy and life in the presence of God, but the unrighteous will be separated from His presence in the darkness and torment of their evil.²

192 We believe in the literal and personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth at a time not revealed.³ At His return the righteous dead will be raised and the righteous living will be changed to their glorification in bodies like their Lord's glorious resurrected body – bodies which they possessed in earthly life but now with glorified, heavenly qualities. The unrighteous will also be resurrected for the final judgment.⁴

- 193 We believe that Christ will consummate His kingdom over all people and nations by His final triumph over Satan.⁵
- 194 We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will finally judge all persons of their belief in Him as demonstrated by commitment of their lives to the way of the cross; the lost to everlasting punishment and the redeemed to eternal blessing and life.⁶

¹Genesis 3:19; Psalm 103:14-16; Ecclesiastes 12:6-7

²Luke 16:19-31; 23:39-43

³Matthew 24:42-44; John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

⁴Romans 6:5; Philippians 3:21; John 5:28-29; Revelation 21:1-8

⁵I Corinthians 15:20-26; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 20:10-15

⁶Matthew 25:31-46; II Corinthians 5:10

TESTIMONIES

These are arranged in six sections: Sacred Worship, Christian Living, The Christian Family, Christian Service, The Christian Relationship to Government and Society, and Certain Current Issues.

250 SACRED WORSHIP

251 Prayer and Praise

252 No practice in Christian living is more often spoken of in the Scripture than prayer and praise both as duty and as privilege. The Bible gives examples of and instruction in these practices. In the Old Testament, Daniel is an outstanding example in that, despite the king's decree to the contrary, he faithfully and openly prayed to God three times a day. The Psalms are filled with prayer and praise to God. Reading them, the Christian learns of the rich rewards from such practices. Our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, as our sure example in holy living, often gave Himself to prayer and praise. He also often instructed His disciples, and thus Christians of all generations, to pray faithfully and to expect God's answer (Matthew 7:7; John 16:23-24; James 5:16b)

253 A sense of need is a sufficient call to prayer. Burdened sinners may come boldly to the throne of grace and find a welcoming Father from whom they can obtain forgiveness. Similarly burdened Christians can find in prayer the assurance of God's love and relief from their burdens as they cast all their eyes on the Lord (I Peter 5:7).

254 Prayer is the life-breath of Christian living and gives the Christian unbroken access to the Heavenly Father. It is thus essential for the maintenance and development of the Christian life. We believe that families within our fellowship should set apart a time for collective prayer each day, Bible reading and praise; and that in our public services of worship, we should give importance to prayer and praise.

255 Christian Worship

256 Worship is a privilege of the Christian. It is a spiritual experience in which believers give themselves to communion and fellowship with the Heavenly Father, a time when they consciously feel and give adoration, love and gratitude to God. It is a time of reverent coming before the Almighty God as children of His by grace.

257 The first preparation for profitable worship is a humble spirit, which recognizes the grace of God in giving us this privilege. Equally important is a contrite spirit, which is submissive to His lordship, and superior will for our daily living. When these attitudes prevail, worship is full of meaning and reward (Psalm 51:17).

258 The service of worship will usually include times of prayer, praise, and preaching. During public worship services we should also allow frequent times for reflection, meditation, and decision.

259 Inasmuch as public worship aids Christians to grow in grace, it is the focal point of the church's local ministry. Since it is a testimony to the surrounding community of the importance of worshiping God, members should attend the services of their congregation regularly and faithfully. They should impress upon their children the same religious practice, believing that thus they will aid in leading their children to salvation and to the worship of God.

260 From the beginning of His earthly life (Matthew 2:1-2) and throughout the ages of time (Revelation 4:10-11), the Lord Jesus Christ has been, is, and will be the object of worship. We make Him the center of our worship and delight in collectively and personally giving Him praise and adoration as God. Without His presence, through the Holy Spirit, our worship would not have either meaning or depth.

261 The Ordinances

262 When Jesus had His last supper with His disciples He made statements which have at times been interpreted (1) as calling for a perpetual New Testament observance or (2) as a new meaning for the Passover meal which they were partaking of together. The unleavened bread was to represent His body about to be broken for them and the wine, the blood that He was about to shed. The early church and most Christians to this day have taken the first interpretation.

263 We believe in water baptism as a public statement of faith.

264 Each of our congregations may arrange services, perhaps in special meetings rather than in the regular worship service, for baptism and communion upon the request of members, while treating tenderly the consciences of those who protest

the use of outward symbols. If a pastor feels a conviction against administering the ordinances, the services of another pastor may be enlisted in the observance. In all such services it should be abundantly clear to the entire congregation that we have the right to abstain from as well as to participate in the observance. In these services it should also be clear that the observances are only symbols of an inward spiritual experience.

265 Harmony in the Church

266 Harmony in the church family is essential to its good witness in the community and to its worship of and service to its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Watchful care should therefore be taken to maintain that harmony. The congregation, and especially the pastor and officers, should be concerned that nothing be permitted to bring disruption to the peace and unity of their fellowship. They should be quick to discern differences of opinion so as to prevent degeneration into serious conflicts among the members of the congregation. In the event that dissension or resentment does arise, the pastor and officers should admonish all parties of the serious threat involved in their attitudes and make every effort, especially following the pattern laid down by our Lord Himself in Matthew 18:15-20, to reach a speedy reconciliation (I Peter 1:22; Hebrews 13:1; I John 4:21; Matthew 5:23-25).

270 CHRISTIAN LIVING

271 Early in their religious lives, Christians learn that it is necessary to make many decisions about their behavior. They discover some practices, which, though common to society about them, will seriously hinder their Christian growth and witness. Hence making right decisions about such matters will determine their growth in life and witness. Knowing that it is growing Christians who have the greater effectiveness in witness and service, and greater delight in their own lives, We hold the following testimonies as guidelines towards Christian growth which we understand to be taught in the Bible. It is our desire that Christians within our fellowship experience speedy and rich progress toward the attainment of fullness in Christ.

272 Moderation and Modesty

273 Because the pressures to follow a style of life like that of the non-Christian society are so great upon Christians, We insist that our citizenship is not of this world. The New Testament command, "Be not conformed to this world," (Romans 12:2) reminds us that in our living we must take care that our dress be modest and decent in every way. We must also take care that we not be seduced by the attractions and abundance of earthly goods and thus fall into covetousness. In the furnishing of our homes, in the providing for our tables, in the accumulation of material things - in every way we should show our conviction that the fashion of life of this world is not that of the Christian.

274 Weddings, Funerals, Memorials

275 Weddings

276 Since the wedding ceremony is solemn and holy, We feel that it should be simple and reverent. While wishing it to be an occasion to be remembered for its beauty, we should nevertheless avoid ostentation and extravagance. We should take care to make the entire ceremony one of Christian celebration, watching in the choice of music and all other parts of the service that it be an occasion of seeking God's blessing on the union and His guidance in the establishment of the home.

277 Funerals

278 Knowing that our bodies have been made of dust (Genesis 3:19) and shall return to dust, we ought to avoid extravagant and expensive funerals and memorial stones.

279 Memorials

280 When a congregation feels that it would be a fitting tribute and possible testimony to others, we may prepare a memorial statement of the exemplary life of the deceased member. These memorials shall be for pastors (spouses), missionaries, Yearly Meeting clerks/board/committee chairpersons, or any individual who has made a significant contribution to the organization as a whole.

281 Unwholesome Habits

282 We should be especially watchful against being involved in the unwholesome habits characteristic of this evil world. Both II Corinthians 7:1 and I Corinthians 3:17 serve as a basis for our testimony against such habits.

283 Unwholesome habits include the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. Abundant suffering has resulted for those who have been ensnared by these practices, not to mention the tragic effect on health, mind, money, and relationships. In indulging in such habits, one's example as a Christian is also damaged. We are warned also to avoid gluttony in any form or practice, considering the harm done to one's self and to one's influence on others.

284 Because of these grave considerations We should avoid such habits and refrain from assisting in the manufacture or promotion of the use of alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs. If new Christians find it difficult to break these habits [see #283], loving care should be extended to them so that they may come to freedom from them.

285 Amusements

286 With the increase of leisure and the wide availability of entertainment of every kind, we should consider most carefully the recreation and amusements to which we give ourselves, our interest, our time, and our money. Amusements can and do have a large influence upon character and life.

287 Our members should avoid attending or being involved in movies, dances, and theatrical performances of a demoralizing nature, as well as in other activities that may be injurious to Christian growth. Members are not to be involved in lotteries, wagering, or any other kind of gambling. We should take care to avoid publications tending to undermine their faith in the authority of the Scriptures and to hinder their Christian growth.

288 Though acknowledging certain benefits and the potential for Christian ministry in radio and television, We must also recognize and avoid programs that are unwholesome or demoralizing in music, language, or action portrayed.

289 We participating in summer and weekend camping and recreation which take them away from their congregation should remember their own spiritual needs, the concerns of the church, and their responsibilities to the church as they plan such activities.

290 Secret Societies

291 Many organizations make attractive appeals for membership and involvement. We must study carefully such organizations - the time, commitment, money required, as well as the likely influence of the organization upon them. We will especially avoid affiliation with secret societies which base their rituals on a distorted understanding of the Bible and directly or indirectly give Jesus Christ less than divine nature, even though they may appear to have spiritual value. The oath-bound character of such societies seems not only unnecessary, but also likely to prove harmful to honesty.

300 THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

301 The Family

302 The family is the basic unit of human relationship, and as such is also the foundational unit of society and of the church. The many Biblical references to the family assure us of its divine origin and of God's concern for the family and the home.

303 Marriage and Sexual Relations

304 A union so solemn as marriage is to be entered into only after much forethought, planning and prayer, and "in the fear of the Lord." We should seek earnestly the will of our Lord concerning their choice of a mate, remembering the apostolic injunction, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (II Corinthians 6:14a). Parents should use watchful care to help their children find mates of Christian character and commitment.

305 Marriage is the union of one man and one woman into a oneness that no other human relationship can provide. We affirm that the Scriptures (Genesis 2:24; Leviticus 18; Romans 1:27; I Corinthians 6:9ff) make abundantly clear that God's intention is for sexual relations to occur exclusively within the marriage covenant between one man (husband) and one woman (wife), and that homosexual marriages and/or unions are contrary to Scripture. Made before divine and human witnesses, the marriage vow unites a couple so fully that they "become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31). Marriage also, even more importantly, involves mental, emotional, and spiritual union. We should therefore enter into marriage under the full persuasion that it is a life-long commitment and union.

306 We believe that sex is a beautiful gift of God when it joins a man and a woman together in self-giving love (Hebrews 13:4). We hold that this depth of relationship is appropriate only in marriage and that sexual relations should be abstained from outside the marriage bond. We believe that same sex marriages violate God's Word. Temptation to sexual relations outside the marriage covenant

of man and woman - husband and wife - may be overcome by the grace of God. We cooperate with ministries and recommend resources - Biblically-based books, clinics and counselors - which offer counseling for sexual addictions and moral failures of any kind. Those who minister to individuals in the areas of heterosexual and homosexual sin [see #369] are strongly encouraged by We to respond to them with clarity and compassion. The basis for a good marriage is not sexual alone, but true love that is developed through communication, mutual respect, deep friendship and a lifetime of self-giving, as the Apostle Paul admonished (Ephesians 5:22-29). We who find severe difficulty in their marriage relationship are urged to prayerfully seek counsel from a pastor or a Christian therapist who can mediate those problems in order that the marriage be restored to the state God desires.

307 Divorce

308 Since the only clear Biblical allowance for divorce is adultery, we discourage seeking a divorce on any other grounds (Mark 10:2-9). The sanctity of the marriage vows requires us to seek earnestly to prevent serious marital discord, perhaps through counseling, and to make every effort toward a happy, harmonious, and holy marriage.

309 The break-up of many marriages in our day lays great responsibility upon the congregation to be sensitive to the needs of those becoming involved in such crises and to be quick in showing loving concern for them.

310 We ought not to marry divorced persons, except where divorce was granted on grounds of adultery. We ask our ministers to consider the circumstances carefully, perhaps in consultation with the leaders of their congregations, before deciding whether to perform the ceremony.

311 Parents and Children

312 The responsibility of parenthood is given by God (Psalm 127:3). The Scriptures often speak of this responsibility and give guidance for bearing it. Parents should early and continually turn to God for wisdom and guidance in the rearing of their children.

313 The Bible commands: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1), and throughout its pages, examples clearly support its teaching that obedience is the right attitude of children to parents. Obedience goes hand in hand with respect, honor, and love for parents. On their part, parents should be sensitive to the concerns and needs of their children so that they can freely speak their hearts to each other.

314 Parents have great spiritual, as well as physical, material, and educational responsibility for their children. Knowing that their children face the pressures of temptation from all sides, particularly in their schools, Christian parents have a great responsibility to guide them into a real understanding of what they believe and what they should do in the face of such temptation. Parents should from the beginning have a concern that their children come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This concern will move them to pray faithfully with and for their children, to try to build a home atmosphere that will draw them to God, to encourage them in regular attendance of services of worship and in Christian service, and to provide them with Christian instruction in the home.

320 CHRISTIAN SERVICE

321 The Public Ministry

322 We believe that God provides for the Church by calling men and women to be ministers of the Gospel. For the edifying and equipping of the Church, the Holy Spirit confers on them the gifts of pastoring and evangelizing (Ephesians 4:11). This calling to the ministry will be evidenced in the life and work of the public minister. While there will be those who also have administrative ability or unusual insight into the Scriptures, it is this distinctive call of God which sets apart a person to serve in the Gospel ministry. Freely received, this call and gift should be freely and devotedly given in service to God and the church.

323 Stewardship

324 We believe that they are required to be conscientious and wise stewards of every part of life (Romans 14:22). At least four areas of life deserve special consideration.

325 The Lord's Day: In celebration of our Lord's rising on the first day of the week, Sunday, the early church established it as the day for Christian worship and rest from secular activities. We honor this day in accordance with the commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). We should consider carefully how to make the most of the day for the Lord's service and worship and for rest of body and mind from the week's labors. On this day, We should refrain from involvement in any business, in shopping, or in unnecessary supplying of temporal, secular needs.

326 Tithing: The practice of tithing our income to the Lord began in the Old Testament. Later our Lord Jesus Christ approved this practice, and We believe it is still the minimum to be given and the best means of providing for the financial needs of the church. But Christians do well to let generosity beyond the tithe characterize all their giving to God. As this method of giving is followed, there will be no need to resort to other methods of fund-raising.

327 Since the Bible in both precept (Malachi 3:10) and practice (I Corinthians 16:2) identifies the place for the giving of tithes and offerings as the church, We believe that the church is the place for one's giving and the church then must earnestly seek for divine wisdom in its use of the gifts for the Lord's work.

328 Wills: We should prepare legal wills and testaments while in health and judgment and thus express their wishes regarding their possessions and families. In the distribution of their estates, We should consider contributions to the work of God in the local congregation and in the We Church - Eastern Region.

329 Talents: We believe that all persons have natural abilities and spiritual gifts from God with which they are to make contributions to the work of God (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 12:42-48). It is therefore our duty to use our particular gifts liberally in the ministry of the church.

330 Use of Church Buildings and Facilities

331 Because church buildings and facilities have been dedicated to the service of God, and especially as places for His worship, We believe that they should be treated with care and respect. At times parts of these buildings and facilities may be used as meeting places for fellowship, but even at these times the buildings and facilities should be remembered as dedicated to the service of God. The primary purpose of the buildings and facilities should always be the worship of God, instruction in the Christian faith, development of Christian fellowship, and Christian service to the community. We encourage We to construct and maintain their worship buildings and facilities with prayerful consideration of their function, remembering the moderation and simplicity which is becoming to the testimony of We and to the Church of Jesus Christ.

332 Business Practices

333 We should seek divine direction in all their business affairs. They should undertake endeavors only after prayer and seeking God's guidance. While it is to be hoped that we will have adequate income, we must nevertheless remember that the search for riches is a threat to the Christian life. Careful attention should be given to all our dealings in order not to bring dishonor to our testimony or to the church. We should be especially careful to pay debts and to fulfill all commitments. If business failures occur, we must do everything possible to fulfill all obligations.

340 THE CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP TO GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY

341 The Poor

342 The Christian virtue of love should characterize We in caring for the material needs of the poor, underprivileged, neglected, or victimized within our membership. Also, as means are available, such care should be extended to others' needs, remembering that we are admonished to do good to all, especially those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10; I John 3:17).

343 Schools

344 We should take real interest in the educational programs affecting their children and all children of our communities. We should work for the election of suitable members of the boards of education, the employment of teachers of Christian character and example, and the development of educational programs while considering the influence of their contents and activities on the children involved.

345 Civil Government

346 We are convinced that the New Testament requires the Christian to hold the government and its leaders in respect, and that the basic principles of government can be directly traced to the Scriptures. Therefore, it is necessary that we obey the laws of the nation insofar as they are not in conflict with our obedience to God. When it becomes necessary for We to disagree with the practices and requirements of government, we should do so out of concern for the promotion of righteousness and not out of delight in controversy or strife.

347 We should use the ballot, with prayer for guidance, to vote for candidates and measures which will promote righteousness, giving much consideration to the personal and spiritual qualifications of candidates regardless of political affiliation.

348 War and Peace

349 During the first 300 years of the Christian church its members abstained from military service as being a violation of the teachings of Christ. This attitude changed only when Constantine made Christianity the state religion and introduced the notion that it was right to fight in support of an officially-Christian government. Since that time there has been division in the practice of Christians as to the support of war.

352 This liberty is not to be interpreted as any softening of our firm conviction that war is wrong as a method of settling disputes, being unchristian, destructive of our highest values, and productive of the seeds of future wars. We therefore, as a church, unequivocally support young We who, as conscientious objectors to war, refuse military service. We are concerned to find alternative solutions based upon justice and righteousness for all peoples and are deeply moved to participate in the new calls to peacemaking which are being sounded in our day.

353 Oaths

354 The New Testament (Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12) teaches that for Christians, there is no need to swear to tell the truth but rather that speaking the truth should be their normal, continuing practice. For this reason We have rejected the often-required swearing to tell the truth and have insisted that merely affirming the intention to tell the truth is sufficient to verify what we are about to state. We are grateful that the civil authorities have long granted us, and all others of like mind, the right to this practice.

355 Equality of Persons

356 We believe that all people are equal in the sight of God and all are loved by God. All believers, regardless of their race, nationality, sex, social status, or affluence, are encouraged to worship and participate in the life of We Churches.

360 CERTAIN CURRENT ISSUES

361 We desire to state their beliefs with regard to certain issues, beliefs, and practices that are currently of concern to the church.

362 Stewardship of the Earth and its Resources

363 We believe that God in the beginning gave people dominion over the earth and expected them to be wise stewards. Wasteful and destructive use of the earth's resources is contrary to God's purposes.

364 Abortion

365 We believe that all life is a gift of God (Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4); therefore when the matter of an abortion is being considered, neither the life of the mother nor of the unborn child is to be treated lightly. We hold that abortion on demand or for reasons of personal convenience, social adjustment, or economic advantage is morally wrong.

366 Euthanasia

367 We also believe that Scripture maintains that we are created in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27), therefore, we do not belong to ourselves but to God. God is the giver and sustainer of life (Job 14:5; Ecclesiastes 3:2; James 4:13-15). We believe euthanasia to be in direct violation of Exodus 20:13 and therefore reject it as a means of relieving suffering. We encourage any person contemplating euthanasia to seek divine guidance (Proverbs 3:5-6) and to consult any pro-life medical professional and/or pastor for further counsel.

368 Homosexuality

369 We are firm in the conviction that the Scriptures make abundantly clear the sinfulness of all homosexual and deviant sexual acts (Romans 1; I Corinthians 6). We believe that homosexual tendencies may be overcome by the grace of God. We also believe that forgiveness for deviant acts may be obtained by sincere repentance and faith in Christ.

370 Pornography

371 Since pornographic materials promote and propagate a lifestyle that includes activities which are condemned by God's Word and tempt viewers to commit the sin of lust (Matthew 5:27-28; Romans 13:14; II Peter 2:14, 18-19), We therefore are urged to carefully avoid exposure to such materials.

372 Because of our responsibility as Christian citizens (Matthew 5:13; Proverbs 14:34) and in view of the evil, exploitative, and destructive effects of pornography on individuals, families, and our society, We are encouraged to prayerfully and boldly oppose the production and distribution of pornographic materials in their local communities, as well as at the state and national levels (Ephesians 5:11).

373 Cults and Related Practices

374 We believe that the numerous cults, such as Transcendental Meditation, the Hare Krishna movement, and the Unification Church led by Sun Myung Moon, preach other gospels than that of Jesus Christ and offer other "saviors" than He. Some are based more or less openly on non-Christian religions such as Hinduism. We also repudiate the false interpretation of Scriptures put forth by such groups as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons (The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints), Unity, and Christian Science. We, therefore, upon authority of Scripture (Matthew 24:4, 5; Galatians 1:8, 9) take our stand against all such false teachings.

375 We believe that all access to God is through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and that therefore the use of mediums, clairvoyants, fortune tellers, astrologers, and any other alleged means of extraordinary knowledge or help is contrary to the will of God.

376 We oppose all dabbling in spiritism, spirit possession and worship, and Satanism, as well as the denial of the reality of Satan. Rather, we believe in the existence of the Evil One, "that old serpent which is the devil, and Satan," (Revelation 20:2) [see #150-153] who tempted our first parents to sin, and through their disobedience brought about the fall of our race, with all its attendant degeneracy, unhappiness, and misery. We believe that Satan has revealed his evil character and purpose in his mighty opposition to Christ in the temptations in the wilderness and to His reign in all ages. But we also believe that Satan's power is limited, and that in God's own time he will be chained and finally cast into the lake of fire (Genesis 3; Matthew 4:1; Job 1:6; Revelation 20:10).

377 Doctrinal Differences with Other Christians

378 We have warm fellowship with groups of Christians with whom we must nevertheless differ in the following matters:

379 Security of the Believer: We believe that the security of the believer, even for eternity, is indicated in God's Word and witnessed to by the Holy Spirit to the individual, but we do not hold this security to be unconditional. As repentance and faith are the human conditions of acceptance of God's free offer of salvation, so obedience and faith are necessary to continuance in that salvation (Hebrews 5:9; I John 2:4).

380 Healing: We believe that while all healing is divine, there are still instances of healing which must be considered so unusual as to be miraculous. Nevertheless we do not believe that it is God's will to heal every illness by miraculous intervention, and we particularly reject that view of divine healing which sees it as a part of the atonement which is as universally available as is the forgiveness of sins. We fear the loss of faith, which may result from the belief that the presence

of illness proves spiritual guilt or failure. On the other hand, we acknowledge that we have not always availed ourselves as we ought of the prayer of faith which will secure the healing of the sick.

381 Glossalalia (Speaking in tongues): While there are differences of interpretation among our members of the Scriptures which speak of glossalalia, as there are among other Christians, both as to whether the term refers to actual languages or to ecstatic utterances, and as to whether this is a valid gift for our time, we are nevertheless agreed as to the following points:

- a. The will of God as revealed in the Scriptures is our conformity to His holy character as manifested in a holy life. All spiritual experiences, gifts and fruit of the Spirit are means to that end (Romans 8:29).

- b. “Speaking in tongues” should not be regarded as a necessary sign of the fullness or baptism with the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:8-10).
- c. “Speaking in tongues” should not be made an occasion of division or strife among us (Galatians 5:22).
- d. In order to maintain unity in spite of our differences, we must practice mutual submission. We must be willing to voluntarily give up certain freedoms in order to avoid becoming a stumbling block to those for whom Christ died, as the Apostle Paul demonstrated in I Corinthians 8. We therefore agree for the present for all our churches that on the one hand we should not forbid the use of tongues in private devotion, but that on the other hand we should voluntarily forego the use of tongues in our public services.

We are waiting in submission to the leading of the Spirit Himself and in love toward one another for that time when under His leading we can speak unitedly on this matter.