Doctrinal Statement and Historic Creeds (Appendix B)

THE AUTHORITY OF STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. We recognize the vast differences that exist in this church among our own people in doctrines not outlined above. The Bible is the anchor point of our faith, and it is the criteria against which all else is measured. While the Bible is both inerrant and infallible, we recognize that we as humans still can have jaded understandings and interpretations. Therefore, we resolve to continually evaluate and search the Scriptures, as the church of Berea was commended for doing in Acts 17:11.

We believe that this Statement of Faith accurately represents the teachings of the Bible, and all members should be in agreement, signing the membership covenant as a token of that agreement. All teaching in and through the church is required to be in complete agreement with this statement of faith.

STATEMENT OF FAITH IN HISTORIC CREEDS

We adhere to the Apostles Creed & Nicene Creed as succinct declarations that have historically defined key components of the Christian faith throughout the centuries, giving people constant, Biblically-accurate doctrinal statements.

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven; He became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried. The third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.

STATEMENT OF FAITH IN DOCTRINE

We believe in the historic Christian faith, reflected in these statements:

- **About God.**
    - God is the loving Creator of all that exists, both seen and unseen. God is eternal and completely good, knowing all things, having all power and majesty. God exists as the Trinity, in three persons, yet one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God passionately desires relationship with us and toward this end continually invites us into a relationship of faith, friendship, learning, and service.
    - *Supporting Scriptures: Genesis 1:1; Matthew 28:19; John 14:6-9, 15-17; 16:7-15; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 4:9-10*

- **About Jesus Christ.**
    - God the Son is the second Person of the Trinity. God the Son expressed Himself in human form through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified for the sins of us all. He was buried, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, and has promised to return again as King of kings and Lord of lords.
    - *Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 22:36-40; John 14:1-3; Acts 10:42-43; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Colossians 1:13-23; 2:8-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-3*

- **About the Holy Spirit.**
    - The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity. He is sent from God the Father and the Son to live inside all who believe in Jesus Christ, teaches, comforts, and empowers us, giving each follower diverse gifts, fostering unity, inter-dependence, productivity, Christ-like character, and love among Christians.
    - *Supporting Scriptures: John 14:26; 16:7-14; Romans 5:5; 8:9-16; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 3:16; 4:3-4; 5:18.*

- **About the Bible.**
    - We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally and completely inspired Word of God. The Scriptures as originally given by the Holy Spirit are inerrant, infallible, and God-breathed, and therefore are the final authority for faith and life. The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments are the complete and divine revelation of God to Man. The Scriptures shall be interpreted according to their normal grammatical-historical meaning.
    - We believe that God speaks to us in the Bible, and that it is our privilege to seek to understand God's message and apply it responsibly to our lives. The Bible is our standard in all we say and do. We believe that God's unchangeable Biblical message ought to be presented in relevant and contemporary ways, free of religious jargon and understandable to the people of our community.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Joshua 1:7-8; Psalm 19:7-11; 119:9-16; Matthew 5:17-19; Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 3:14-18*

- **About Salvation.**
    - All people are created with dignity and value in the image of God, to live in a vital relationship with God. However, through our sin (failing to live by God's moral standards), we break our intended relationship with God and we experience the destructive consequences of that broken relationship, spiritually and socially, in this life and beyond. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us from those consequences and to restore our broken relationships with God and others, through Christ's death on the cross, a perfect act of redemption for each of us.
    - Salvation comes to people on the basis of God's grace through their faith alone in Jesus alone. They receive the free gift of forgiveness and are spiritually reborn through repenting of their sin and believing in Jesus Christ. Good works and a holy life, although totally unable to save anyone, are the natural product of repentant, believing people.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: John 3:16; 5:24; Romans 3:9-28; 6:23; 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:1-10; Titus 3:3-8; James 2:14-26; I Peter 2:24; 3:18*
    - Once a person has received forgiveness and is spiritually reborn, that person is kept by God's power and is thus secure in Christ forever.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1, 38-39; I Corinthians 1:4-8; I Peter 1:4-5*

- **About the Church.**
    - We believe that the church, which is the body and the espoused bride of Christ, is made up of Christians and acts as the body of Christ here on earth. The church is responsible for spreading the gospel and acting in mercy, justice, faith, love, and forgiveness.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 23:23-24; I Corinthians 12:12-14; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25-27*
    - While the church will always strive to operate in cooperation with the government, we believe in the self-government of the local church that is free of any external authority or control.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Acts 13:1-4; 15:19-31; 20:28; Romans 16:1, 4; I Corinthians 3:9, 16; 5:4-7, 13; I Peter 5:1-4*
    - We believe in two Biblical ordinances for the Church: water baptism by immersion signifying a believer's new life in Christ; and the Lord's Supper whereby the church remembers the death of Christ and the imminence of His return.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; 18:18; I Corinthians 11:23-26*

- **About Spiritual Gifts:** Upon salvation and at subsequent times, the Holy Spirit gives to believers spiritual gifts (talents or abilities) for the edification and building up of the church. These gifts are diverse, and God distributes them as He wills to each believer, empowering them to serve and minister to one another. The focus is on using these gifts in love and humility, for the common good of the body of Christ, rather than for personal glory or recognition. We believe that all of the gifts as well as the full scope of spiritual offices are available for the church today, and that these gifts should be sought for, developed, and used to strengthen the church and other believers and to advance the kingdom of God.
    - *Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 10:1; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11*

- **About the Person of Satan.**
    - We believe that Satan is a real and personal being. As Lucifer, he existed as the highest rank of all angelic creatures. He became the author of sin and the cause of the fall of men because of his sin and pride.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Genesis 3:1-19; Isaiah 14:12-17; Matthew 4:11; John 8:44*
    - We believe Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man. He has blinded the eyes of unbelievers and is in continual warfare with believers. Hell and the Lake of Fire were created for his punishment. He shall be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 25:41; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:11-12; Revelation 20:10*

- **About the Eternal State: Heaven and Hell.**
    - We believe in the bodily resurrection of all mankind. Those who have received the forgiveness of Jesus Christ through His work on the cross enter into God's presence forever, while those who do not are eternally separated from God.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 25:46; John 5:28, 29; 11:25-26; Revelation 20:5-6, 12-13*
    - We believe that the souls of those who have received the forgiveness of Jesus Christ are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord in Heaven, where they live in conscious bliss while they await the first resurrection, when spirit, soul, and body are reunited to forever be in the presence of the Lord in complete joy.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Psalm 16:11; Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 3:21; I Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 20:4-6*
    - We believe that the souls of those who have not invited the forgiveness of Jesus Christ to wash away their sin remain in Hell after death, in conscious punishment and torment until the second resurrection, when with soul and body reunited they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment, and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 25:41-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-26; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Revelation 20:11-15*

- **About Creation.**
    - We believe in the Genesis account of creation, and in the intelligent design of the universe and all things in it, including man. God is the Intelligent Designer, expressing Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the act of creation, making mankind in His image as laid out in Genesis 1 and 2.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Genesis 1-2; Exodus 20:11; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3*

STATEMENT OF FAITH IN PRACTICE

- **Regarding financial stewardship:** We encourage people to handle their finances discreetly, honorably, and responsibly, and to practice regular and generous giving. We believe that God has established the tithe as a basis for giving but that every Christian should also give other offerings sacrificially and cheerfully for the support of the church, for the relief of those in need, and for the spreading the Good News. We believe that a donor relinquishes all rights to direct the use of the tithe or offering once the gift has been made.
    - *Supporting Scriptures: Genesis 14:20; Proverbs 3:9-10; Malachi 3:10-11; Matthew 6:19-21, 24, 33; Acts 4:34-37; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:5-12; Galatians 6:6; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 5:17-18; 3 John 1:5-8*

- **Regarding community:** We express our strong value of community by seeking to reach out and connect with a diversity of people. We want to be personal and caring in a world that is increasingly fragmented and impersonal. We are not afraid to be vulnerable, human, and honest with each other. We believe our spirituality fulfills rather than denies our humanity, and we believe this approach strengthens community.
    - *Supporting Scriptures: John 15:12; Acts 2:42-47; Romans 12:3-18; Galatians 6:1-5, 10; Colossians 4:5-6; 2 Timothy 4:1-5*

- **Regarding unity among Christians:** We recognize diversity among Christians in nonessential areas. We do not press for uniformity in these areas, but rather encourage people to search the Scriptures, seeking balance, mutual understanding, humility and love. Additionally, we seek to respect one another's differences without a quarrelsome, arrogant or divisive spirit, and to return continually to the Great Commandment - to love God and one another.
    - *Supporting Scriptures:* Romans 14:1-15:7, 16:17; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 2 Timothy 2:14-17, 23-26; James 3:13-17; Philippians 2:1-5

- **Regarding civil government:** We believe that God has ordained and created all authority consisting of three basic institutions: 1) the home; 2) the Church; and 3) the state. Every person is subject to these authorities, but all (including the authorities themselves) are answerable to God and governed by His Word. God has given each institution specific Biblical responsibilities and balanced those responsibilities with the understanding that there should be a healthy cooperation between the three, without one having primary control over the other. The home, the Church, and the state are equal and sovereign in their respective Biblically assigned spheres of responsibility under God.
    - *Supporting Scriptures: Romans 13:1-7; Ephesians 5:22-24; Hebrews 13:17; I Peter 2:13-14.*

- **Regarding human sexuality:** We believe that the only sexual relationship that God blesses is the relationship between a man and a woman, and that relationship existing within the confines of marriage. We believe that any other sexual behaviors and choices including but not limited to fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, pornography, bestiality, transgenderism, sex changes, cross dressing, and incest are sinful distortions of God's gift of sex and sexual identity. The church leadership reserve the right to examine other unnamed sexual practices to determine if such practices are in

agreement with biblical sexuality or not. Furthermore, We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman.

- *Supporting Scriptures: Genesis 2:24; 19:5,13; Genesis 26:89; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; I Corinthians 5:1, 6:9; I Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4; Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; I Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22-23*

- **Regarding the mission of the church:** The church is to live out the Great Commission, being involved in the effort to bring the Gospel into the world.
  - The first part of the Great Commission being to proclaim the Gospel to all nations so that all will have the opportunity to hear and believe in Jesus Christ. As ambassadors of Christ, we must use all available means to go to the foreign nations and not wait for them to come to us.
    - *Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:9-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20.*
  - The second part of the Great Commission is make disciples of all people, instructing them in the teaching of Jesus Christ and the Bible, and guiding them to walk as the disciples walked as they followed Jesus.
    - *Supporting Scriptures:* Matthew 10:1; 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Colossians 1:28; Titus 1:1
  - The church is to be "missional," that is, the church is to see itself as a mission to culture, not integrating with or baptizing culture. The church, as the instrument of God, is called to carry out God's mission in culture, and that mission is this: to show the world what it looks like when a community of people live under the reign of God within the Kingdom of God. The gospel is best portrayed by the church that believes it, embodies it, and testifies to it in all places at all times in any given culture.
    - *Supporting Scriptures: Acts 1:8; 2:41-47; 4:31-37; 12:5-17; 17:16-33; Romans 12; I Corinthians 6:9-11*

- **Regarding lawsuits between believers:**
  - We believe that Christians are to govern their actions in love. Based on the Bible's teaching about having loving relationships, Christians are prohibited in the Bible from bringing civil lawsuits against others at the Church to resolve personal disputes that are not of a criminal nature. We believe that most matters can be resolved personally and that the Church contains many of the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander.
    - *Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 18:15-17; I Corinthians 6:1-8; Ephesians 4:31-32*
  - Furthermore, we do not believe that any lawsuit should be taken up frivolously or without prayer regardless of the offender. Christians are to govern their actions in love, allowing for opportunities of forgiveness and mercy, especially toward those who are not part of the Church.
    - *Supporting Scriptures: Matthew 5:7, 9; 7:1; Romans 12:16-21; Galatians 5:13-15; Ephesians 4:31-32*

- **Regarding the sanctity of human life:** We believe that all human life is sacred, that human beings are made in the image of God, and that God has a time and purpose for all life and death. We believe that since the Lord creates a human life, He has a purpose and a reason for that life. Our feelings on the sanctity of life are summed up in the following paragraphs:
    - We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Therefore, we do not support abortion as an option for an unwanted pregnancy (due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, or the well-being of the mother). We believe that there are many other options for unplanned pregnancies, and we resolve not to stand in judgment but to stand with and assist anyone who is unable to support a baby.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Job3:16; Psalms 51:5; 139:14-16: Isaiah 44:24; 49:1, 5; Jeremiah 1:5; 20:15-18; Luke 1:44*
    - We do not support euthanasia in any form, whether willingly or unwillingly. A person has the right to refuse medication or assistance, but assisted suicide is biblically wrong as is the murder of people deemed incapable of making decisions or people deemed as burdens on society. Because of this, we resolve to help those who are hurting, dying, or in need of assistance as much as possible.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13; Numbers 35:33*
    - While we do not stand in opposition to stem-cell research, we do not believe in harvesting human embryos or using aborted children to support stem-cell research. Because the human embryo is a human being made in the image of God for a specific purpose, using human embryos in this manner is biblically wrong and morally reprehensible.
        - *Supporting Scriptures: Psalm 119:73; 139:13-16; Matthew 1:18, 20-21; Luke 1:40-41*