

# Articles of Faith

*The principles that guide us*



Pastor Joe Mira

2019

## **The Scriptures**

We believe that the Scriptures, consisting of both the Old and New Testaments, were given by inspiration of God, and are without error in the original manuscripts, and are the only sufficient, certain, and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience. (Proverbs 30:5-6; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 21:18-19)

## **God**

We believe in one God, the Creator of all things, who eternally exists in three distinct Persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is commonly referred to as the Trinity. He alone rules from Heaven, and there is no other God beside Him (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 3:14, 20:3; Isaiah 42:8; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is holy, just, merciful, and the perfect expression of love (Isaiah 6:3; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 86:15; 1 John 4:8); all-knowing (Psalm 145:3, 147:5; Romans 11:33-36) and all-powerful (Exodus 15:11; Psalm 115:3) and all-present (Psalm 139:7-8). As such, He is worthy of our love and obedience (Matthew 22:37-40).

## **Jesus Christ**

We believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God who has eternally existed with the Father and Spirit, is the second Person of the Trinity. He was revealed historically many years ago through His incarnation, when He was born of the virgin Mary, condemned under Pontius Pilate, and resurrected three days after His death (Matthew 1:18-21, 28:1, 6; John 1:1-2, 14). The express purpose of His incarnation was the substitutionary atonement: that is, Christ came to die upon the cross as the perfect sacrifice on behalf of sinners, the righteous for the unrighteous (Luke 19:10; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Peter 2:21, 3:18). He is the Head of the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18) and will return to judge the world (John 5:22; 2 Timothy 4:1).

## **Holy Spirit**

We believe the Holy Spirit has eternally existed as the third Person of the Trinity. He is responsible for illuminating the teaching of the Word, convicting the world of sin, and drawing people to Christ (John 16:7-14; Ephesians 1:17-18; 2 Corinthians 3:6, 17; Titus 3:5). Further, the Spirit binds Christ to His people, His people to each other, and gives gifts to the individual members of the Church, freeing them to operate together in His power and to Jesus' glory, as the Spirit never glorifies Himself (John 16:12-15; Romans 8:11, 14:17, 15:13; 1 Corinthians 6:17-19, 12:13ff.).

### **Providence**

We believe that God decrees and permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and all events; yet He does not do so in a way that makes Him either the author or the approver of sin or in such a way that He destroys the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures. (Psalm 20:7; Proverbs 16:33; Isaiah 46:8-11; Romans 8:28-30; James 4:13-16)

### **Humankind**

We believe that God created humankind, according to the Genesis account, in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7). But when Adam, the first man, disobeyed God and sinned, the image and likeness became distorted. We also believe that this is summarized in the biblical doctrine of Total Depravity. This does not mean that we believe humankind is as bad as it possibly can be, but rather that the disease of sin has totally or thoroughly affected its nature and being. Emotionally, psychologically, physically, and spiritually—humankind is completely affected by sin. (Proverbs 20:9; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10-11, 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-2; James 1:15)

### **Salvation: Election, Regeneration, Repentance, and Justification**

We believe that election is God's choice of persons to eternal life—not because of any foreseen merit or faith in them, but out of His mercy in Christ and according to His perfect will (Ephesians 1:4-5, 11; 1 Peter 1:2)—and that the elect are regenerated (that is, made alive: John 3:3 and Ephesians 2:4) and effectively called by His Spirit (John 6:44, 63; Titus 3:5).

We believe that repentance is a necessary step in salvation, where a sinner recognizes and confesses God's holiness and righteousness and their own sin and guilt. (Hosea 6:1; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 7:10)

We believe that justification is a legal doctrine, asserting that those who have placed their faith in Christ and His work on their behalf, are legally forgiven of their sin and guilt and, being forgiven, no longer live under the wrath of God, the Judge. (Acts 2:38; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 1:1-2).

In summary, we believe that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

### **Faith**

We believe that faith is a gift from God, worked in the heart by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:8-9), and that saving faith attaches itself specifically to the Savior, Jesus Christ (Acts 16:32; Romans 5:1, 10:9, 13). Faith also is grown by the Word, prayer, service, and obedience to Christ, and is accompanied by, and leads to, a holy lifestyle. (Luke 6:46; Hebrews 11; 2 Peter 1:5-8)

### **Sanctification**

We believe that those who have been regenerated and justified are also sanctified by God's Word and God's Spirit, who dwells in them. Sanctification is a two-fold process: first, all believers are sanctified (or set apart) from the world once and for all; and, second, they are progressively made holy by submission to His Word and cooperation with the Spirit's work. Sanctification is the mark of all true saints, pressing after a heavenly life in obedience to Christ's commands. (1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-4; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:3-10)

### **Perseverance of the Saints**

We believe that those whom God has accepted in the Beloved, the Church, the Body of Christ, those sanctified by His Spirit, will never totally or finally fall away from a state of grace but will certainly persevere to the end. Although saints may

fail or sin, they will demonstrate their genuine salvation by repentance and God will keep them until the end. (Psalm 138:8; John 10:27-30; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 10:38; 1 John 2:18-20)

### **The Church and Spiritual Gifts**

We believe that the Church, or the Body of Christ, is made up of men and women and children—of every nationality, ethnicity, language, socio-economic standing, and color—who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord (Matthew 19:28-30; Romans 3:28-29; Galatians 3:26-28). They are “in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17); and Christ is the Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18; 1 Peter 5:4). Further, according to His commandment, we believe that Christians are to fellowship with one another in a local church, where the Bible is preached and considered to be the rulebook of church order and conduct. The purpose of the Church is to glorify Jesus Christ and to make disciples of all nations. There are two (2) offices in the church: the office of Bishop/Elder/Overseer/Pastor and the office of Deacon (Philippians 1:1-2; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 1:5ff.).

We believe that Christians have been commanded to spread the Gospel through their communities and the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:17). Christians are called to serve, following the model of Christ Himself (Mark 10:45; Romans 12:10; 1 Corinthians 10:24; Ephesians 4:11ff.). This goal is accomplished through the use of Spiritual Gifts. When the Holy Spirit gifts Christians according to His will, then they are responsible to discern, sharpen, and use their gifts to the glory of God and for the good of those in the church and community. (1 Corinthians 12:12ff.; Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 2:3-4; 1 Peter 4:10-11)

### **Baptism**

We believe that baptism by immersion is an ordinance from Jesus Christ and that every person is commanded to be baptized once they have placed their faith in Him (Acts 2:38, 8:34-40). Baptism is to be performed, according to Scripture, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20), and is meant to demonstrate a likeness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ Himself (Romans 6:4). Baptism is a requirement for church membership and

should be performed only by someone occupying one of the two (2) church offices, unless otherwise approved beforehand by the pastor. The question of age will be left up to the pastor's discretion.

### **The Lord's Supper**

We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance from Jesus Christ and that every person in Christ is expected to participate in it. The Lord's Supper is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed as a memorial and is performed to confirm the faith of Christians. (Luke 22:14-23; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34)

We believe that church membership is not a requirement to participate in the Lord's Supper, but that anyone who partakes of the Lord's Supper must be a Christian. Therefore, our communion is open, but the pastor, as the officiant, is required to clarify this before the deacons (or those assigned by the pastor and deacons) administer the elements to the congregation.

### **The Lord's Day**

We believe that the Lord's Day is Sunday and that the New Testament church worshipped on this day for the sake of spiritual devotion and commitment to the Christian life and service, using the Word of God as the guide and songs and hymns as an expression of affection to the Father, Son, and Spirit, to whom all glory and thanks is due. (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 3:16)

### **Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience**

We believe that God alone is the Lord of the Christian conscience in regards to things not contained in the Word of God. We believe that civil government is ordained by God, and should be respected, but is not the means by which God is redeeming humankind. Moreover, we believe that the church, a free church in a free state, can share its beliefs without hindrance or interference from any local or federal government. (1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:31-33; 1 Peter 2:16-17)

### **Eternal Issues: the Resurrection and Judgment**

We believe that there are two eternal realities: Heaven and Hell. Heaven is where God dwells and where all those who trust Him for salvation live eternally, in pure joy, happiness, and satisfaction (Psalm 16:11). Hell, on the contrary, is a place of eternal judgment, where those who have declined God's offer of salvation are forever separated from Him and His people because of sin and guilt. (Matthew 25:35-46; Revelation 20:12-15)

We believe that both of these eternal realities are preceded by a resurrection, in which God reunites the souls and bodies of both the righteous and the unrighteous, and the judgment, when God declares their eternal destination. (1 Thessalonians 4:14ff.; Hebrews 9:27)

### **Marriage and Family**

We believe that God created man and woman, gifting them with distinct roles and responsibilities, and further created marriage to be enjoyed and celebrated by one man and one woman. Sexual intimacy is meant to be reserved for the marriage bond and for the opportunity to raise children in Christ. We acknowledge that there have been deviations of God's design throughout history. Nevertheless, we believe the term marriage only has a single meaning, and that is the meaning found in the Bible (Genesis 2:12; Matthew 19:3-6). We believe that the biblical family is the bedrock of both the local church and society.