

South Fellowship Church

STATEMENT OF FAITH – *A Detailed Theological Standard of Our Beliefs*

I. INTRODUCTION

At South Fellowship Church, we welcome people from all backgrounds and at any spiritual level. Our functions and services are open to any person who is willing to come and explore the Christian faith. Questions are allowed, and discussions on theology and life issues are welcomed! We believe that love and acceptance are the greatest marks of a mature Christian. We recognize that we are all on a spiritual journey. Our hope is that people will come seeking truth about life and eternity. We know that we are all still growing, and that we may be wrong sometimes in our understanding of the Bible. Having said this, we also believe we need to be authentic with each other, and state clearly what we believe at this point of our journey.

THE NEED FOR HUMILITY, GRACE, AND LOVE

As we discuss our theological positions among ourselves or with other people, we are committed to remembering several keys about the nature of theological discussions:

- No human or organization knows God’s Truth perfectly, for we are imperfect vessels. Humility is to be our watchword.
- Faith is developmental; spiritual growth is an ongoing process. Therefore, our maturity should increase over time, and our wisdom into theology and life should grow as well.
- The church needs people who are different, and who humbly hold differences of opinion. We will seek to be good listeners.
- Love is the preeminent mark of a Christian. Therefore, we will value “being loving” as we seek and discuss theological truth.
- Our goal is not perfect theology, but functional unity as we serve God and become transformed into Christ’s image. The Bible reminds us often to work and grow together as we wrestle to live out our faith, recognizing that it is God who gave us different roles.¹



THE NEED FOR THEOLOGICAL STANDARDS

At its core, Christianity is really about (1) what we believe to be true and (2) who we place our faith in. What we believe is important! In theological terms, what we believe is often called

¹ Eph. 4:11-16 reads, “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Romans 12:16-19 adds, “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” Finally, 1 Peter 1:22 includes this command: “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

“doctrine” or “standards.” This document is designed to clearly disclose what we believe in at South Fellowship Church, and to help those who gather together to live out our lives faithfully.

“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” 1 Timothy 4:16



Icon of the Council of Nicea, 325 AD

II. HISTORICAL DOCTRINAL ESSENTIALS

Although it isn't a new phenomenon, today we live in a world of many “gods” and belief systems. Throughout history, orthodox Christians have united around a short list of “essential truths” to help keep clear the beliefs of Christianity. As strange or “new” teachings arose around them in every generation, Christians often wrote down these biblical essentials as “Creeds,” “Confessions,” or “Statements of Faiths.” The Apostle Paul wrote what is considered the first creed around 50 AD, recorded in Corinthians 15:1-9.² Some important examples are the Apostles' Creed (2nd Century) and the Nicene Creed (325 AD), both shown on page 3, as well as others like the Westminster Confession of Faith³ (A standard of reformed doctrine written in 1646 AD). The purpose of

these historical statements was and is to define and reaffirm the core beliefs of the Christian Faith, so that what we believe would have accuracy, stability, and roots.

Taken together, the eight essentials below express historic essential beliefs common to these early confessions, and central for all true Christian believers and churches throughout the world and throughout the ages. At South Fellowship Church, we believe in these ancient truths, and try to live our lives by them every day of our lives. We desire to practice these historic elements of faith in real, tangible ways today. This is why we sometimes call ourselves an “Ancient-Future” Church.

NOTE: *These following Doctrinal Essentials from the Bible are drawn in nature and detail from the historic creeds of our faith. We offer these essentials in a plain, more modern language style with few theological terms to help in discussion and understanding. More specific and detailed theological statements, including Bible references, are included after this in the THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION sections.*

² 1 Corinthians 15:1-9 / NLT reads: “Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it. It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you—unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place. I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I, Paul, also saw him.”

³ The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646 AD) is a longer statement from which many Reformers and Presbyterians derive their theological traditions. Although South is an independent church, we find our roots in many of these reformed doctrines. A complete on-line copy of a modern English version can be found at www.epc.org.

THE HISTORIC ESSENTIALS:

THE BIBLE We believe that the Bible is self-attesting and completely true. Through it, God speaks to those who seek Him. As God's Word to us, its teachings require our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The sixty-six books forming the Old and New Testaments are a complete and unified witness to God's redemptive acts culminating in the birth of the Living Word, Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks.

ONE TRIUNE GOD We believe in one God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

GOD THE FATHER We believe in God the Father, an eternal spirit, present everywhere, having all knowledge, and holding all power and authority in the Universe. He is the "Father" of all who follow Him, and so He is invested in them and has the right to act on their behalf. God the Father is, more specifically, the Father of Jesus, His only born Son. With the Spirit, the Father and the Son share a relationship of perfect intimacy and purpose.

GOD THE SON, JESUS We believe in Jesus Christ, who became human through his miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and his virgin birth in Bethlehem. In Jesus, both humanity and deity were perfectly combined. He who was and is fully God became fully man, and the two natures were united in one Person forever. As complete Man, Jesus' death on the cross was a sacrifice for humanity's sins and evil. Since He was fully and eternally God, Jesus' death paid the spiritual debts of all men and women throughout all time. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, sitting at the right hand of the God the Father, he now is our High Priest, Mediator, and Judge. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth—personally, visibly, and bodily—to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God.

South Fellowship Church Affirms These Historical Creeds

The Apostle's Creed (2nd century):

"I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic (universal) Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

The Nicene Creed (325 AD):

"I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: Whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe in one catholic (universal) and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen."

GOD THE SPIRIT We believe in the Holy Spirit, who has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. Fully a part of the triune eternal God, the Spirit convicts us of sin and draws us to the Savior. Indwelling our hearts, He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts spiritual gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption, when Jesus comes again.

SALVATION We believe that Jesus came to forgive and save men and women from our own corruption, evil, and sin. Being estranged from God and condemned by our rebellious and selfish nature, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God reaching out to us -- upon His free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ alone, thereby forever cleansing them spiritually in His sight. Only those men and women who are born again of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become true Children of God and heirs of eternal life.

THE CHURCH We believe in one universal or “catholic” Church (not tied to a denomination, but from the Greek word, *katholikos*, meaning “whole” or “total”). This Church is composed of all people throughout time who, through faith in Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, are united together into one Family, which the Bible calls “the body of Christ.” The Church finds her visible, yet imperfect, expression in local congregations of many names, denominations, and affiliations. These churches are following Jesus Christ when the Word of God is preached in its purity, when the sacraments are administered in their integrity, when scriptural discipline is practiced, and when loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting, the true Church awaits the return of her Lord, Jesus. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Rev. 22:20)

OUR LIVES We believe that those who follow Jesus are to love God with all of our being: with all of our hearts, with all of our minds, and with all of our strength. We are to seek Him, love Him, listen to Him, and obey Him. Jesus commands all who believe in Him to proclaim the Good News of salvation gently to those we meet. Because God’s love is so broad, we are to share the news and teach followers in all nations. Everything we do is the flow out from a place of love. He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service, but promises to share with us not only eternity, but also peace, joy, love, purpose, and spiritual power for our lives.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10)

III. A THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION OF DOCTRINES

Including and developing from these essentials, there are a number of doctrinal values which we hold. To us, doctrine, beliefs, and life standards may be divided into three groups:

A. That which is essential for salvation (that which is, in our opinion, required to be a true Christian).

B. That which is essential for leadership at South Fellowship Church. Those fulfilling the office or role of Pastor, Elder, Deacon, and/or Teacher are considered to be “leadership.”

C. Those doctrines or issues on which we allow latitude, or agree to disagree on while remaining in relationship.

A. DOCTRINE ESSENTIAL FOR SALVATION

A religious man once asked Jesus, “What must I do to gain eternal life?” Jesus’ answer is clear: “Come, follow me.” Some people may think that we gain eternal life or go to heaven based on where we were born, or through the faith of our parents. They may believe that one can become a Christian through being good, through fulfilling some religious act, or through attending a certain church. None of these is the key to really being a Christian. Christianity is really about believing in Jesus and following him.



"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." John 3:16-17

What is required to be saved?

In theological terms, we believe salvation is a free gift offered to mankind by God through the finished work (the life, death, and resurrection) of Jesus Christ. It is God who first reaches out to us, and no one comes to eternal life without the Spirit drawing them. God is the Power Source and Actor in the work of salvation. Mysteriously, God offers eternal life as he sees best, based on his deep love and compassion for humanity. But, from a human perspective, in order to be saved and gain eternal life, some response is generated and acknowledged. A person is called on by God to repent of his or her sin and receive and accept Jesus Christ as Lord (personal master, ruler, or King) and Savior (the one who redeems us from the just judgment we each deserve.) Each individual must trust alone in what Christ has done to receive that salvation. *This can be stated in a simpler, less theological way: To be a Christian, a man or woman must—as led and drawn by God’s Spirit—recognize their need for spiritual forgiveness, must then believe that Jesus as God is the means of spiritual forgiveness, and then invite Jesus to come in and lead their life.*

This is all that any person must believe to be a Christian. While God offers us more directions for leading a life that is joyful, peaceful and holy, Christian faith is this simple. Christians use varying phrases from the Bible to express this place of choosing to follow Jesus: personal faith, salvation, being saved, being born again, meeting Jesus, and becoming a Christian. A person who denies the above would not be considered a Christian. While we may have a loving relationship and friendship with such a person, we could not have true Christian fellowship. (Eph. 2:8- 9; John 1:12; John 3:16; Acts 16:31)

B. DOCTRINE ESSENTIAL FOR LEADERSHIP

Throughout Christianity, the essential for salvation is consistent. The essential doctrines of our Christian faith have not changed. On the other hand, doctrine essential for leadership in local churches may vary greatly—it may even vary in one place from time to time. Additionally, no local church or denomination, including us, has the perfect set of doctrinal rules, because no human can fully know the mind of God.

The Elder Board, the governing board of our church, has over many years prayerfully considered which doctrines best define what we see as God’s instructions in the pages of the Bible. Humbly, the Elder Board has set certain doctrines as essential for those who are in leadership at this church. They include the essential historic doctrines above, but are more specific and detailed in nature.

NOTE: These doctrines are not set in stone, and are to be reviewed regularly. An individual at South Fellowship may disagree with some of these doctrines and still be a good Christian, an active participant in the life of the church, and a church member. While they could serve in most capacities, they could not serve in a leadership role (Pastor, Elder, Deacon, or doctrinal Teacher). When these doctrines are taught, it should be explained that they are not essential for salvation. We may certainly state the case for our position, but we should be careful to point out that, in many cases, sincere and intelligent Christians hold different positions.

1. WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT GOD

Natural Attributes	We believe that there is but one living and true God, who is infinite in perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory. (Ex. 34:6,7; Deut. 6:4; 10:17; Num 16:22; Ex 15:11; 33:19; Isa 44:6; Hab. 3:6; Ps 102:26; Job 34:12; Rev 5:12 and 7:12.)
Moral Attributes	We believe that God is most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; and Most just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will be no means clear the guilty. (from the Westminster Confession)
Trinity	We believe in one God eternally existing in three equal persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 48:16; Matt. 28:19; John 6:27; Acts 5:3-4; 11 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 1:8).

2. WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT GOD’S INTERACTION WITH HUMANITY

Creation & Fall	We believe that mankind was created in the image of God, and that Adam and Eve sinned and consequently experienced not only physical death but also spiritual death (which is separation from God). The consequences of this sin affect the entire human race. All human beings are born with a sinful nature (Gen. 1:26-27; Gen. 2:17; Mark 7:20-23; John 2:24-25; Rom. 5:12-19; Eph. 2:1-3; Eph. 4:18)
Incarnation	We believe that, in order to remedy this situation, God the Son became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, who was begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, and who is true God and true man. (Matt. 1:18-25; Matt. 26:38; Mark 7:20-23; John 2:24-25; John 8:40; John 11:33; Heb. 1:8; Heb. 2:14)
Atonement	We believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins as a substitutionary sacrifice and that all who believe in Him are declared righteous on the basis of His shed blood. (Mark 10:45; Rom. 3:21-26; Rom. 5:8-9; II Cor. 5:14; Gal. 3; 1 Peter 3:18)
Resurrection	We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, in His ascension into heaven, and in His present life there for us. Jesus now serves as high priest, intercessor, and advocate in our behalf with the Father. (John 20:25-27; Acts 1:9-11; Rom. 1:4; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1)
Return of Christ	We believe in the personal, bodily, visible return of Christ Jesus Christ in the glory of His Father to set up on the earth a kingdom in which He shall reign in righteousness and peace. (Isa. 9:6-7; Isa. 11:2-5; Matt. 24:30; Acts 1:11; Rev. 20:4-6)
Salvation	We believe that whoever by faith receives Jesus Christ as His Savior becomes a child of God. His salvation is not the result of any human effort or merit. (John 1:12; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 3; Eph. 2:8-9; 1 John 5:11-13)
Eternal Security	We believe that once a person is saved, it is impossible for him to lose his salvation. He is kept eternally secure by the power of God through the new birth, the indwelling and sealing of the Holy Spirit, and the intercession of Christ. (John 10:25-30; John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:33S-39; Eph. 4:30; Phil. 1:6; 1 Peter 1:23)
Role of the Holy Spirit	We believe that He is a person, possessing all the distinctively divine attributes. He is God. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He regenerates, seals, and sets apart the believer to a holy life. He baptizes the believer into the body of Christ and comes to indwell him permanently (Isa. 40:13-14; Ps. 139:7; John 3:5-7; John 7:37-39; John 14:16-17; John 16:8; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:9; 26-27; 1 Cor. 2:10-11; I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13; 11 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:5)
Baptism of the Holy Spirit	We believe that there is only one baptism of the Holy Spirit. This occurs at conversion at which time one receives the Holy Spirit in the Spirit's

entirety. Christians may have subsequent meaningful experiences with the Holy Spirit. Any subsequent experience should properly be called a "filling of the Spirit" and not a "second baptism." It is necessary for each Christian to be continually filled by the Spirit by confessing sin and yielding his life to the Master. (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13; Eph. 4:4; Eph. 5:18-21; Col. 2:9-10)

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

We believe that believers receive from the Holy Spirit spiritual gifts which they should endeavor to discover, develop, and use to serve and build up the Body. The Body functions most effectively when gifts are being properly exercised. However, the fruit of the Spirit, not spiritual gifts, are the evidences of being filled by the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-27; Eph. 4:7-13)

Exercise of Spiritual Gifts

We believe in the exercise of all the spiritual gifts according to the guidelines given by Scripture. If a message is given by a spiritual gift, the message cannot contradict or add to Scripture which is final and complete. (I Cor. 2:4-11; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 1 Pet. 4:10)

Sanctification

We believe that all believers still possess a sinful nature in this life, but that God has made full provision for believers to overcome this sinful nature and to live for God through identification with Christ, a knowledge of the Scriptures, and by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We recognize that this is a process which will not be completed until we see Jesus face to face. (Rom. 5:12-19; Rom. 6:1-14; Rom. 8:11-17; Eph. 2:1-10).

The Bible

We believe God, Who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself. We believe that the Bible, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible, divine authority in all matters upon which it touches. It is inerrant in its entirety. This includes the fields of history and science as well as spiritual, religious, and redemptive themes. (We use the word "inerrant" not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of always making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed.)

We believe that the Bible is to be believed as God's instruction in all that it affirms; obeyed as God's command in all that it requires; embraced as God's pledge in all that it promises. (Matt. 5:18; John 10:35; John 16:12-15; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Cor. 2:14-16; 11 Tim. 3:16; 11 Peter 1:21)

Bodily Resurrection

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men. Believers 'are resurrected to enjoy eternal life with God. Unbelievers are resurrected to experience judgment and then eternal suffering apart from God. (Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 20:4-6, 12-15; Rev. 21:1-8)

Baptism	We believe that baptism, whether by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling, is a sign and testimony of a person's saving relationship with Jesus Christ. We believe that every Christian should, out of obedience to the Word of God, and as a public identification with Jesus Christ, be baptized. Children who become Christians should wait to be baptized until they can understand the reason, method and significance of the sacrament. (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Eph. 4:5)
Lord's Supper	We believe that Christians are to celebrate Communion until He returns. This celebration reminds Christians of Christ's body broken and blood shed for our sins. (Luke 22:14-23; 1 Cor. 11:17-30)
Lordship	We believe that Christ should have control of every area of a believer's life. There are no activities, thoughts, or decisions in which God is not concerned, and His will should be sought accordingly. Jesus Christ should be Lord of our work, play, thoughts, and speech every day in all situations, as well as Lord of our ministry and service to Him. (Rom. 14:23; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; I Cor. 10:31; Phil. 1:21)
Worship	We believe that corporate and individual worship are essential parts of every believer's relationship to God. We set aside specific times for corporate verbal praise, thanksgiving, adoration, and acknowledgment of the acts, attributes and qualities of God. According to Romans 12:1, individual obedience to God, service to fellowmen and evangelism in our every day lives are forms of worship, as well as our verbally describing God's worth in a public worship service. (Ex. 34:14; Ps. 29:1-2; John 4:23-24; Rom. 12:1)
Fellowship With God	We believe that having personal fellowship with God on a regular and consistent basis is essential for Christian growth. The means of this fellowship with God is spending time praying, learning from the Word of God, and applying its truths to our lives. (Ps. 1; Ps. 5:3; Ps. 119; Ps. 145:2; Col. 3:16; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17)
Stewardship	We believe that everything we have belongs to God, that He is the Owner (Haggai 2:8; Deut. 8:18; I Cor. 4:7), and that a Christian is a steward of all God has given him to care for (I Cor. 4:2). We express our commitment to God's ownership by giving back to Him a portion of what He has given to us. We determine the amount by asking Him for His wisdom (James 1:5). As we do this, we should give attention to what His Word says about tithing (Mal. 3:10; Luke 11:42), giving cheerfully (II Cor. 9:7-15), and giving the first fruits, expecting God to meet our needs. (Prov. 3:9-10; 11 Cor. 9:6-10)

3. WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE FAMILY

Family	We believe that next to God the family is our most important priority and responsibility. Our families are a greater priority than our ministries. The family is the most important unit in our society and, as a church, we are
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committed to ministering to the family and enabling each member to live out his or her God-given role and responsibilities. (Gen. 2; Deut. 6; Ps. 127; 1 Tim. 3)

- Husbands We believe that God has appointed the husband as the head of the family. He is to love his wife (Eph. 5:25-33), to provide for and protect her (I Tim. 5:8), to be her teacher (I Cor. 14:35), to exercise authority over her under God (I Pet. 3:6), to be considerate of her (I Pet. 3:7), and to be her priest (Eph. 5:25-33).
- Wives We believe that submission is designed to be mutual within the family, as per Eph 5:21: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." We believe that God has called the wife to respect her husband and submit to him as he exercises godly leadership in the home. She is to do him good and not evil and is to develop a gentle and quiet spirit. (Prov. 31:10-12; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1-6)
- Parents We believe that parents are given the primary responsibility for the spiritual training of their children. They are not to exasperate their children but to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. The church is to be a supplement but never a replacement for the role of parents in training children. (Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 127:3-5; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21)
- Children We believe that children are to be submissive to their parents and to seek to honor them. A child who is married or living away from home is to continue to honor his parents and to seek their counsel for his life. (Ex. 20:12; Col. 3:20; Eph. 6:1-3)
- Abortion We believe that from conception a preborn is a person (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 139; Jer. 4:4-10). We believe that all persons, male and female, are made in the image of God and, therefore, have eternal worth (Gen. 1:26-27). Therefore, we believe that it is wrong to intentionally take the life of a preborn through abortion.
- Marriage We believe God instituted marriage. (Gen. 2:24). We believe marriage is symbolic of the relationship between Christ and the Church. (Eph. 5:22-23) We believe it is God's intention that marriage be a permanent, supportive relationship between one man and one woman. (Matt-19:4-6) It is God's intention that Christians not intentionally marry non-Christians. (2 Cor. 6:14)
- Divorce Nowhere in the Bible does God condone divorce, and indeed, He says at one point: "I hate divorce..." (Malachi 2:16). However, because we live in a fallen world, the Bible gives guidelines to the Church on how to handle divorce. While divorce is always sinful and traumatic, it is not a sin that stands above others in the Bible. Like all who sin and repent, God is able to forgive and use divorced people in his work and Kingdom.
- Remarriage Several circumstances about remarriage are dealt with specifically in the Bible. A widow or widower is free to remarry a believer. (Rom. 7:1-14;

1Cor. 7:38-9). If an unbeliever divorces a believer (for whatever reason), the believer is free to remarry a believer. (1Cor. 7:12-17). A believer whose spouse (believer or unbeliever) has committed adultery is free to divorce and remarry. (Matt. 19:9). All areas of remarriage are complicated and difficult, and so any remarriage should be undertaken patiently, with great care, and with the wisdom of other wise Christians.

4. WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE CHURCH

Body of Christ	We believe that when a man, woman, boy or girl receives Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, they are "born again" (John 3:1-21) into another family beyond their natural, human family and now have God as their Father (John 1:12-13; Gal. 3:26). By nature, this family must include both sexes and all ages (Mark 10:28-31; 1 Tim. 5:1-2; Titus 2:1-8) and they all must learn to function together. We call this by different names taken from the Bible: the Family of Faith, the Body of Christ, and the Church.
Universal Church	We believe that the Church in its invisible form is universal, the true body of Christ. All believers from the day of Pentecost until Jesus' return are members of the universal church, regardless of organizational affiliation. (Acts 11:15-18; Eph. 4:4-6; Col. 1:18; 1 Thess. 4:13-17)
Maturity in the Body	We believe that all believers are to give attention to becoming spiritually mature in order to junction in the body of Christ. The emphasis of Scripture for individuals is on the qualities of Christian maturity, and for the corporate body of Christ, the development of faith, hope and love. (1 Cor. 13:13; Eph. 1:15-18; Col. 1:3-5; 1 Thess. 1:3; 11 Thess. 1:3-4)
Spiritual Reproduction	We believe in the process of spiritual reproduction and transference as God's method for building the body and reaching the world. The goal of spiritual reproduction is to produce mature Christians who are able to transfer their maturity to others (1 Thess. 1:6-8; 11 Tim. 2:2). All the members and gifts of the body are needed to accomplish spiritual reproduction. (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:12)
Every Member A Missionary	We believe that every member of Christ's Church is to be a missionary—"one who is engaged in living out and doing Jesus' ministry"--and that all believers in Jesus are New Testament era priests. (Eph.4:11-2, 1 Peter 2:9). As ministers and priests, we are to "own the ministry of the local church" through prayer, intercession, giving, and service. God has also given each of us a call to be missionaries in our own neighborhoods, schools, and jobs. We are to be the ambassadors of Jesus to the world.
Full Time, Vocational	We believe that God calls some members of the body into full-time, vocational ministry in order that they might equip the other members of

Ministry	Body for ministry. This call into full-time, vocational ministry is based on a man or woman having demonstrated the ability to equip other Christians to do ministry. (Eph. 4:11-12)
Church Leadership	We believe in an Elder form of church government (I Pet. 5:1-5). We believe that the Biblical norm is multiplicity of leadership (I Tim. 5:17, Acts 6:1-6) and that decisions ideally should be made by unanimity (consensus) of those in leadership (Acts 15:23-25). This implies teamwork, a committed love for one another as a model to the body and to the world (John 13:34-35; 1 Pet. 5:3), and commitment to the same basic body of doctrine and philosophy of ministry (Amos 3:3). We believe that the best reading of the Bible is that only men are to be chosen as elders (I Tim. 3:1-7). To be an elder, a man must have developed a lifestyle which demonstrates all of the character qualities described in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
Women and The Church	<p>We affirm that God gives all gifts—including teaching and leadership—to both men and women. We believe that godly women have and continue to offer incredible shepherding and guidance to the church (Luke 8:1-3, Romans 16:1-16, Phil. 4:2-3). We believe that God in His wisdom created men and women as equal spiritual beings, but appointed them to different roles in the church. These roles are equally important and pleasing in the Church to God. Specifically, God has appointed men to be accountable for the church and women to support them in leadership through the full exercise of their gifts. At South Fellowship, this means that only men are to be chosen to serve on the Elder Board (as they hold responsibility for church doctrine and life), but that women can serve in all other roles.</p> <p>While we recognize that godly Christians may disagree on this principle, we believe that this divine order of accountability and authority is based on three reasons set forth in 1 Tim. 2:11-15 and I Cor. 11:2-16:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The order of creation. Woman was created from man to be his helpmate (Gen. 2:18). b. Although both sinned, the man was the one held accountable in the Garden of Eden because he was the one responsible for the woman. c. While being fully equal, the head of the woman is the man, as the head of Christ is God (Eph. 5:21-24).
Deacons	We believe that deacons are men and women who are gifted by the Holy Spirit in the areas of service and administration and called by God to serve in the role of deacon and deaconess at South Fellowship. To be a deacon a person must have developed a lifestyle which demonstrates all of the character qualities described in I Tim. 3:8-13.
Servant Leadership	We believe that the main qualification for leadership is a servant's heart. The heart of a servant, which is humility, must be demonstrated before a person is given leadership responsibility. (Phil. 2:3-4; 1 Pet. 5:1-3)

Shepherding We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted to the leadership of His Church the task of shepherding His Body. Shepherding involves spiritually feeding, caring for, and watching over the souls of believers. (John 21:15-17; Heb. 13:17)

5. WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD

Spiritual Warfare We believe in the reality and personality of Satan, and that when given the opportunity, he attempts to defeat Christians. However, we believe Christians can discover and overcome Satan's schemes by applying Scriptural truth. (job 1:6-12; Luke 10:18; John 8:44; Eph. 6:10-18)

Evangelism We believe that Christians should proclaim the good news of Christ and salvation to non-saved persons, starting first in their own community, then throughout the whole world. (Acts 1:8; I Cor. 10:31-33; 1 Cor. 14:25; 1 Pet. 3:15)

Missions We believe that Jesus gave the church a clear, spiritual mandate to "make disciples of all nations." Therefore, it is the responsibility of each local body to contribute to this God-ordained program by training, sending and supporting individuals and teams for local and cross-cultural evangelism, discipleship and church planting. (Matt. 28:19)

Social Concern We believe that when God created man, He gave him the cultural mandate to fill the earth by his creative powers and subdue it with his or her powers of authority and management (Gen. 1:28). This responsibility of creating and controlling has never been lifted; therefore, it is a biblical Christian concern to become involved in politics, social programs, moral and social ethics, and environmental control and development.

C. DOCTRINE ON WHICH WE AGREE TO DISAGREE

Throughout history, churches have struggled to find the right balance of doctrine and freedom. In our differences, many disagreements have arisen. To minimize this, we have many areas of faith practice which we leave to individual conscience. This involves the doctrines not discussed above, on which two Christians may hold different views and still be friends, members of the same church, and members of the same leadership group. This is not to say that discussions in these areas are unimportant. We simply believe that in these areas, the Bible is not perfectly clear, or open to differing understandings. In these cases, Christians at South Fellowship simply offer grace to one another, and agree to disagree.



Some examples might be: modes of baptism, the time of Christ's return, the type of bread used in communion, the age of the earth, the best Bible version, the style of music used in worship, the

most appropriate expression of spiritual gifts, spiritual warfare, civil involvement or disobedience, and others.

When doctrines like these are taught, it should be explained that they are not essential for salvation or for leadership. We may state the case for our positions, but we should point out that, in many cases, sincere and intelligent Christians hold different positions.

PLEASE NOTE: *This Statement of Faith is continually being reviewed and refined. There are many points of doctrine which are not mentioned. By their omission, we are simply stating that we do not feel that it is necessary for leadership to be in agreement over these points at this time.*