

Grace Reformation Church Statement of Faith

What We Believe and Teach

This Statement of Faith represents the distinctive doctrinal understanding of the eldership of Grace Reformation Church. It is our intention that the teaching and preaching at Grace Reformation Church be consistent with this understanding.

THE WORD OF GOD

We believe the Bible to be the Word of God. It is our only ultimate and infallible authority for faith and practice. The very words of the Old and New Testaments were given by divine inspiration, written by men under God's control, inerrant and infallible in the original manuscripts.

(Psa 19:7-14, 119, 138:2; Isa 8:20; Jn 1:17, 10:35; 2nd Tim 3:15-17; 1st Pet 1:10-12; 2nd Pet 1:3-4, 16-21)

We believe that the Bible was divinely protected in the transmission process and is just as alive and applicable today as when it was originally written. Its authority is derived from its Author and not from the opinions of men. Human wisdom never supersedes what God has preserved for us to grow in our faith while living out our lives here on this earth.

(Isa 55:10-11; Matt 5:18, 24:35; Jn 17:17; Eph 1:11; 2nd Tim 3:17; Heb 4:12)

We believe that the Bible was complete at the close of the apostolic age and the completion of the New Testament. We do not believe that God is still speaking today through additional revelation or prophetic words of any kind.

(Prov 30:5-6; Dan 9:24; 1st Cor 13:8; Heb 1:1-2; Jude 3-4; Rev 22:19)

CREATION

We believe that Scripture clearly teaches from Genesis to Revelation that God is the Creator and that He created the world in six, normal 24-hour days.

(Gen 1:31; Ex 31:17; 1st Chr 1-9)

GOD

We believe that there is one God, who is eternally existent in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is omnipotent - He is the Almighty. He is omnipresent - present throughout all creation. He is omniscient - possessing all knowledge of all things past, present, or future. He is infinite - limited by nothing other than His own nature and character. He is sovereign - He is the supreme ruler of all things. He is invisible, personal, unchanging, truthful, trustworthy, righteous, holy, good, severe, loving, merciful, long-suffering and gracious.

(Gen 1:26; Dt 6:4; Psa 90:2; Isa 44:6-7, 45:5-7; Matt 28:18-19; Mk 12:29; Jn 1:1, 4:24, 10:30; 1st Cor 8:4, 10:31; 2nd Cor 13:14; Eph 1; 1st Tim 2:5; Heb 1:8-10)

We believe that God the Father orders and disposes all things according to His sovereign plan, a plan designed to bring Him ultimate glory. He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass and He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events.

(Gen 1:1-31; 1st Chr 29:11; Psa 145:8-9; Isa 40; Hab 1:12; Matt 16:27; Jn 1:12, 5:19; Rom 2:5-6, 6:23; 1st Cor 8:5-6; 2nd Cor 6:18; Gal 4:4-5; Eph 1:4-6, 1:11-12, 3:8-10, 4:4-6; Heb 12:5-9; James 1:13-15; 2nd Pet 2:4-11)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ at His incarnation became man through the miracle of divine conception and virgin birth while never ceasing to be God. Thus, He is fully man and fully God. God the Son voluntarily laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God and took on an existence appropriate to a servant in order that He might redeem sinful man. He accomplished this redemption for His elect people by giving Himself as a sinless, substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, which satisfied God's righteous judgment and wrath for our sin. His bodily resurrection from the grave is proof He accomplished redemption. Our Lord then ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He is enthroned in glory, rules over all things, and intercedes on behalf of His people until He returns bodily to judge the world.

(Isa 7:14; Matt 1:21-25; Lk 1:26-35; Jn 1:1-14, 1:18, 5:22-32, 8:24, 10:30, 14:7-14; Rom 3:24-26, 5:8-9, 8:34; 1st Cor 15:20-28; 2nd Cor 5:14-17; Phil 2:5-11; Col 2:9; 1st Pet 2:24, 3:18)

We believe that the Holy Spirit guided the Prophets and Apostles in all truth as they committed themselves to write the Word of God. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin and is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration as He baptizes all who repent—bringing life to those who are spiritually dead and placing them into the one true Church, the Body of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that indwells all believers permanently, seals them unto the day of redemption, bestows spiritual gifts upon them, and empowers them along with the Word to walk in the Spirit. While the Holy Spirit is sovereign in perfecting all believers today, the apostolic gifts of tongues, prophecy, and the working of the sign miracles as seen in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the Apostles and those under their authority as revealers of divine truth. The apostolic gifts were never intended to be characteristic in the lives of all believers.

(Joel 2:28-29; Jn 3:3-8, 14:16-17, 16:5-15; Rom 8:9-11; 1st Cor 12:4-13, 12:27-31, 13:8-10; 2nd Cor 3:5-6; Gal 5:16-24; Eph 1:13, 4:7-12, 30, 5:18; Heb 2:1-4; 2nd Pet 1:10-21; Jude 3-4)

MAN

We believe that God made our first father Adam perfect, holy and upright. He was appointed representative and head of the human race, thereby exposing all his offspring to the effects of his obedience or disobedience to God's commands. Adam, by personal disobedience to the revealed will of God became a sinner, depraved in nature and subject to the power of Satan. At this point, Adam was not only under the wrath of God but became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of doing anything acceptable to God. With no resuscitative powers to save himself, he was hopelessly lost.

(Gen 1:26, 2:7, 2:15-25; 3:1-24; Isa 43:7)

We believe that in Adam's falling from his original righteousness into sin, that the whole human race fell. His sin was transmitted to all men, who at conception are spiritually dead and alienated from God so that man is a sinner by nature. We believe it is utterly beyond the power of fallen man to love God, to keep His laws, to understand the gospel, to repent of sin or to trust in Christ – man is incapable of remedying his lost and corrupt condition. For the salvation of such lost and sinful men, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary.

(Psa 14:1-3, 51:5; Jer 17:9; Jn 3:36, 8:44; Rom 3:9-30, 5:6-18, 6:23, 8:5-8; 1st Cor 2:14; Eph 2:1-3; Col 1:16; 1st Tim 2:13-14; James 3:9; 1st Jn 1:8)

SALVATION

We believe that God, before the foundation of the world, for His own glory did elect a great multitude of men and women to eternal life as an act of free and sovereign grace. This election was in no way dependent upon His foresight of human faith, decision, works or merit, but was based solely on His own good pleasure and sovereign will. This act of grace includes all that God does in saving the elect from the penalty, power and presence of sin, and restoring them to a right relationship with Himself. As such, salvation is solely the work of God from initiation to completion. Our faith then is a free gift of God. All who receive this gift freely repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ and His redemptive work on the cross. All who believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord are forgiven and saved from their sins and justified (declared

righteous) before God as they are born into the family of God by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. God's purpose for saving His elect is so that they bring glory to Him by their lives.

(Jn 1:12, 3:16-21, 5:39-40, 6:35-40, Acts 13:48; 8:23; Eph 1:3-11; Col 2:13; 2nd Thes 2:13; 2nd Tim 2:10; James 4:8; Rev 22:17)

We believe that sovereign election does not make God the author of sin, nor does it negate the responsibility of moral and volitional creatures to repent and trust in Christ as Savior and Lord. We believe that God has poured out the Holy Spirit to work alongside the preached Word. The Spirit of God regenerates elect sinners and draws them irresistibly to faith in Christ the Savior. Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines so that all whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith, the Father will receive. Our salvation is not related to any initiative of our own, nor to God's anticipation of what we might do by our own will, but it is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy that He draws men to Himself. In light of this, our salvation is the unmerited favor that God grants to depraved sinners as He opens the eyes of our hearts and we trust in Him for salvation. Those who are granted repentance and faith are justified, forgiven of all sins, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and blessed with every spiritual blessing.

(Acts 11:18, 16:12; Rom 1:16, 8:28-30; Eph 1:13, 2:1-10; Tit 2:11-14, 3:4-7; James 1:13-18; 1st Pet 1:18-19)

We believe the elect, who are called by grace, are justified in God's sight on account of Christ's righteousness being imputed to them, which is received by faith alone. Saving faith is trusting in nothing but Christ's substitutionary atonement as the basis for our righteous standing before God and our right to inherit eternal life. By substitutionary, we mean that God the Father decided to punish His own sinless Son on the cross, for those whom God had chosen to redeem from the penalty of sin. Christ is also the substitute of the redeemed in that His perfect righteousness is imparted to believers so that they stand before God, not only as having no sin against them, but as having perfectly obeyed God's law. Because of this substitution, atonement for man's sin has been made and there is no basis for God to judge the redeemed since Christ has been judged in their place. A saved person is one who believes that this substitutionary atonement is the basis by which he is able to stand before God in perfect righteousness and that this atonement continues to be the only basis by which this status is maintained.

(Isa 52:13-53:11; Jn 10:11-18; Rom 4:1-11, 8:1-4; 2nd Cor 5:21)

SANCTIFICATION

We believe that our salvation is in Christ alone, and that everything pertaining to life and godliness has been given to us by our heavenly Father in His sufficient Word. This not only includes salvation from the penalty of sin, but also the provision of sanctification or separation from sin in this earthly life.

(Jn 17:17; Acts 20:32; Rom 6:15-23; 2nd Pet 1:3)

We believe that every believer is definitively set apart in Christ as they are once and for all sanctified unto God by justification through faith. At that moment they are saints. This aspect of sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not their present walk or condition. The definitive aspect of sanctification is an instantaneous work of the Holy Spirit and is complete and without need for further development or growth.

(1st Cor 1:2, 30-32; Col 1:9-12)

We believe the progressive aspect of sanctification defines for us the result of the ongoing ministry of the Spirit in our spiritual growth. Using Scripture, the Holy Spirit provides the nourishment for growth and maturity in Christ. Progressive sanctification is assured by the Word and the Spirit. However, due to our sin nature, every believer is involved in a daily battle with sin in a struggle that continues throughout this earthly life. Our fallen nature is the source of the war between the flesh and the Spirit and makes the eradication of sin in this life simply impossible. Growing in our relationship with Christ is possible for believers as they feed on the Word, follow the Spirit of God in prayerful obedience, are faithful to trust Him

in the midst of trials, and submit to fellowship with other believers for service and accountability. We do not believe that Christ can be received as Savior and rejected as Lord.

(Matt 7:21; Rom 7:14-25; Gal 5:16-25; Eph 4:17-24; Phil 3:12-16; Col 3:5-11; James 1:2-8; 2nd Cor 3:17-18; 1st Pet 1:13-2:2; 1st Jn 1:5-10)

PERSEVERENCE OF THE SAINTS

We believe that all those in whom God has accomplished His transforming work of grace are kept by His power and secure in Christ forever. We believe that God will always complete any saving work that He has begun. It is the privilege of all believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the accountability of the local church. The Bible clearly forbids both the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living as well as any attitude that downplays or ignores the believer's responsibility to persevere and grow in a fruitful, Spirit-enabled, God-pleasing life. Thus, all believers will persevere in confession and repentance of sin. Faith without works is dead.

(Matt 7:13-23, 10:22, 24:13; Jn 5:13-20, 8:37-40, 10:27-31; Rom 5:9-11, 8:29-39; 1st Cor 1:4-9; 2nd Cor 13:5; Eph 1:13, 4:30; Phil 1:6, 2:12-13; Heb 7:25, 12:6, 13:5-6; James 2:17, 20; 1st Pet 1:4-5; 1st Jn 1:9, 3:5-9; Jude 24)

THE CHURCH

We believe that the Body of Christ, the Church, is a spiritual organism established by our Lord Himself to carry out His eternal purposes on earth—specifically that believers glorify God in their worship by being built up in the faith and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world. Every believer in Jesus Christ has been baptized or placed into the universal Church by the Holy Spirit. The New Covenant Church, as established in Scripture on Pentecost, is comprised of redeemed individuals who have followed the Word of God by being baptized, assembling together for worship, in fellowship, instruction, prayer, breaking of bread, accountability and service.

(Matt 16:18, 28:19; Jn 4:24; Acts 2:38-47; 1 Cor 11:18-20, 12:12-13; Eph 3:20-21; Heb 10:25; Jude 17-23)

We believe that the local church is under the authority of Christ alone. He has appointed men to be elders (overseers, pastors) to represent Him as they care for His body. These men lead or rule as servants of Christ and have His authority in their equipping ministry. Such authority never allows any leader to exploit the flock nor govern in an ungodly or lording manner. The congregation is to submit to their loving, servant leadership as they teach and lead in accordance with the Bible. Deacons also serve Christ as His ministers of mercy. These Biblically designated officers must meet the Biblical qualifications. In light of God's design for ministry, leadership and accountability, every para-church ministry should function underneath the authority and oversight of the local church.

(Acts 13:1-3, 20:28; Eph 1:22, 4:11-16; Col 1:18; 1st Thes 1:2-8, 2:13; 1st Tim 2:9-15, 3:1-13, 5:17-25; Tit 1:5-9; Heb 13:7-17; 1st Pet 5:1-5)

We believe that each member within the Body of Christ has the Biblical responsibility to truthfully and lovingly confront one another in their sin for the purpose of restoration and personal holiness. This process is to be followed within the context of Biblical fellowship for the purity and power of the Body of Christ. As a part of the universal Church, we fully support, encourage, and recognize the discipline of other Bible believing churches.

(Matt 18:15-17; Gal 6:1-5)

MARRIAGE

We believe that marriage is a covenantal union between one man and one woman, established by God from the beginning, reaffirmed by Jesus Christ in the gospels, and taught by the apostles. The union of husband and wife in marriage is God's provision for intimate physical (i.e., sexual) and emotional companionship, the God-ordained means of propagating the human race, and is an earthly picture of the

spiritual union between Christ and His church. The union of husband and wife is to be honored by all. In light of these affirmations, we condemn all practices which violate this union, including adultery and divorce (except where biblical principles and teaching allow for divorce). Further, we reject unions such as polygamous and homosexual marriages as a violation of God's original design for marriage to be between one man and one woman.

(Gen 2:20-25; 1st Tim 3:2)

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

We believe that God has given to every believer in the church spiritual gifts for the purpose of edifying one another for the work of the ministry. There are two kinds of gifts mentioned in Scripture that were given to the early church: (1) miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic age for the purpose of confirming and authenticating the Apostles' message as the Church was birthed and the New Testament was being written; and (2) ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. Since the New Testament revelation is now complete and the canon of Scripture closed, the Word of God is now the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message. The confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message and the only gifts in operation today are those non-revelatory equipping gifts given for the building up of the body of Christ.

(Lk 18:1-8; Jn 5:1-17; Rom 12:3-8; 1st Cor 12:4-31, 13:8-12; 2nd Cor 12:7-13; Eph 4:7-13; Heb 2:1-4; 1st Pet 4:3-11; 1st Jn 5:14-15; Jude 3-4)

ORDINANCES

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ instituted two ordinances, or commands, to be observed by all believers until His return. They are what we refer to as believer's baptism and the Lord's Table (or Lord's Supper). These two ordinances are symbols of the New Covenant relationship we now have in Christ. Neither of these ordinances bring saving merit. Neither give grace in and of themselves.

(Matt 26:26-30; Acts 8:34-40, 22:16; 10:44-48; Rom 6:1-11; 1st Cor 10:16)

We believe water baptism is a singular act which beautifully signifies a believer's faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, his cleansing from sin, and union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to new life. It is also a public testimony to the world of our union with the Body of Christ. Because it is a testimony of the believer's choice to repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ, it is only for those who have made such a volitional decision and therefore is not intended for those incapable of understanding such a commitment. Thus, we practice believer baptism, and baptize by immersion. In humility and Christian charity, we welcome those who hold to Reformed, Paedobaptist convictions to join with us in worship and at the Lord's Table. We do not divide over this issue. Yet, our doctrine, preaching, teaching and baptismal practice is singularly Believer Baptist.

(Matt 3:13-17, 28:19; Acts 2:37-42)

We believe the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated as a regular practice by the body of Christ. It was instituted by the Lord Jesus on the night He was betrayed. It reminds us that Christ ushered in the New Covenant by His blood. It was given to those for whom He died, in order to remind them of His death on their behalf, His victory over death, and His return to judge the world and gather His people to Himself forever. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate His death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and covenant renewal of their communion with Him, and of their church membership. It should always be preceded with careful self-examination. It should not be participated in if one is under church discipline or unrepentant in sin. The elements of the communion table are not changed in any way, being only symbolic of the body and blood of Christ. We do not believe in Paedo-communion (infants partaking). Only those who can examine themselves may partake. Remembering this great act of Christ is of great benefit to the believer because it sets before him the cost

of his sin, the great love and mercy of God, the great gift of salvation bestowed upon him, and the present benefits of being adopted sons and daughters of God. The effect is to be a strengthening of the believer's walk of joy and obedience. Because Christ is present spiritually in the Lord's Supper, we feed by faith upon the body and blood of our Savior symbolized by the two elements, and we are nourished spiritually in our hearts and souls.

(Acts 2:42, 2:46; 1st Cor 10:16-17; 11:17-34; Lk 22:14-23; Eph 2:8-9)

We believe that believers are commanded to participate in baptism and the Lord's Table out of love and obedience. Because salvation is the free gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ, there is no sacramental imparting of saving grace by participation in these ordinances.

(Lk 22:14-23; Eph 2:8-9)

THE LORD'S DAY

We believe the Lord's Day (Sunday) was established early in New Covenant church history for regular observance, and should be used for corporate exercises of worship and spiritual devotion.

(Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10)

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

We believe that Satan is the author of sin and the great deceiver in the fall of Adam and Eve. Satan is the supreme enemy of God, the accuser of God's people and the work of the cross, and is unceasingly active in opposing the ministry of the Church. Satan's greatest weapon of opposition is deception from the truth, as he blinds unbelievers and deceives those in the body of Christ. While Satan's judgment was consummated at the cross, his ultimate destiny is judgment in the eternal lake of fire.

(Gen 3:1-6; Matt 25:41; Jn 12:31; 2nd Cor 4:1-6, 10:3-6; Col 1:13-17, 2:8-15; Jude 6; Rev 12, 20:10)

We believe that regenerate believers are removed from Satan's authority and dominion. Yet, they may be the objects of his demonic schemes for their destruction. This, however, does not include the possibility of demon possession. Demonic possession is impossible because of the believer's union with Christ and the sealing, indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. A believer's warfare is waged by putting on the full armor of God and resisting the devil. It does not involve commanding, rebuking, or binding Satan directly. Satan is defeated when one repents and trusts God for salvation, committing themselves to prayer and a holy life as they live under the authority of the Word of God.

(Rom 8:26-39, Eph 1:13-14, 6:10-20; James 4:7-10; 1st Pet 5:6-11; and 1st Jn 4:4)

ESCHATOLOGY

We believe in the physical, visible return of our Lord Jesus Christ to judge the living and the dead at the close of the New Covenant age. At that time He will raise the dead bodily, both righteous and unrighteous. The righteous will enjoy everlasting life and the wicked will endure everlasting punishment.

(Matt 25:31-46; Jn 5:28-29; Acts 17:31; 1st Cor 15:21-23; 2nd Cor 5:10; 1st Thes 4:13-17; Rev 20:11-15)

We believe that those who have died in their sins will at their death remain in conscious misery under a temporary punishment until the final judgment at the end of the New Covenant age, when the soul and body will be reunited, judged, and cast into the eternal lake of fire. Even though there is a separation of the body and soul at physical death, there is no loss of our immaterial consciousness. Because of this, unbelieving souls are not totally annihilated but separated from God in conscious punishment for all eternity.

(Matt 25:41-46; Lk 16:19-31, Eph 5:5)

We believe that those who have trusted Christ for salvation pass immediately into the presence of God at death and remain there until the resurrection of the body at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

(Lk 23:43; Jn 6:39, 17:3; 1st Cor 3:10-15; 2nd Cor 4:14, 5:8; Phil 1:23)