

# CHURCH - THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

“good news for the poor in spirit”

## Key question

What is the gospel message?

## Key text

## I Corinthians 15:1-8

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas . . . to the twelve . . . to more than five hundred brethren at one time . . . to James . . . also to me.”

## Key Definition

## The Gospel

In the N.T., the gospel denotes the good tidings of the Kingdom of God and of God’s gracious salvation through Christ, to be received by faith, on the basis of His expiatory death, His burial, resurrection and ascension.

## Introduction

1. The meaning of the word -
  - a. In the Greek language it is EUAGGELION the technical term for “news of victory.”
  - b. It has two senses:
    1. Active proclamation of the message.
    2. The content of the message proclaimed.
 

**I Cor.9:14** “those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.”
  - c. Seventy five percent of the references come from Paul.
    1. It is used 15 times in the Synoptic gospels
    2. It appears in Acts 15:7, 20:24, I Pet.4:17, & Rev.14:6.
    3. It is used 60 times by Paul.
2. What the Gospel is not
  - a. It is not the **Bible**. The Bible contains the gospel but there is a great deal of material in the Bible that is not the gospel.

- b. It is not the **Commandments**. It is not just a message from God telling people how to live.
  - c. It is not **Repentance**. It is not a call to change your ways and clean up your life. It does call for a change in life direction but such a change is not the heart of the good news.
  - d. It is not **giving up** the world. It is not a call to be separate from the world in all respects.
  - e. It is not human **religion**. A person can be very religious and not embrace the gospel. The gospel is not a call to religion.
  - f. It is not a **social ethic** that divorces the King from the Kingdom. This was the tendency of the Social Gospel movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - g. It is not salvation (primarily) from temporal **psychological** meaninglessness or **political** injustice. These are the two options for most theologically liberal views.
  - h. It is not faith in the **preaching** of a message about events (death and resurrection) that never were a part of history. This is a popular liberal view.
3. There is a tension within the Christian tradition between two different aspects of the Gospel.

<b><i>Body savers</i></b>	<b><i>Soul savers</i></b>
Social reform	Church renewal
Community	Individual
Faithfulness is the emphasis	Faith is the emphasis
Our walk	Christ's work
Spiritual experience	Legal standing
The Synoptic Gospels	The Epistles

- a. The Body savers' emphasis unites them with many other religious and secular causes with the effect of:
    - 1. Reducing the opposition and conflict between Christianity and the non-Christian world.
    - 2. Freeing the church to work hand in hand with other religious and secular groups in reaching common goals.
    - 3. Down playing or eliminating the distinctive aspects of Christianity and making all religions seem basically the same with different storefronts.
  - b. The uniqueness of Christianity is not seen in its ethical teaching but in its doctrine of the cross.
  - c. The Gospel is not one of social reform but of personal spiritual reconciliation with God and others who are "in Christ."
4. The Gospel (good news) is used to describe a broad range of God's relationship with His people.
- a. It is used to describe the hope that was preached to Israel in the Old Testament. Rom.10:14-21; Heb.4:2; **Gal.3:8** (Here the gospel is the promise that "All the nations will be blessed in you.")

- b. It might be said that it is written in the hearts of all people (including gentiles). Rom.1:20-23, 2:14-16. No one can say that they have not heard the good news at some level.
  - c. It is used of the hope that was offered to Israel by John the Baptist in the coming Messiah.
  - d. It is used by Paul to describe the finished work of God through the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus.
5. Six designations of the Gospel
- a. The Gospel of the **Kingdom** – it is foundational to participation in the family of God.
  - b. The Gospel of **God** – it is of God not man.
  - c. The Gospel of His **Son** (or the gospel of Christ) – it is inseparable from the person and work of Jesus.
  - d. The Gospel of the **Grace** of God – it is grounded in unconditional acceptance of those who are in themselves not worthy of fellowship with God.
  - e. The Gospel of the **Glorious** of God – it reveals something of the heart of the nature of God.
  - f. The **Everlasting** Gospel – it is a truth that stands as an eternal testimony to the work and nature of God. Rev.14:6, I Pet.1:25

A. **Jesus' teaching about the gospel of the kingdom of God. (God has come to rule.)**

1. The Kingdom of God is the reign and rule of God over His creation.
2. It is centered in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not come to deliver a gospel, but to be himself that gospel. "we proclaim **him!**" Col.1:28  
**Mk.1:1** "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."
3. It is one gospel.  
**Mk.1:14-15** "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of (KJ has "the kingdom of") God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.""
4. Its content was not as fully developed (by Jesus) as it was by Paul.
6. Jesus' gospel was preached to the Jews only.  
**Matt.8:12; 10:6** "go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"; **15:24** "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
6. His gospel is linked to the fulfillment of the promise of the kingdom in the Old Testament.  
**Mk.1:14-15** "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."
7. This kingdom included both spiritual and material elements. It was a kingdom with a present (mysterious) form and a future (millennial) form.  
**Lk.4:18-19** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"

8. Jesus identified himself with the gospel and the Kingdom.

**Mk.10:29-30** “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundred fold now in this time, houses and brothers, and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecution, and in the age to come eternal life.”

9. Some traditions of Christianity have emphasized the gospel of the kingdom as a social justice, political reform movement aimed at the community. This emphasis is sometimes at the expense of the focus in the epistles on personal justification and redemption.
- The social justice wings of the church have found this emphasis attractive but they have often failed to note that much of Jesus’ actions were not designed to seriously address the issues of social justice but were rather aimed at authenticating his identity.
  - The tension within the Christian church is not so much over words vs. actions (we all agree that both are necessary) but rather over body savers vs. soul savers.
  - One must be selective in reading the four Gospels to come away with a Jesus who serves as a poster boy for a modern social gospel. Much of His teaching does not fit the image. For example it is Jesus who gives us the stark pictures of “hell fire” judgment (Matt.24-25) on not only social insensitivity but also private immorality (Matt.5-7).
10. We might compare and contrast two emphases with the following chart.

<b><i>The Gospel according to Jesus</i></b>	<b><i>The Gospel according to Paul</i></b>
(expressed in Matthew, Mark, and Luke)	(expressed in the letters of Paul & Peter and to some extent the Gospel of John)
Repentance is the emphasis	Faith is the emphasis
Holiness and faithfulness are key	Grace and faith are key
Saving the body	Saving the soul
Our walk	Christ’s work
Preached to the Jews	Preached to the world
Centered on the Kingdom	Centered on the Cross & Resurrection
The realm is the millennial kingdom of Israel’s future hope	The realm is the mystery kingdom of this present age

Note the following demands or conditions that are linked to forgiveness and eternal life in Matthew. This emphasis is compatible with the Old Covenant of Moses but in tension with the New Covenant teaching of Paul.

- As some Jewish religious leaders came to John the Baptist for baptism they were turned away with these words “**bring forth fruit** in keeping with your repentance” (Matt.2:8)
- Jesus began his ministry with words like “unless your **righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees**, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt.5:20).

- c. The Sermon on the Mount is full of warnings about failing to fulfill the spirit of the Law. “whoever shall say ‘you fool’ shall be **guilty enough to go into the hell of fire.**” (Matt.5:22-23).
- d. **Matt.5:29-30** “And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for **it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.** And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be into hell.” (also Matt.18:8-9)
- e. **Matt.6:14-15** “For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But **if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.**”
- f. **Matt.7:19** “Every tree that does not **bear good fruit** is cut down and thrown into the fire.”
- g. **Matt.7:21-23** “Not every one who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who **does** the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who **practice lawlessness.**”
- h. **Matt.10:33** “But whoever shall **deny Me** before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”
- i. **Matt.12:36-37** “And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for if in the day of judgment. For **by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.**”
- j. **Matt.12:50** “for whoever shall **do** the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”
- k. **Matt.13:49-50** “So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the **righteous**, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
- l. In **Matt.18:21-35** Jesus tells us a story about an ungrateful servant who is forgiven much but refuses to forgive a small debt. In the story, the master repents of his forgiving the ungrateful steward and forces him to pay. Jesus then concludes with, “**So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.**”
- m. In **Matt.19:16-26** Jesus confronts the Rich Young Ruler who asks what he must do to obtain eternal life. Jesus responds with, “If you wish to be complete, go and **sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven;** and come, follow Me.”
- n. In **Matt.24:42-51** Jesus tells the story of the slave who wrongly assumes that his master will not come to check up on him so he behaves badly. Jesus concludes the story with, “the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know. And shall **cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth.**”

- o. In **Matt.25:14-30** Jesus gives us the parable of the talents and says of the servant to did not wisely invest his talents, “**And cast out the worthless slave** into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
  - p. Jesus’ teaching on the final judgment of the nations concludes with these words, “Then He will answer them, saying, ‘truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not **do** it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And there will **go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.**” (Matt.25:45-46)
- B. Paul’s definition of the gospel of grace. (God has come to redeem.)**
1. **Gal.1:12-17** “<sup>12</sup> For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but {I received it} through a revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>13</sup> For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it; <sup>14</sup> and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. <sup>15</sup> But when He who had set me apart, {even} from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup> to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, <sup>17</sup> nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.”
  2. **Rom.1:1-7 “the gospel of God”**  
 “the gospel concerning God’s Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”
    - a. “promised beforehand through His prophets”
    - b. “concerning His Son”
      1. “born of the seed of David”
      2. “declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection”
    - c. “the obedience of faith”
  3. **Rom.10:8-13 “The word of faith”**
    - a. “Confess with the mouth” - “Jesus is Lord” = Salvation
    - b. “Believe in the heart” - “God raised Him” = Righteousness
    - c. “Call upon the name of the Lord” = Salvation
  4. **I Cor.15:1-11 “The gospel which I preached”**
    - a. MESSAGE
      - “Christ died for our sins”
      - “Christ raised from the dead”
      - “Christ appeared”
      - “Grace”
      - “according to the Scriptures”
    - b. RESPONSE
      - “received” & “believed”
  5. **I Cor.1:18-31 “The word of the cross”**

a. MESSAGE

“Christ crucified”

b. RESPONSE OF

1. “THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING” - “the wisdom of this world”, “the foolishness of the message preached”

“stumbling block” or “foolishness”

2. “THOSE WHO ARE BEING SAVED”-

“power of God”

6. **Gal.1:6 “a different gospel”**

Which is “a distortion” of:

**Gal.2:14** “the truth of the gospel”

**Gal.3:1-7** “the Law through the flesh.”

7. **I Cor.15:1-8 events of the past with spiritual significance for the present**

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas . . . to the twelve . . . to more than five hundred brethren at one time . . . to James . . . also to me.”

**II Tim.2:8** “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel.”

8. Three great imputations

<b>The imputation of Adam’s sin to the human race</b>	<b>The imputation of our sins to Christ</b>	<b>The imputation of God’s righteousness to us by faith</b>
Rom.12:12-18	II Cor.5:21a Rom.3:25, 4:25, 8:3, Gal.3:13	II Cor.5: 21b Phil.1:11 Phil.3:6-9 Gal.3:6

C. **The message preached by the early church.**

1. The promises by God made in the Old Testament have now been fulfilled with the coming of Jesus the Messiah.
2. God anointed Jesus as Messiah at His baptism.
3. Jesus began His ministry in Galilee after His baptism.
4. He conducted a gracious ministry, doing good and performing mighty works by the power of God.
5. The Messiah was crucified according to the purpose of God.
6. He was raised from the dead and appeared to His disciples.
7. Jesus was exalted by God and given the name “Lord.”
8. He gave the Holy Spirit to form the new community of God.

9. He will come again for judgment and the restoration of all things.
10. All who hear the message should repent and be baptized.

**D. The communication of the gospel message to our culture**

1. Telling the meta-story that gives meaning to everyone's personal story.
2. Acts 8:26-40 Philip converts the Ethiopian eunuch.
  - a. Philip is responsive to the Spirit. Vs.26-29
  - b. Philip is responsive to the Ethiopian stranger. Vs.30-34
  - c. Philip is responsive to the Scriptures and the Story. Vs.35
3. In a postmodern culture there are opportunities that await those who are sensitive to the Spirit, the questions of the human heart, and the power of the story revealed in the Scriptures.
4. We must believe that when the Biblical story is told with power and sensitivity it will capture the hearts of people in every culture as it answers the deepest longings of all hearts – the longing for freedom from guilt and shame, the longing for hope and meaning, the longing for love and the security of belonging.

**E. A summary of the gospel message as presented by traditional evangelical churches.**

**1. Introducing the gospel message**

Two key questions

- a. "Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know for certain that if you were to die tonight you would go to heaven?"
  1. "May I share with you how I came to know I have eternal life and how you can know it, too?"
  2. "First let me ask you a second question which will help clarify the matter."
- b. "Suppose you were to die tonight and stand before God and He were to say to you, 'Why should I let you into my heaven?' What would you say?"
  1. "Let me be sure I understand what you would say to God. You would say ... . Is this what you would say?"
  2. "When we started talking I thought I might have some good news to share with you, but now that I've heard your answer to this question I know I have the best news you've ever heard!"
  3. "Most of my life I thought (or most people think) as you. To get into heaven required ... . Then someone shared with me the best news I have ever heard (or when I was shown that)."

**2. The content of the gospel message**

(MODEL #1) "James Kennedy"

**1. GRACE**

- a. Heaven is a free gift.
- b. It is not earned or deserved.

This can be seen more clearly when we understand what the Bible says about MAN.

## 2. **MAN**

- a. He is a sinner.
- b. He cannot save himself.

This comes into sharper focus when we look at what the Bible says about GOD.

## 3. **GOD**

- a. He is merciful - therefore does not want to punish us.
- b. He is just - therefore must punish our sin.

God solves this problem in the person of Jesus Christ.

## 4. **CHRIST**

Who do you think Christ is?

- a. He is the infinite GOD-MAN.
- b. He died to pay for our sins and to purchase a place in heaven for us which he offers as a gift.

This gift is received by faith.

## 5. **FAITH**

- a. It is not mere intellectual assent nor temporal trust.
- b. It is clinging (trusting) in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation.

The bible distinguishes true faith from false faith with the concept of repentance.

## 6. **REPENTANCE**

- a. It is a change in perception of where our deepest longings for true life can be found.
- b. It is also a change in the direction of our behavior.

Repentance is demonstrated in water baptism.

## 7. **BAPTISM**

- a. It is not a magical ceremony that in itself "saves you".
- b. It is a commanded step of obedience which pictures God's transforming work in your life, and your repentance.

(MODEL #2)

## 1. **GOD'S PLAN**

- a. **UNITY**: God has created man to have fellowship with Him and experience eternal life: (meaning, peace, security, joy).
- b. **GRACE**: Fellowship with God and eternal life are not earned by man but are the free gift of God.

## 2. **MAN'S PLIGHT**

- a. Man's **frustrations** come from the fact that he is a **sinner** (he lives his life independent of God and His will).
- b. Isa.59:2, Rom.3:23, Rom.6:26, Heb.9:27, Jas.2:10, Rom.3:11-12.

## 3. **MAN'S PILGRIMAGE**

- a. In spite of man's efforts **he cannot** save himself.
- b. Eccl.1:2, Isa.64:6, Prov.14:12, Eph.2:9, Titus 3:5.

#### 4. **GOD'S PROVISION**

- a. God is not only **loving and merciful** but also **just** and therefore must punish sin. Ps.89:32, Ex.34:7b.
- b. Christ is God become man to give His life a **ransom** for sinners. Jn.1:1,18, Isa.9:6, Jn.14:4-9.
- c. Christ's death **removed the sin barrier** between man and God. I Pet.3:18, Isa.53:4,6, Jn.3:16, Rom.5:8.

#### 5. **MAN'S PARTICIPATION**

- a. Man enters into the Kingdom of God, experiencing forgiveness and eternal life when he accepts God's gift in **faith**. Jn.5:24, (Jn.6:47, 12:44), Heb.10:10, Jn.6:40, Rom.8:1, I Jn.2:2.
- b. **True faith is not** mere intellectual assent, emotional response, or temporary confidence. Jas.2:19, Matt.8:29, Jn.8:30-31, 44-45.
- c. **True faith is** trusting Jesus Christ alone for your salvation (Acts 16:31, Jn.3:36, Eph.2:8-9) and includes:
  - 1. **REPENTANCE** from sin and dead works. Acts 19:18-19, Heb.6:1.
  - 2. **CONFESSION** of Christ as Savior and Lord. Acts 2:38, Rom.10:8-15
  - 3. **A DESIRE TO FOLLOW** Him in obedience.
    - a. Baptism
    - b. Good works - Eph.2:10.

(MODEL #3)

#### 1. Introduction

The gospel is good news and bad news. The good news is about God. The bad news is about us.

#### 2. **Creation**

- a. Good news - We are all made in the image of God and aspire to the realization of his kingdom.
- b. Bad news - We have chosen to ignore the inner light that we have and have tried to find life without God.

#### 3. **Commandments**

- a. Good news - The moral code of Moses was given to us to show us our need for a redeemer.
- b. Bad news - We have tried and failed to be righteous through our own discipline.

#### 4. **Cross**

- a. Good news - Christ came to redeem us by dying in our place.
- b. Bad news - We have often accepted the cross as a comfort but not as a life style.

#### 5. **Commitment**

- a. Good news - We are redeemed by faith apart from faithfulness.
- b. Bad news - We have often made faith a shallow intellectual confession without a deep heart commitment.

#### 6. **Conclusion**

- a. Becoming a Christian is a matter of repentance - changing the way we see things and believe.
- b. True saving faith is demonstrated in water baptism and a life that seeks to please God.

(MODEL #4)

1. **God does not ask or expect me to be the judge of another person's heart toward God.**
  2. **God however will judge every person in a perfectly fair way.**
    - a. God is no respecter of race, religious background, sex, position, success, intellect, etc.
    - b. God simply asks us to be true to ourselves as "image bearers" of the nature of God.
  3. **For those of us who are insecure and see ourselves as falling short of that image, God has provided a gracious gift.**
    - a. He offers the life of His Son (Jesus) to us as a substitute.
    - b. As we place our faith in Jesus, He imputes to our account his righteousness and atones for our sins with his sacrificial death.
  4. **A person can choose to receive God's gift or reject it.**
    - a. If a person rejects the gift they will stand before God in their own righteousness and will be judged on that basis.
    - b. If a person receives the gift of God's grace in Christ, they will be judged on the basis of Christ's life and death.
  5. **No one is forced to believe in Jesus, but no one is free to escape the accounting before a holy God.**
    - a. We know God will be fair.
    - b. We know God wants all to be saved.
3. **Closure to the gospel message.**
- a. RESPONSE OPTIONS
    1. "In I Cor.1:23-24 Paul said 'We preach Christ crucified, to Jews a **stumbling block**, and to Gentiles **foolishness**, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ **the power of God and the wisdom of God.**'"
    2. "These are three common responses to the gospel."
      - a. "It is foolishness."
      - b. "It makes sense but I am not interested in responding to Christ with faith at this time."
      - c. "It makes sense and I want to express my faith in Christ."

3. "What is your response?"
  4. "Would you like to receive the gift of eternal life?"
- b. CLARIFICATION OF COMMITMENT
- "This is the most important decision a person can ever make, so let me clarify it for you again. You receive eternal life by transferring your trust to the resurrected and living Christ. You must receive Him as your Savior and your Lord. You must repent and want to become a responsible member in God's family. Is this what you want?"
- c. PRAYER
- "If this is really what you want, we can pray. I can lead us in prayer and we will tell Him what you just now told me."
- d. ASSURANCE
- "I would like to read something important that Jesus says about what you have just done. Jn.6:47 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.'"

### **Questions that you should be able to answer.**

- 1. Specific facts you should know.**
  - a. What does the word "gospel" mean?
  - b. What are some of the texts that speak of the gospel?
- 2. Issues that you should be able to discuss.**
  - a. How would you explain the gospel to someone who has never understood it?
  - b. According to Paul, what constitutes a false gospel?
- 3. Questions you should wrestle with.**
  - a. How does the Gospel of the Kingdom differ from Paul's gospel and why?
  - b. What would you consider to be the core fundamentals of your faith?
  - c. What is the most effective way to communicate the content of the gospel message?

## **Introduction**

### **The nature and purpose of a doctrinal statement**

This doctrinal statement is a core set of beliefs held by those who will be voting members of this congregation. We believe these beliefs to be clearly taught in the Bible and widely held by Evangelical Christians across time and culture. While we affirm the historic creeds of the church we also recognize the fact that the way doctrinal issues are addressed may differ as time passes, thus we offer the following statement.

Agreeing with the doctrinal statement does not make one a Christian, and disagreeing with some aspect of the statement does not mean that a person is not a Christian. However, the affirmation of these beliefs provides us with a confessional unity that facilitates working together with a common perspective and for that reason agreement with the statement is required of all members of CHBC.

We recognize that correct doctrine is not the source of life in a church and cannot guarantee a faithful witness in the future. God's Spirit is the source of the church's vitality and health. Leaders guided by God's Spirit are needed to keep the direction of the church clear and true to the faith.

Our identity as Christians is established not only by our confession of faith and affirmation of doctrines. It is also founded upon our personal encounter with the living Christ and our willingness to live lives of obedience to His Word. It is our intention that the following

doctrinal statement clarify the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith. We expect it also to challenge our members to serious study of the Bible, an intimate communion with Christ and His people, together with a life of faithfulness and fruitfulness.

We believe the Biblical story reveals life's ultimate reality. The story comes to us in the Christian scriptures of the Old and New Testaments which we recognize as an authoritative revelation from God. This God reveals himself as one, loving, holy, eternal being in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Through Christ, God created the universe and fashioned all human life in His own image. Because all humans have failed to live up to the image of God within them, He sent his Son, Jesus as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. Jesus shed His blood on the cross for our sins taking the place of humanity, rose bodily from the grave, was exalted as Lord of the universe, and will return as Judge and Ruler. His salvation is offered to all by grace and is received through faith giving believers full forgiveness and a new heart empowering and motivating them through the Holy Spirit to love and serve God and all people. Looking forward to Jesus' second coming as a blessed hope, we prepare to meet him by building communities of faith and faithfulness.

## **Statement of faith for a model Church**

### **I. God's Word**

We believe that God worked through human authors and culture to uniquely inspire the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments and that they alone are authoritative and without error as they speak to all matters of faith and life.

We believe that the Bible is the living and powerful Word of God in human language and its proper interpretation requires sensitivity to the indwelling Holy Spirit, the common usage of human language, and the historical perspective of the church.

I Pet.1:25; II Pet.1:21; Ps.119:11, 130; Matt.4:4; Rom.15:4; Eph.6:17; II Tim.3:15-17; Heb.4:12

### **II. God's Nature**

We believe that God exists as one, loving, holy, eternal being in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As Creator, Redeemer, and Lord, God is to be the sole object of people's worship. God is the righteous judge before whom the whole world will give an account.

Jn.4:24; Ex.3:14; Heb.1:10-12; Jer.23:24; Matt.10:29-30; Mk.10:27; I Pet.1:15; I Jn.4:8; Matt.28:19; II Cor.13:14; Acts 17:30-31

### **III. God's Creation**

We believe that God through Christ, created the universe and that all human life is made in God's image. We also believe that all humans have failed to live up to God's holy standard and are sinners who do not deserve eternal fellowship with God but rather incur His just wrath.

As stewards of the planet and of life we are all accountable to God and bear significant responsibility for our relationship with the creation, each other, and God.

Gen.1-3; Ps.33:6; Jn.1:3; Col.1:16; Heb.1:2; 11:3; Rom.3:23; 5:12,18-19; 6:23; 7:14-15; I Jn.1:8;

### **IV. God's Son**

We believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament, the only Savior, and the Son of God who is equal in essence with God the Father. He is truly divine and truly human.

Jesus Christ has existed eternally and is the creator of all things. He lived a sinless life, worked miracles, shed His blood on the cross for our sins taking the place of humanity, rose bodily from the grave, was exalted as Lord of the universe, intercedes as High Priest for His people, and will return bodily as Judge and King. He will resurrect the believer to eternal union with God and the nonbeliever to eternal separation from God.

Jn.1:1,18; II Cor.5:19; Matt.16:16; Jn.5:21-23; 14:7-9; Phil.2:7-8; Heb.2:14,17; Matt.1:21; 26:28; Mk.2:17; 10:45; Lk.19:10; Isa.53:5-6; II Cor.5:21; I Pet.3:18; I Jn.2:2; Rev.5:9; Acts 5:30-31; Eph.1:20-21; Heb.1:3; Mk.8:38; Acts 1:11; I Thess.4:16-17

### **V. God's Spirit**

We believe that the Spirit of Jesus calls us to faith in Jesus, indwells every believer at the point of “new birth” (conversion) and that the Spirit comforts, teaches, and empowers, every believer for faithfulness and fruitfulness as a part of “the body of Christ” the church.

The manifestation of the Spirit will always glorify Jesus but in different ways through different gifts and ministries. There is need to respect the full variety of gifts and ministries that exist in the church by the one Spirit. The manifestation of gifts and ministries are to be used to edify (build up) the body of Christ (the church) under the oversight of its elders.

Jn.14:16-18; 15:5; Rom.8:2, 9,15-16; Jn.3:5-6; 16:8, 13; Gal.4:6; 5:22-23; I Jn.2:27; Acts 1:8

## **VI. God’s Grace**

We believe that all people have a sinful nature, are spiritually separated from God by sin, and are unable to merit through good work their salvation. Salvation from sin is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone.

Salvation by grace gives believers a new heart and is evidenced by good works. Salvation by grace provides - forgiveness of sin, deliverance from condemnation, the baptism with the Holy Spirit, entrance into God’s family, a righteous standing in the sight of God, and eternal life.

Isa.53:6; Jas.4:17; Rom.6:23; Jn.10:28; I Jn.1:9; Eph.2:8-10, 13; Rom.8:1; 10:9-10; II Cor.5:17; Jn.1:12; Mk.8:34-35; I Jn.3:18; I Pet.1:7-8

## **VII. God’s Church**

The universal church is made up of all Christian believers in the world. The local church is intended to function as a dynamic expression of the universal church, and is to maintain a spirit of unity and cooperation with other Christian organizations.

The local church is designed to be a community of Christians and is to be characterized by worship, fellowship, teaching, and ministry to those in need. Individuals are to exercise spiritual gifts in the church, and the body should strive for unity and spiritual growth. The church’s witness in word and deed is to extend to both the local community and the world.

I Cor.12:12-13; Heb.10:24-25; Rom.12:4-5; Eph.2:14-20; 4:15-16; 5:23

## **VIII. God’s Ultimate Purpose**

We believe that the final purpose of God will be realized in the physical return of Jesus to the earth followed by a resurrection of the dead and a judgment that will determine the final state of the living and the dead.

We believe that we are to look forward to Jesus’ coming as a blessed hope and be prepared to meet Jesus.

I Cor.3:12-15; 15:54-57; II Cor.5:6-8; Matt.24-25; II Pet.3:3-4, 8-10

## **Appendix #1**

### **Three key passages of Scripture**

*Note: While these passages do not present an exhaustive expression of the faith, they do express what we believe to be the core beliefs of the faith and function to define the affirmation of those who we recognize as Christians.*

#### **The Gospel Message**

##### **I Corinthians 15:1-5**

“1 Now I make known to you brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.”

- 1. We believe that Jesus died to save us from the penalty due us for our sin (our falling short of the image of God that all humans possess).**
- 2. We believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and appeared to many human witnesses.**
- 3. We believe that the Scriptures are inspired of God and reveal God’s plan for His creation.**

#### **The Lord Jesus Christ**

##### **Colossians 1:13-20**

“13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”

- 4. We believe that Jesus is both Redeemer and Judge.**
- 5. We believe that Jesus is both Creator and Lord of all.**
- 6. We believe that Jesus is both divine and human.**

#### **The Christian Life**

##### **Ephesians 2:8-10**

“8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

- 7. We believe that salvation is by the grace of God.**
- 8. We believe that salvation is through faith in Jesus.**
- 9. We believe that salvation is to produce a life of faithfulness to God’s will as revealed in the Scriptures.**

## **Appendix #2**

### **Frequently asked questions about doctrine**

*Note: The questions and answers in Appendix #2 may change from time to time and they are included in this doctrinal statement only as an aid for those who take part in one of our membership classes or who inquire about our beliefs and practices with respect to doctrine.*

#### **What is our understanding and practice with respect to denominational affiliation?**

We are nondenominational but not antidenominational. We believe that it is God's intent that all Christians be united in a common spirit and sense of purpose. We recognize that denominational distinctive have often been necessary (a sign of needed reform) and sometimes have been unnecessary barriers to fellowship. While not being officially aligned with any one protestant denomination we seek to work with and support groups that are aligned denominationally and share common objectives with us.

#### **What do we mean by "Evangelical Christian"?**

An evangelical Christian is simply a person who accepts the historic Christian faith that has come down to us through the Protestant Reformation. An evangelical Christian is person who can answer "yes" to each of the following questions. 1) I believe that the Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God. 2) I believe that Jesus died for my sins and that through personal faith in Him I have been "born again" of His Spirit. 3) I believe that I am called to be an active witness for the Christian faith.

#### **What is our understanding and practice of water baptism?**

We expect that every believer will be baptized in water as a sign of their sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ. We practice believer's baptism but we respect infant baptism as valid for those who come to us with sincere conviction of such a practice. We respect the fact that the historic church has been divided on this issue and we do not believe that this issue should be a point of discrimination in this congregation.

#### **What is our understanding and practice of the Lord's Supper?**

We believe that every believer is welcome to share the bread and cup of communion as a memorial to Christ's death. The Lord's Table is to be celebrated regularly and respectfully under the supervision of the leaders of the church.

#### **What is our understanding and practice of special manifestations of the Spirit?**

We believe that every believer is baptized by the Spirit and gifted for service in the body of Christ. Everyone does not have the same gift set nor are there sign gifts (speaking in tongues) that distinguish the spiritual from the carnal believers. Believers should be free to manifest any of the gifts of the Spirit in ministry but only as they build up the body and maintain order under the oversight of the elders.

### **What is our understanding and practice of church discipline?**

We believe that every believer is called to a life of freedom, faithfulness, and fruitfulness. It is the responsibility of church leaders to model this life, provide an environment where all believers can grow in their experience of this life, and lovingly correct those who persistently mock or rebel against this life.

### **What is our understanding of the inspiration of the Bible?**

We believe that the Protestant Bible is authoritative and trustworthy in all that it affirms concerning theology and ethics. We believe that the proper interpretation of the Scripture requires a sensitivity to the nature of the language and context of the text and the wisdom and guidance of the Spirit through the broader Christian community.

### **What is our understanding of the time and events of Christ's Second Coming?**

We believe that every believer should anticipate Christ's physical return to earth and watch for it. We do not believe that the Scripture is so clear in its teaching about the sequence of events surrounding our Lord's second coming that we should take dogmatic (divisive) stands on these doctrines.

### **What is our understanding and practice with respect to women in ministry?**

Because there is diversity of opinion with respect to the teaching of Scripture on this subject within the leadership of this congregation we have an open and ongoing dialogue on the subject. The present policy of CHBC is to encourage women and men to seek the expression of their faith in service through the use of all their talents and gifts. Our understanding of the Scripture as it has been interpreted by most of the evangelical church down through history is that the men of the congregation should take the role of ultimate responsibility in spiritual leadership. Our board of elders is made up of men only. Women and men alike serve as Deacons, and leaders in other capacities. There is a position paper explaining our policy in more detail available upon request.

### **What is our understanding and practice with respect to homosexuality?**

We believe that practicing homosexuals are made in the image of God and deserve to be loved and accepted as such. We also believe that the Scripture clearly teaches that homosexual acts are unnatural and sinful. While we can accept the homosexual we do not approve of homosexual acts. We believe that a person can be a faithful disciple of Christ and also have homosexual desires. We do however believe that such desires must be controlled and disciplined (just as heterosexual desires must be controlled) if one is to follow Christ.

### **Is faith in Jesus as one's personal Savior the only path to eternal life? How exclusive is the Christian faith?**

We believe that the Scripture clearly indicates that Jesus' sacrificial death is God's only provision of eternal life and that faith in Him is essential for participation in the gift of eternal life. It is not clear as to how much knowledge of Jesus' person and work is necessary for saving faith but we can assume that knowledge of His name and faith in Him as Savior is basic to saving faith.

Having said this we also recognize that we are not the ultimate judge of the extent of God's grace and that God's judgment will, in the end, prove to be just to all. We also recognize that infants who die and those mentally challenged who are not capable of understanding the gospel represent special cases of exception to this teaching. We also recognize that those who expressed faith in the God of Israel before the advent of Christ were justified before God by their faith.