

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

PURPOSE

God exists and has revealed Himself to mankind. We believe that our conscience and actions must be directed by and submitted to God's truth. This truth comes to us in many ways but has particularly been given in the form of the special and unique revelation of the Bible. This statement is a summary of those truths of God revealed in the Scriptures that we believe are essential for the understanding and defense of the Gospel, for instruction in godly living, for the order of a New Testament church, and for evangelism. This document is a foundational guide for all instruction, teaching, and preaching at The Austin Stone Community Church.

THE WORD OF GOD

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. The Bible, including all the books of the Old Testament and New Testament, is Holy Scripture and the inspired true word of God. It is fully authoritative and our only absolutely trustworthy guide for life and faith. Furthermore, we affirm the general counsel of the *Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy* (1978).

II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20,21; Mark 13:31; John 8:31,32; John 20:31

THE TRINITY

We believe that there is one true, good, and living God who is of one substance, power, and eternal purpose yet eternally existing in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Trinity is without division of nature, essence, or being (*I John 5:7; Matthew 3:16-17; II Corinthians 13:14*). The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son (*John 15:26; Galatians 4:6*). The persons of the Trinity are equal in

every divine perfection. They execute distinct but harmonious functions in the work of creation, history, providence, and redemption. God the Trinity possesses all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness in and of Himself.¹

Genesis 1:1,26; John 1:1,3; 4:24; 5:26; Matthew 28:19; Acts 7:2; Romans 1:19,20; 9:5; Ephesians 4:5,6; Colossians 2:9

GOD THE FATHER

We believe in God the Father, an everlasting, infinite, perfect personal being who is the sovereign and rightful ruler of all that exists. The Father is perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. God created all things and upholds, directs, disposes, and governs all creatures, actions, and things by His wise and holy providence according to His infallible foreknowledge and the immutable counsel of His own will. God, in His ordinary providence, makes use of all natural and spiritual means yet is free to work without, above, and against them at His pleasure. He does this to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and grace. He is sufficient in Himself, not standing in need of any creature that He has made. He conducts Himself with steadfast mercy towards humanity. He draws men to Himself through His Son, forgiving the sin and delivering from death those who come to Him through Christ for salvation. The Father hears and answers prayer according to His wisdom, love, and providence. He will carry out all things in their proper time and order that they would consummate in Jesus Christ to reveal the supremacy of His name and purposes especially including the power of His love.

Job 22:2-3; 34:10; Psalm 139; Isaiah 55:10-11; Daniel 3:27; Hosea 1:7; 2:21-22; Luke 10:21-22; Matthew 4:4; 23:9; John 3:16; 6:27; Acts 17:24-28; 31,44; Colossians 1:16-17; Revelation 1:4-6; Romans 1:7; 4:19-21; I Timothy 1:1,2; 2:5,6; I Peter 1:3

¹ Although the word Trinity is not contained in the Scriptures, this term is used to convey the collective nature and being of God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as revealed in His Word.

GOD THE SON

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten eternal Son, very God of very God, and the image of the invisible God. He took upon Himself our nature; being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary and manifested in a body of flesh. He lived a sinless life, performed many signs and wonders, and taught the words of eternal life. He offered Himself as a penal substitutionary atoning sacrifice for sinners. He was physically crucified, suffered, bled, died and was buried. By the blood of His cross, He secured for us eternal redemption and made a way for life everlasting (*Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; Romans 9:5; John 1:1-18; 8:46-47; 20:28, 30-31; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:7*).

Salvation is found in and through Christ and Him alone. It is only because of His shed blood that we may approach the throne of grace and receive pardon for our sins from the Father. He was raised from the dead on the third day and appeared to His disciples in His resurrected body. He later ascended into heaven where He now sits at the right hand of the Father and is perpetually interceding for the saints. He awaits the time when the Father will send Him personally back to earth to a final resurrection of His people and judge His creation to usher in the final portion of redemptive history. He is due from angels, men, and every other creature whatever worship, service, or obedience He is pleased to require of them. At His appearing, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.

Acts 1:11; I Corinthians 15:1-28; Hebrews 7:25; 9:28; I Peter 2:21-23; Matthew 20:28; Romans 5:6-8; 6:9, 10; 8:34; I Timothy 3:16; Revelation 5:12-14

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the Holy Spirit, eternally one with the Father and Son, who convicts and convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (*John 16:8*). Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. The Holy Spirit is the divine agent by whom believers are born into the Kingdom of God. As our abiding helper, the Spirit effectually calls, sanctifies, empowers, baptizes, indwells, guides, teaches, and equips all believers for service and witness. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit guides, governs, and protects the child of God from spiritual

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defeat and oppression (*Ephesians 6:11-18*). He enables believers to live in union with Christ and God the Father.

John 14:16,17,26; 15:26-27; John 16:9-14; I Corinthians 12:13; I Corinthians 2:10-11; 3:16; 6:19; II Corinthians 3: 6; Galatians 5:22-26; Titus 3:5; Romans 8:9,12-13; Ephesians 6:11-18

CREATION

We believe that God created all things visible and invisible for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness. He created every molecule and galaxy. He created each species of life separately and finished His work by creating Adam from the dust and Eve from Adam. We believe that the universe has its beginning and end in God's will. The universe is in no sense independent of Him and creation does not reflect a prior deficiency but its formation and maintenance represent a continuing exertion of His creative power and ability. Both Adam and Eve were created equally in the image of God without sin. He endued them with knowledge, righteousness, and holiness having God's natural law of conscience written in their hearts and the power to fulfill that law. They lived with the possibility of transgressing since they were left to the liberty of their own will. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man and woman in His own image and therefore every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1; 2:7; Ecclesiastes 7:29; 12:7; Job 26:13; 33:4; Psalm 24:1-2; 33:5-6; 104:24; Isaiah 55:10-11; Jeremiah 10:12; Matthew 10:28; John 1:1-3; Acts 17:24; Romans 1:20; 2:14-15; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 1:16; 3:10; Hebrews 1:2; 11:3; Revelation 4:11

CONDITION OF MAN AND WOMAN

Adam and Eve received a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which allowed them, while they kept it, to remain joyfully whole in their communion with God and have dominion over the earth and all living things. Adam and Eve, being influenced and seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They thereby incurred

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not only physical death but also spiritual death which is separation from God. God permitted their sin, having allowed it to His own ultimate mercy and glory. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God and so became dead in sin and wholly corrupted in all their parts and faculties of soul, spirit, and body. As they were the root of all mankind, the guilt, death, and corrupted nature caused by this sin was imputed and conveyed to all their posterity descending from generation to generation. Since this original corruption, we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good. We are thus wholly inclined to all evil and from this disposition proceeds all actual sin. For this reason, we believe all human beings are born with a sinful nature. This corruption of nature, during this life, remains in those that are saved; and although it is, through Christ, pardoned and mortified, it is never completely overcome until our glorification.

Genesis 1:27-28; 2:16-17; 3:6-8, 11,13,23; 5:3; 6:5; 8:21; Job 14:4; 15:4; Psalm 51:5; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19; Acts 17:26; Romans 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12, 15-19; 7:18; 8:7; 11:32; I Corinthians 15:21-22, 45, 49; II Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 1:21; Titus 1:15; James 1:14-15; 1 John 1:8,10; Romans 7:5,8, 14, 17-18, 23, 25; Galatians 5:17

MARRIAGE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY

The term “marriage” has only one meaning: a covenant between one man and one woman, in a single exclusive union, by which their status changes from two individuals to one flesh as God joins them together. This covenant creates a new family such that their lifelong primary human loyalty is now to one another before anyone else. It is an earthly covenant between one man and one woman that God created and sanctioned to image the unbreakable heavenly covenant between Christ and His Church, therefore intended not to be broken by anything but death. From Genesis to Revelation, the authority of Scripture witnesses to the nature of biblical marriage as uniquely bound to the complementarity of man and woman. The Lord Jesus Himself said that marriage was created by God from the beginning, so no human institution has the authority to redefine marriage any more than a human institution has the authority to redefine the gospel, which marriage mysteriously reflects.

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Regarding gender, God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Rejection of one's biological gender is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

God created sex as a gift to be enjoyed within the covenant of marriage. We believe that God intends sexual expression to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of this marriage covenant. We believe that the exercise of sexual expression outside the biblical definition of marriage in any manner, including but not limited to adultery, homosexuality, premarital sex, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography, is contradictory to God's design for sexuality and marriage.

Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:15-25; Psalm 139; Matthew 5:27-32; Matthew 19:3-12; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Ephesians 5:21-33; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Timothy 1:10

SALVATION

Salvation is a mystery. While acknowledging our finite and incomplete understanding of God's ways, in faith we believe that God, by His providence and eternal counsel, chose some persons to life and salvation before the foundation of the world. These He effectually calls to Himself. Whoever He calls, He will justify and keep by His power through faith to salvation (*Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:2-4; 2:4-5, 8-9; II Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2*). His choice was of Himself, for His own pleasure and glory, and not with regard to, or with reference to, any foreseen works of faith or deeds in the creature as His motive. His choice prevails and triumphs over human resistance to bring His own to saving faith (*John 17:6,9,19; 11:51-52; Ephesians 1:4; Romans 8:32-33; 11:5-6; Titus 3:4-7; Revelation 5:9*). Justification occurs by and through Christ and because of His work on the cross and is apprehended through faith. No man is justified in the sight of God partly by Christ and partly by works (*Romans 3:20,28,30; 8:33; Galatians 5:4*). Salvation is the gracious purpose of God according to which He justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness and grace, and is infinitely wise,

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holy, and unchangeable. It precludes boasting and encourages humility. The grace of redemption is that by which God effectually calls His chosen, converting them to Himself, and quickening them from spiritual death to spiritual life. This grace is operative by and through God alone, not in cooperation with man, meaning that those who are redeemed always come to saving faith, as they are made willing to come to Christ by the drawing of God, and receive through faith their redemption and eternal salvation.

Matthew 22:14; John 6:44; 14:6; Romans 8:2,30; 9:11; 11:7; Ephesians 1:4-12, 17-19; 2:1-5; II Thessalonians 2:13-14; II Timothy 1:9-10; Titus 3:4-5; Acts 26:18; I Corinthians 2:10-12; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26; Philippians 2:13

We further believe that the work of Christ on the cross for sin warrants and impels a universal offering of the gospel to all persons, so that to every person it may be truly said, "God gave his only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life." Those whom God calls will hear His voice and follow Him. Whoever comes by the drawing of God through the invoking of the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ will not cast out.

Matthew 28:19; John 3:16; 4:14; 6:37; 10:27; Colossians 1:23; Acts 1:8; Revelation 22:17

We believe that by complete and perfect obedience to God and by His suffering and His death, Jesus Christ obtained forgiveness of sins and the gift of His righteousness for all who trusted in God prior to the cross and all who trusted in Christ thereafter. Through living a perfect life and dying in our place, the just for the unjust, Christ absorbed and became sin and succumbed to our due punishment thereby satisfying the wrath of God against us.

1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; Romans 3:23-26; 5:6, 9, 18-19; 8:1,34; 14:9; I Corinthians 15:3; II Corinthians 5:14, 21; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:7; 2:3-6; Philippians 3:9; Colossians 1:14; I Thessalonians 1:10

Human beings are accountable for their response to the forgiveness, pardon, and reconciliation offered to them in the Lord Jesus Christ. When an individual trusts in Him, the person is justified by God and adopted into His family. God's will for believers is that they exhibit transformed

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lives evidenced by purity, holiness, and growth in Christ-like character. He desires that they each participate, according to their spiritual gifts, in the task of effectively sharing the gospel message of salvation with those, near and far, who have yet to believe in Jesus.

1 John 4:7; Isaiah 8:20; II Timothy 3:15-17; Romans 5:12-16; Ephesians 1; Philippians 2:13

We believe that those who are redeemed and come to saving faith will never lose their salvation but will remain in Him. Believers may fall into sin through neglect, spiritual weakness, and temptation, whereby they grieve the Holy Spirit, degrade their graces and joys, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves. Even so, they will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, sanctified by His spirit, and will never fall away from the state of grace but will endure to the end. They will never fall fully and completely because God, by His grace, preserves them. The intercession of Christ for those God has called is efficacious unto eternity.

Philippians 1:6; John 10: 28-29; 17:11, 24; Psalms 32:3-5; 51:8, 10, 12; 89:31-33; Isaiah 63:17; Jeremiah 31:3; 2 Peter 1:10; 1 John 3:9; Matthew 7:22-23; Mark 6:52; 16:14; 1 Peter 1:5,9; II Timothy 2:18-19; Hebrews 10:10, 14; Hebrews 13:20-21; Hebrews 6:17-18; 7:25; 9:12-15; Romans 5:2,5; 8:33-39; I Corinthians 11:32; II Thessalonians 3:3; Ephesians 4:30; I John 2:3; 3:14, 18-19, 21, 24. Revelation 2:4

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

We believe the Holy Spirit empowers spiritual gifts as God wills to His children. These gifts are designed to testify to the presence of the Kingdom and distributed to equip the saints for worship and ministry to build up the body of Jesus Christ (*Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-11; Ephesians 4:11-12*). The miracles and revelatory gifts dispensed to the apostles and prophets of the early church are active today. The use of spiritual gifts is for the purpose of edification within the body that it would be built up in Christ (*1 Corinthians 14:12*). We believe that God uses these spiritual gifts to display His glory and anointing in individual saints for the work of His ministry established in the timeless message of the Bible (*Acts 2:1-4*).

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CHURCH

The Church consists of all who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for their eternal salvation and is the spiritual body of Christ. This includes all the redeemed of the ages, believers from among all peoples from every tribe, tongue, and nation. The primary purpose of the Church is to worship God and glorify Him by building up believers and effectively reaching the world with the gospel of Christ. We believe that Christ is the King, the High Priest, and a Holy Prophet of the church (*Acts 3:22-23; Hebrews 4:14; 8:1*). God ordained the ministry of the local church to include taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world and thereby accomplish His redemptive purposes among all peoples. The local congregation is a gathering of believers who are associated by the New Covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Spirit; observe the ordinances of Christ; are governed by His laws; and exercise the gifts, rights, and privileges within them by the power of the Word and the Holy Spirit. Its only proper officers are Elders and Deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

Matthew 16:15-19; Acts 2:41-42, 47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:17-32; I Corinthians 3:16; 7:17; 9:13- 14; 12:1-31; Colossians 1:18; I Timothy 3:1-15; 4:14; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of outward obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior; death to sin; burial of the old life; and resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to a believer's faith in an ultimate bodily resurrection to eternal life with Christ in His Kingdom.

The Lord's Supper is an act of worship and obedience whereby believers, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are significant expressions of salvation, worship, and submission to God for the believer.

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Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12

EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

The call and holy privilege of every child of God and of all churches of Jesus Christ is to go and make disciples of the nations (*Matthew 9:37-38*). God creates transformed lives evidenced by purity, holiness, and growth in Christ-like character by means of new birth. The Holy Spirit imputes the love of Christ into the hearts of believers, thus transforming their love toward others, for His Name's sake. This results in children of God who actively seek to take the Gospel to sinners and who share in carrying out the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:13-15; 2 Timothy 4:5*). The highest purpose for evangelism and missions is that the name of Jesus Christ and the glory of His kingdom be taken to the ends of the earth until He returns.

Matthew 24:14; Romans 1:5; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 22:17

HEAVEN AND HELL

We believe that Heaven is a real place of eternal blessedness prepared by God for those who have been saved by grace through the shed blood of Christ. We believe that Hell is a real place of eternal suffering for those whose names are not written in the book of life. There is no intermediate state in which the unsaved can atone for his own sins.

John 14:1-6; Revelation 7:13-17; 20:11-15; 21:22-27; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; Luke 16:19-31

LAST THINGS

We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal felicity of the righteous, and the eternal punishment of the unredeemed.

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*Matthew 16:27; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Philippians 3:20; I
Thessalonians 4:15; II Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13; I Corinthians 15: II
Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15*

CHURCH LEADERS' ADHERANCE TO THIS AFFIRMATION

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of The Austin Stone Community Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to The Austin Stone Community Church, all persons employed by The Austin Stone Community Church in any capacity, or who serve as elders, deacons, leaders, and partners must abide by this Affirmation of Faith.

Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:14-16; Ephesians 5:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 5:22

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