First Baptist Church of Laredo
Membership Guide

“Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love..”
–Ephesians 4:15-16

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Why Should I Become a Member?
Reason #1: Join a church to share responsibility.

Each member has a responsibility to use his or her gifts to minister to others within the church. “For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them” (Romans 12:4-6a) The church cannot function only through the work of the pastors and a few people.

Reason #2: Join a church for accountability.
God never intended for his children to live as solo-Christians (that is why we have so many “one another commands” in Scripture).
By joining a church we are saying, “I can’t do this by myself. I need other Christians to help me!” You cannot be held accountable if people don’t know who you are. You have to be involved in the lives of others in order for us to help you.

Reason #3: Join a church for love, encouragement, and discipleship.

Discipleship
Older men and women in the faith are commanded by Paul to disciple and encourage younger Christians within the local church (Titus 2).

Encouragement
“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Love
What other way is there to make your love concrete than to commit yourself to a local church where you can be cared for and at the same time care for other Christians? (see 1 John 3:16-18)

Reason #4: Join a church for church leaders.
Leaders are commanded to keep an account of those put under their care.

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Hebrews 13:17).
How can a leader know who to lead and care for if there are no members?

Reason #5: Join a church to be a testimony of God's grace to a watching world
Scripture teaches that Christians are those who hear God's Word, trust in Christ's atoning death alone for their salvation, and obey their Lord.
When Christians join a church and live faithfully according to God's Word, they collectively help clarify to non-Christians what Christianity really looks like.

What is Church Membership?

Church membership is committing to living out the gospel and glorifying God together as a local body of believers.

This means church is primarily NOT a building but a people. The church is NOT primarily a building, programs, ministries, or events but a people unified in Christ by the Gospel and living it out. When we understand that the church is primarily a people who have been brought to the worship of God, it radically changes our perspective on the church. More than we focus on our building, more than we focus on our programs, our focus is the worship of God.

What is the Church?

A church is a local body of believers who profess and give evidence that they have been saved from their sin through faith by God's grace for His glory to live out the gospel together in the midst of a lost and dying world.

When we talk about church membership, we are not referring to the universal Church. The universal church is the collective body of all Christians regardless of location, denomination, and time who believe in Jesus Christ. Citizen of heaven embassy.

Yes, the bible does refer to the universal church that you are a part of and connected to, but primarily, we are to live out the gospel together with a local body of believers. Overwhelmingly, the majority of New Testament references to the church are written to and about a local body of believers who are committed to Christ and one

another. This is what we are referring to when we talk about Church in regards to church membership.

How do I become a member?

1. **Attend the membership class**
2. **Meet with the pastor to discuss your testimony and understanding of the gospel**
3. **Be baptized as a believer (**We believe baptism is for those who have personally repented and trusted in Christ. It is a public profession of faith and a prerequisite for church membership**).**
4. **Congregational affirmation**

What is the purpose of our Church?

Our Guiding Purpose as a church is to worship God by treasuring Him as most precious.[1]

We worship God by treasuring God as most precious because He is worth more than our family, He is worth more than our financial security, He is worth more than our health, He is worth more than our ability to control situations and people, and God is worth more than our entertainment. God is worth more.

Whenever you treasure something more than God, that is sin. Our hearts are idol factories, and even good things like serving and ministry can become sinful when we are doing them from a heart that is treasuring something other than God.

This means that our church's focus is NOT on programs, events, and bible studies; our sole focus is on the worship of God. Our church's ministry focus is not on us but on God. This means we don't own things in the church; we are merely stewards of what God has given us.

Worship starts with you first. You must be more concerned with your worship than anyone elses worship. When we are so concerned with other people's worship we neglect

[1] Matthew 22:36-40, Hosea 6:6, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Micah 6:8, Psalm 73:25, Deuteronomy 6:5, Deuteronomy 10:12, Deuteronomy 11:13, Deuteronomy 30:6

our own worship. Worship starts with you. Then your worship should first be shared with your family. Your first area of doing ministry is your family.

The worship of God is what compels us to love one another. The worship of God is our purpose as a church and that means we love God with everything and we love one another even when it hurts, even when it is not easy.

Our union with Christ is what binds us together. We worship in response to what God has done. It's what we share with a lost and dying world. It is what ultimately brings glory to God. The Church's purpose is to worship God by treasuring Him as most precious. That is why we are here.

Our Worship is God-centered, God-exalting, and the pinnacle of our joy. Our worship flows from a grateful heart into every area of our life.

Mission (Actions needed to achieve our purpose): ***We are one church family[2], unified in Christ, Led by God word[3], equipping the saints for the work of ministry,[4] to be the tangible hands and feet of Christ for the glory of God[5].***

What does a successful church look like?

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[2] Ephesians 4:4-6; John 17:20-23; Philippians 1:27; Philippians 2:1-11;
[3] 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Colossians 3:16; James 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 2:13
[4] Ephesians 4:11-16
[5] Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:1-47; Revelation 7:9
[6] Luke 2:35-36; John 1:14, 5:18, 6:51, 10:30, 33; Romans 1:3, 8:3; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:19, 22, 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14; 1 Peter 1-20; 1 John 2:22, 4:2-3; 2 John 1:7
[7] Isaiah 53:3, 9; Matthew 4:1-11; John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15, 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5
[8] Daniel 9:26; Isaiah 53:11; Matthew 20:28; John 1:29, 3:16; Romans 4:25, 5:15, 8:3; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:28; Galatians 1:4, 3:13; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 4:9-10; Revelation 5:9
[9] Isaiah 53:5-6; John 1:4, 3:16, 10:27-30, 19:28-30; Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 2:17-18; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:25, 4:9, 5:11; Jude 20
[10] Matthew 28:6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24: 5-7, 34, 38-39; John 20:1-18, 27; Romans 8:11, 34; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4
[11] John 6:63; Romans 5:2, 6, 8, 10, 8:2; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 2:5, 18; Colossians 1:20-23, 2:11-14; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:18
[12] John 1:12; Luke 17:5; Romans 1:16-17, 3:28, 4:3, 5:1, 10:17; Ephesians 2:8; Galatians 3:5; James 2:17, 22, 26
[13] Romans 8:24; 2 Corinthians 4:18, 5:7; Hebrews 11:1; 1 Peter 1:8
[14] Isaiah 66:2; John 1:12, 4:42, 10:28; Acts 15:11, 16:31, 24:14; Romans 5:2, 12:2, 16:26; Galatians 2:20, 3:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 11:13; 1 John 5:10

Ultimately, the church's success is measured by conforming to God's word and treasuring Him as most precious.

The mark of a great church is not how many people come, but how many people live differently for having been there.
-Alister Begg

What is the Gospel?

God the Son took on humanity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth[6]. Jesus lived, suffered, and endured every temptation that we experience but, unlike us, He never sinned[7]. His perfect, sinless life made Him innocent, but, because of His great love for us, He willingly accepted the punishment that we have earned for our sin[8].

He accepted the humiliation of death on the cross so that He could deliver on His promise to bring us back into right relationship with God, free us from the power of sin, and give us new life that never ends[9]. These promises came true on that glorious Sunday morning when Jesus arose from the dead and walked out of the grave, never to return[10].

This victory is applied to us by the very Spirit of God that breathes life into us while we are still spiritually dead - enemies of God, consumed by our selfish, sinful desires[11]. Once enlivened by the Spirit, we are simultaneously given the gift of faith[12].

Faith is the unshakeable confidence in things we can't see, but we know are true[13]. By this faith we accept God's forgiveness for our sin, receive grace as we are continually made more like Christ, and rest in the promise of our salvation, provided and held for us by our Lord Jesus Himself[14].

What is Saving Faith?

The True Church is Composed of Those Who Belong to God

a. **The word "church" refers to the assembly of the "called out ones"** (*ekklēsia*). Specifically those who are called out of the world by God.

b. The church is referred to with metaphors that indicate it is to be made up of Christians only.

• Bride of Christ (whom he redeemed),
• Temple of the Holy Spirit (that is indwelt by God),
• Body of Christ (that is connected to Jesus and has him for their head/authority),
• People of God (which is not merely a human institution)

One thing all these metaphors have in common is that they require that the people in the church truly belong to God (i.e. not simply in name but in reality).

c. **Christians are referred to as "saints" or "holy ones"** – that is, those "set apart for God."

Contrast This with "Easy Believism"

a. This is the idea that a person is saved by simply praying a prayer, walking an aisle, being baptized etc.

b. Example: "Just as I am"

Charlotte Eliot's hymn entitled "Just As I Am" was written in 1836. It has been a popular invitation hymn in evangelistic meetings for years and years. The most familiar verse is the first verse, "Just as I am without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me; and that Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God I come, I come."

It's simply a call to sinners to come, to come to Christ, who shed His blood for them. They are to come just as they are. That's what "Just As I Am" means. Solely on the basis of faith, they are to come, and He will save them. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." And Jesus said, "Him that comes unto Me, I'll under no circumstances cast out," John 6:37. And the hymn is meant to state that the sinner who wants to come can come just as he is, by faith, to embrace Christ.

However, the erosion of the gospel in our day has given that particular verse and hymn a twist and a different meaning for some…. Sinners today are hearing not only that Christ will receive them just as they are, but also that He will let them stay that way….. thus many wrongly believe that they can come to Christ, receive absolution from their sins and be granted the gift of eternal life and heaven, and then walk away to continue living life any way they please, even choosing…. as one well-known Bible teacher put it…. "To leave God out and live according to the old nature." That is the gospel we hear today. Come just as you are, and go away just as you are. Jesus will take you just the way you are. In fact, He will let you stay that way.

What Does the Bible Say about Saving Faith?

1. Jesus Gives a Demanding Invitation That Is Costly to Accept

Luke 14:25–27 Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, [26]"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. [27]"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

Luke 14:28–30 "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? [29]"Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, [30]saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

2. True Faith Is Not Mere Excitement or Positive Feelings Towards Jesus

John 2:23–25 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. [24]But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, [25]and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

John 6:14, 66

Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." [Jesus then says hard things about commitment] [66]As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

3. True Faith Continues Trusting in Jesus (because God sustains it)[1]

John 8:30–31

As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. [31]So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you *continue in My word*, then you are truly disciples of Mine

Colossians 1:21–23:

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, [22]yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— [23]*if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard*, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

4. True Faith Fears God (and desires his approval) More Than Man

John 12:42:

Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;

5. True Faith Follows Jesus(loves God's truth and seeks to obey it)

John 12:26:

If anyone serves Me, *he must follow Me*; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

6. True Faith Produces Fruit (like an apple tree produces apples and not thorns)[2]

James 2:14–19:

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can *that* faith save him? [15]If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, [16]and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? [17]Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. [18]But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. **[19]**You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

We persevere in the faith because God preserves those who truly belong. He is faithful to complete the good work of salvation he begins in every person he gives new life to in Christ (Phil. 1:6, John 10:28-29). [2] We are not saved by works (Eph. 2:8-9, Titus 3:5), but salvation results in good works (Eph. 2:10).

Priorities in Ministry

I. **Exalt-** In everything we do and how we do it our sole focus is exalting God by doing ministry according to His word, relying on God, and treasuring Him as most precious.

II. **Equip-** We equip believers by teaching, discipling, Shepherding them with the whole counsel of God in love, so that they can live and minister in the likeness of Christ.

III. **Evangelize** the lost through our unity as a church and by proclaiming the gospel of Christ in word and deed to all the world.

Member Commitments

What are Member Commitments?

• ***A commitment.*** A promise made to God, to a local church, and to one's self.

• ***A summary of how we agree to live***. While our statement of faith is a good summary of what we believe, our member commitments is a summary of how we agree to live – more importantly, it is a summary of how God would have us live. It does not include every explicit command for the New Testament believer, but it does give a general summary of what it means to live as a disciple of Christ.[1]

• ***A way to help maintain the unity of the body of Christ***. As our statement of faith unites our church in doctrine, so this statement unites us in practice. Both doctrine and practice are important in the church (1 Tim. 4:16).

• ***A biblical standard.*** Church membership involves being held accountable to live in a manner consistent with a common understanding of Scripture. These commitments are helpful in a church that is practicing Biblical church discipline. As members of a church, we exhort one another to live holy lives, and we challenge brothers and sisters persisting in sin.

• ***A tool.*** This functions as a tool to inform potential members about some of what we believe New Testament church life should look like (including their responsibilities). It also functions as a reminder to all our members of our commitments to one another and Christ.

Member Commitments

PREAMBLE

Believing that God has made us part of the body of Christ and that he calls us to live together as a church, we commit to live to the glory of God. Therefore, by the enablement of the indwelling Spirit of God, we will strive to fulfill these commitments in obedience to God's Word. [1] Taken from https://www.9marks.org/article/membership-matters-what-our-church-covenant/ 27

1. DEVOTION TO JESUS CHRIST

We commit to love and magnify Christ in all that we do, knowing that it is by the grace of God alone that our sins have been forgiven, our old nature put to death, and we have been raised to new life in Christ. *(Titus 2:11-14)*

Titus 2:10b-14 *that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. [11]For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12]training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13]waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14]who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

Romans 6:1-4 *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? [2] By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? [3] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

2. MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD

We commit to live in accord with God's Word and to minister the Word to one another so that everyone might be mature in Christ. *(Col. 1:28, 3:16; Eph. 4:15; Rom. 15:14)*

Live in accord with God's Word

And to minister the Word to one another

Col 1:28, 3:16 *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. … [3:16]Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

Eph 4:15 *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ…*

3. GENUINE WORSHIP

We commit to not forsake the regular assembly of ourselves together to worship the Lord. *(Heb. 10:24-25, 12:28-29; Acts 2:42-47)*

> **Hebrews 10:24-25***And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* [25] *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

What are reasons we might find ourselves violating this command of Scripture?

i. Misunderstanding of the centrality of the local church in God's purposes (see Acts 2:42)
ii. Pride - "I can do this by myself" or "the church is full of hypocrites"
iii. Lazy – "It's the only time I can sleep in…"
iv. Making other things more important - Sports, making more money, hobbies
v. Selfishness - "me time"

4. STRONG COMMUNITY LIFE/FELLOWSHIP

We commit to exemplify a true Christian community, caring for one another, admonishing one another, and bearing each other's burdens. We commit to maintain the unity of the Spirit by walking in love towards one another and forgiving as God forgave us. *(Eph. 4:1-6, Eph. 4:32)*

> **John 13:34-35** *"just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* [35] *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Community

- Community is a commitment to love those around me (which means being patient, kind, serving them, listening to them).
- The church is a family (see "brothers" and "sisters" language in NT).
- Community means I stick around in fun times and difficult times.
- It does not come cheap. Takes commitment of time, energy, and humility.

What are some of the things that are involved in biblical community / fellowship

- **Caring for one another** – care about them spiritually and physically. And rejoicing when good things happen for them (1 John 3:16-18).
- **Admonishing** – willingness to encourage / correct fellow members from the Word of God (Col 3:16).
- **Bearing each other's burdens** – meeting needs if we can, crying / praying (Rom 12:14, Gal 6:1, 9).

Maintain the unity of the Spirit – How do we do this?

- Walking in love – means putting to death selfishness.
- Forgiving as God forgave us. – putting to death bitterness or anger

• When someone offends you, you have a responsibility to seek to maintain the unity of the body. **Ask yourself some questions then respond accordingly:**

1. Am I offended because it is not my preference or way of doing things? (ie. the Bible doesn't speak directly to the issue or give a clear principle they violated)?
    a. Then grow in humility and love (Phil. 2:1-4)
    b. Humility says "I'm not always right…and others can make mistakes"

2. Am I offended because I am assuming their motives?
    a. If so, stop assuming and judging (God knows and judges - 1 Cor. 4:5)
    b. Be charitable (loving) in your assumptions about their motive

3. Am I offended by a minor offense that is not clearly sin?
    a. Then overlook the offense
    b. Love covers a multitude of offenses (1 Peter 4:8)
4. Am I offended because they actually sinned in a clear way against me (not simply a perceived attitude or motive, but clear words or actions)?
    a. Graciously approach them for their good and God's glory (see Commitment #6)
    b. Do your part to maintain the unity of the Spirit

5. Notice that the response is never to let bitterness grow, to stop attending church gatherings, or to look for another church family (leaving unresolved conflict behind you). (see Philippians 4:2).

5. CHURCH DISCIPLINE[5]

We commit to graciously and humbly give and receive biblical correction, in order that we may not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We will lovingly pursue a straying member for their good and God's glory. *(Heb. 3:12-13; Gal. 6:1-3; Matt. 18:15-17)*

Graciously and humbly give and receive biblical correction

Gal 6:1 *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*

The goal is that we won't buy into the lies of sin and be hardened towards God.

Heb 3:12 *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.* ***13*** *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

What if you or they continue going after sin?

• **Straying** is

1. Beginning to side with your sin over Jesus.
2. Different than, "I don't want to keep sinning in this way and I am fighting it and seeking to turn away from it so I can have more of Christ."

• We **lovingly pursue** a straying member.

1. When sin surfaces, confront it privately.

Matt. 18:15 *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.*

2. If he won't listen, then take a couple others.

Matt. 18:16 *But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses*

3. If he doesn't listen, then the whole church body needs to be involved.

Matt. 18:17a *If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.*

4. If he still refuses, then let him be as an unbeliever

Matt. 18:17b *And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

- For his own good. (see 1 Cor. 5:5) – hope is he will repent
- For the good of church body (see 1 Cor. 5:6) - So all may be warned to avoid indulging in sin
- For God's glory and it's display in the gospel's power (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 20) – So God's holiness will be on display

5. If genuine, proven repentance occurs at any point restoration to fellowship is given (2 Cor 2:6-8, Gal 6:1).

Application

• At some point we hope you can think of a few people in the church who know you well enough that they could help restore you if you get entangled in sin (and vice versa). Ask yourself, **"Who knows me well enough to keep me accountable?"**

• **What might hinder you from humbly giving or receiving correction?**

1. Fear of man instead of God.
2. Desire for ease rather than the messiness of relationships? Or lack of time.
3. Fear of having to deal with your own sin.
4. Not seeing the seriousness of sin (it is life and death).
5. Not seeing God's grace that covers your sin, shame, and condemnation.

6. EXERCISE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS[6]

We commit to build up the body of Christ by exercising our spiritual gifts. *(1 Cor. 12:4-7;*

1Pet. 4:10-11)

1 Peter 4:10-11 *As each has **received a gift**, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus*

Gifting - grace, not earned or *merely* innate abilities
Spiritual – from the Spirit of God
Summary of the types of gifts in 1 Peter 4:10-11:

- **Speaking** gifts (evangelist, pastor/preacher, teacher, counseling)
- **Service** (tangible service for good of others).

7. GENEROUS GIVING

We commit to give cheerfully as the Lord provides for us in order to sustain the ministry of this body and its missionaries and to show that our treasure is in heaven and not on earth. *(2 Cor. 9:6-12)*

To give cheerfully

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 *The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. [7] Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for **God loves a cheerful giver**.*

As the Lord provides.

2 Cor. 9:8- 10*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. [9] As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." [10]**He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing** and increase the harvest of your righteousness.*

In order to sustain the ministry

2 Cor. 9:11*You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. [12] For the ministry of this service is not only **supplying the needs of the saints** but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.*

It shows where our treasure is

Matt 6:19-21 *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, [20] but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. [21] For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

8. FERVENT PRAYER

We commit to pray for one another, for our church leaders, and for the spread of the gospel. *(Eph. 6:17-19; 1 Tim. 2:1; Col. 4:3)*

Our commitment to pray is undergirded by

- Our privilege to pray – we pray because we can approach God's throne
- Our great God – we pray because God is sovereign, loving, and wise
- Our deep needs – we pray because we are totally dependent on God

What we pray for

Eph. 6:18-20 *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance,* ***making supplication for all the saints****,* ***19*** *and also* ***for me****, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth* ***boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel****,* ***20*** *for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

- Pray for one another (Eph. 6:18, Eph. 1, Col 1)
- Our church leaders (Eph. 6:19)
- The spread of the gospel (Eph. 6:19-20, Col 4:3)

Come Sunday nights to pray TOGETHER

"The machinery for extending the gospel are moved by prayer. They do as much for the Lord's cause who intercede like Moses on the mount, as they do who fight like Joshua in the thick of battle. This is to be like Christ. He bears the names of his people, as their High Priest, before the Father. Oh, the privilege of being like Jesus! This is to be a true helper to ministers. If I must choose a congregation, give me a people that pray." (JC Ryle, A Call to Prayer, pg. 34-35)

"Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure." – D. L. Moody

If you become a member, use the online directory or a printed copy and pray through it *(pray for a few brothers and sisters each day).*

9. FAITHFUL EVANGELISM

We commit to faithfully bear witness to the gospel among our family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. *(Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Rom. 10:13-15)*

Bear witness

2 Corinthians 5:18-20a *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and* ***gave us the ministry of reconciliation****;* ***19*** *that is, in Christ God was*

reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] ***Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ…***

The gospel

2 Corinthians 5:20b-21 *…God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.* [21] *For our sake he* ***made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***

10. COMPASSIONATE MINISTRY OF MERCY

We commit to care for the widows, fatherless, and needy among us with compassion and wisdom. *(Rom 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:25-26; 1 John 3:16-18; James 1:27)*

Care for the widows, fatherless, and needy

James 1:27 *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

1 John 3:16-18 *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.* [17] *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?* [18] *Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

First Baptist Laredo has a benevolence policy. If you or someone you know (especially a fellow member of the church) is in need of help with necessities (food, clothing, shelter issues, etc.), contact the deacon of benevolence to request help.

If you have skills (car repair, house repair, financial advising) let the church know. Also, we occasionally take up a benevolence offering to replenish the benevolence fund.

11. MAINTAINING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

We will, upon moving from this place, unite, if possible, with a church where we can carry out the spirit of these commitments and the principles of God's Word. *(1 Jn. 2:19; Jn. 13:35; 3 Jn. 5-6; Acts 18:2; Rom. 16:3)*

God expects us to be a part of a local church

- When we move we ought to consider if there are healthy churches we could join.
- Don't just move and then give fellowship an afterthought.
- Your spiritual health is more important than a raise, nicer city, or other things (like being near the beach or a mountain).

Changing Churches within the same area (i.e., switching local churches). •

Reason you <u>must</u> leave a church (a different gospel has taken root – Gal. 1:9).

• **Good reasons to leave a church**

1. Significant doctrinal issues (i.e., matters that are *both* clear in Scripture and important to faith and life).
2. Ungodly shepherds (though leaving might not be the first course of action - 1 Tim. 5:19)
3. Regular disregard for God's Word

• **Bad reasons to leave a church.**

1. Unresolved conflict (John 13:35, Eph. 4:31, Phil. 4:2)
2. Personal preference clashes and consumerist desires (Phil. 2:3-5)

• In between these is **the grey area: Reasons we <u>may</u> leave a church**

1. Check our motives
2. Seek counsel from other trusted godly and biblically minded people
    - Don't simply ask, "What do you think?"
    - Rather, "Are there any Scriptures or biblical principles that come to mind that you think should have a bearing on my decision?"

Don't just stop attending. Let the Church Leadership know you plan to move or switch churches so we can shepherd you in that.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Church Leadership Commitments

- FBC Laredo's church Leadership commits to protecting, leading, equipping, and caring for the corporate church body and her individual members. The following is an overview of the requirements for Church Leadership as defined within the Scriptures. The Church Leadership makes a covenant

- To, along with the aid of members, appoint Church Leadership according to the criteria assigned to them in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Ptr. 5:1-4)

•To prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Ptr. 5:1-4)

•To oversee the growth of members as disciples of Christ and give an account for their growth in grace, truth, and love (Matt. 28:16-20; Eph. 4:15-16; Jam. 5:14; Heb. 13:17; 1 Ptr. 5:1-4)

•To provide teaching and counsel from the whole Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; 1 Tim. 4:16;

2 Tim. 4:1-5; Titus 2:1)

•To equip the members of the church for the work of ministry, including future Church Leadership and Church Planters (Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Tim. 2:2)

•To be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matt. 7:15; Jn. 10:12-13; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 1 Jn. 4:1)

•To lovingly oversee the exercise of discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, for the good of the one disciplined, and for the health of the church as a whole. 24

•To set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated in the church covenant (Acts 20:28; Phil. 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Ptr. 5:3)

Baptist Faith and Message, 1963

Adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention May 9, 1963 REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE The 1962 session of the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in San Francisco, California, adopted the following motion. "Since the report of the Committee on Statement of Baptist Faith and Message was adopted in 1925, there have been various statements from time to time which have been made, but no overall statement which might be helpful at this time as suggested in Section 2 of that report, or introductory statement which might be used as an interpretation of the 1925 Statement. "We recommend, therefore, that the president of this Convention be requested to call a meeting of the men now serving as presidents of the various state Conventions that would qualify as a member of the Southern Baptist Convention committee under Bylaw 18 to present to the Convention in Kansas City some similar statement which shall serve as information to the churches, and which may serve as guidelines to the various agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention. It is understood that any group or individuals may approach this committee to be of service. The expenses of this committee shall be borne by the Convention Operating Budget." Your committee thus constituted begs leave to present its report as follows: Throughout its work your committee has been conscious of the contribution made by the statement of "The Baptist Faith And Message" adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925. It quotes with approval its affirmation that "Christianity is supernatural in its origin and history. We repudiate every theory of religion which denies the supernatural elements in our faith." Furthermore, it concurs in the introductory "statement of the historic Baptist conception of the nature and function of confessions of faith in our religious and denominational life." It is, therefore, quoted in full as part of this report to the Convention.

(1) That they constitute a consensus of opinion of some Baptist body, large or small, for the general instruction and guidance of our own people and others concerning those articles of the Christian faith which are most surely held among us. They are not intended to add anything to the simple conditions of salvation revealed in the New Testament, viz., repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

(2) That we do not regard them as complete statements of our faith, having any quality of finality or infallibility. As in the past so in the future Baptists should hold themselves free to revise their statements of faith as may seem to them wise and expedient at any time.

(3) That any group of Baptists, large or small have the inherent right to draw up for themselves and publish to the world a confession of their faith whenever they may think it advisable to do so.

(4) That the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no

authority over the conscience.

(5) That they are statements of religious convictions, drawn from the Scriptures, and are not to be used to hamper freedom of thought or investigation in other realms of life." The 1925 Statement recommended "the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, revised at certain points, and with some additional articles growing out of certain needs ..." Your present committee has adopted the same pattern. It has sought to build upon the structure of the 1925 Statement, keeping in mind the "certain needs" of our generation. At times it has reproduced sections of the Statement without change. In other instances it has substituted words for clarity or added sentences for emphasis. At certain points it has combined articles, with minor changes in wording, to endeavor to relate certain doctrines to each other. In still others e.g., "God" and "Salvation" it has sought to bring together certain truths contained throughout the 1925 Statement in order to relate them more clearly and concisely. In no case has it sought to delete from or to add to the basic contents of the 1925 Statement. Baptists are a people who profess a living faith. This faith is rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Therefore, the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is Jesus Christ whose will is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. A living faith must experience a growing understanding of truth and must be continually interpreted and related to the needs of each new generation. Throughout their history Baptist bodies, both large and small, have issued statements of faith which comprise a consensus of their beliefs. Such statements have never been regarded as complete, infallible statements of faith, nor as official creeds carrying mandatory authority. Thus this generation of Southern Baptists is in historic succession of intent and purpose as it endeavors to state for its time and theological climate those articles of the Christian faith which are most surely held among us. Baptists emphasize the soul’s competency before God, freedom in religion, and the priesthood of the believer. However, this emphasis should not be interpreted to mean that there is an absence of certain definite doctrines that Baptists believe, cherish, and with which they have been and are now closely identified. It is the purpose of this statement of faith and message to set forth certain teachings which we believe. Herschel H. Hobbs, Chairman Howard M. Reaves Ed. J. Packwood C.Z. Holland W.B. Timberlake C.V. Koons Malcolm B. Knight Dick H. Hail, Jr. Charles R. Walker Walter R. Davis Garth Pybas V.C. Kruschwitz Luther B. Hall Robert Woodward Douglas Hudgins Paul Weber, Jr. R.A. Long Nane Starnes C. Hoge Hockensmith Hugh R. Bumpas David G. Anderson E. Warren Rust James H. Landes R.P. Downey

I. THE SCRIPTURES The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. It reveals the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ. Ex 24:4; De 4:1-2; 17:19;

Jos 8:34 Psa 19:7-10; 119:11, 89, 105, 140 Isa 34:16; 40:8; Jer 15:16; 36:1-32 Mat 5:17-18; 22:29; Lu 21:33; 24:44-46 Joh 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Ac 2:16; 17:11 Rom 15:4; 16:25-26; 2Ti 3:15-17 Heb 1:1-2; 4:12; 1Pe 1:25; 2Pe 1:19-21

II. GOD There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being. A. God the Father God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men. Gen 1:1; 2:7; Ex 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11; 20:1 Lev 22:2; De 6:4; 32:6; 1Ch 29:10; Psa 19:1-3 Isa 43:3, 15; 64:8; Jer 10:10; 17:13 Mat 6:9; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11 John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7 Rom 8:14-15; 1Co 8:6; Gal 4:6; Eph 4:6 Col 1:15; 1Ti 1:17; Heb 11:6; 12:9; 1Pe 1:17; 1Jo 5:7

B. God the Son Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ he was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself the demands and necessities of human nature and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, partaking of the nature of God and of man, and in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord. Gen 18:1; Psalm 2:7; 110:1; Isa 7:14; 53:1-12 Mat 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16, 27 Mat 17:5; 27; 28:1-6, 19; Mark 1:1; 3:11 Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46 John 1:1-18, 29; 10:30, 38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50 John 14:7-11, 16:15-16, 28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20, 28 Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5, 20 Rom 1; 3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3, 34; 10:4 1Co 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8, 24-28; 2Co 5:19-21 Gal 4:4-5; Eph 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Php 2:5-11 Col 1:13-22; 2:9; 1Th 4:14-18; 1Ti 2:5-6; 3:16 Tit 2:13-14; Heb 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28 Heb 9:12-15, 24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1Pe 2:21-25; 3:22 1Jo 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14- 15; 5:9; 2Jo 7-9 Rev 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16

C. God the Holy Spirit The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts" by which they serve God through His church. He seals the

believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the assurance of God to bring the believer into the fulness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. Gen 1:2; Jud 14:6; Job 26:13; Psa 51:11; 139:7 Isa 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32 Mat 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mk 1:10, 12 Luke 1:35; 4:1, 18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49 John 4:24; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-14 Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17, 39 Acts 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6 Rom 8:9-11, 14-16, 26-27; 1Co 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11 Gal 4:6; Eph 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1Th 5:19 1Ti 3:16; 4:1; 2Ti 1:14; 3:16; Heb 9:8, 14 2Pe 1:21; 1Jo 4:13; 5:6-7; Rev 1:10; 22:17

III. MAN Man was created by the special act of God, in His own image, and is the crowning work of His creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence; whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin, and as soon as they are capable of moral action become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore every man possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. Gen 1:26-30; 2:5, 7, 18-22; 3; 9:6 Psa 1:1-6; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isa 6:5; Jer 17:5 Matt 16:26; Acts 17:26-31 Rom 1:19-32; 3:10-18, 23; 5:6, 12, 19; 6:6 Rom 7:14-25; 8:14-18, 29; 1Co 1:21-31; 15:19, 21-22 Eph 2:1-22; Col 1:21-22; 3:9-11

IV. SALVATION Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God’s grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour. Justification is God’s gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God. B. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God’s purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person’s life. C. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed. Gen 3:15; Ex 3:14-17; 6:2-8 Mat 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6 Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32

John 1:11-14, 29; 3:3-21, 36; 5:24; 10:9, 28-29 John 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31 Acts 17:30-31; 20:32; Rom 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3 Rom 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18; 29-39; 10:9-10, 13 Rom 13:11-14; 1Cor 1:18, 30; 6:19-20; 15:10 2Co 5:17-20; Gal 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15 Eph 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Php 2:12-13; Col 1:9-22; 3:1 1Th 5:23-24; 2Tim 1:12; Titus 2:11-14 Heb 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8, 14 James 2:14-26; 1Pe 1:2-23; 1Jo 1:6-2:11 Rev 3:20; 21:1-22:5

V. GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is a glorious display of God’s sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the cause of Christ, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Gen 12:1-3; Ex 19:5-8; 1Sa 8:4-7, 19-22 Isa 5:1-7; Jer 31:31 Mat 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22, 31; 25:34 Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48 John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45, 65; 10:27-29 John 15:16; 17:6, 12, 17-18; Acts 20:32 Rom 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7, 26-36 1Co 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Eph 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11 Col 1:12-14; 2Th 2:13-14; 2Ti 1:12; 2:10, 19 Heb 11:39-12:2; 1Pe 1:2-5, 13; 2:4-10 1Jo 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2

VI. THE CHURCH A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, committed to His teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. This church is an autonomous body, operating through democratic processes under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In such a congregation members are equally responsible. Its Scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages. Mat 16:15-19; 18:15-20 Acts 2:41-42, 47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23, 27 Acts 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Rom 1:7 1Co 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12 Eph 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11, 21; 5:22-32 Php 1:1; Col 1:18; 1Ti 3:1-15; 4:14

VII. 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 obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord’s Supper. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members

of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming. Mat 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mk 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 Rom 6:3-5; 1Co 10:16, 21; 11:23-29; Col 2:12

VIII. THE LORD'S DAY The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, and by refraining from worldly amusements, and resting from secular employments, work of necessity and mercy only being excepted. Ex 20:8-11; Mat 12:1-12; 28:1; Mk 2:27-28; 16:1-7 Luke 24:1-3, 33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1, 19-28 Acts 20:7; 1Co 16:1-2; Col 2:16; 3:16; Rev 1:10

IX. THE KINGDOM The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age. Gen 1:1; Isa 9:6-7; Jer 23:5-6 Mat 3:2; 4:8-10, 23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29 Mk 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32 Luke 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36 Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Rom 5:17; 8:19 1Co 15:24-28; Col 1:13; Heb 11:10, 16; 12:28 1Pe 2:4-10; 4:13; Rev 1:6, 9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22

X. LAST THINGS God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord. Isa 2:4; 11:9; Mat 16:27; 18:8-9 Mat 19:28; 24:27, 30, 36, 44; 25:31-46; 26:64 Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40, 48; 16:19-26 Luke 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3 Acts 1:11; 17:31; Rom 14:10; 1Co 4:5 1Co 15:24-28, 35-58; 2Co 5:10; Php 3:20-21 Col 1:5; 3:4; 1Th 4:14-18; 5:1; 2Th 1:7; 2:1-17 1Ti 6:14; 2Ti 4:1, 8; Tit 2:13; Heb 9:27-28 James 5:8; 2Pe 3:7; 1Jo 2:28; 3:2 Jude 14; Rev 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13

XI. EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by personal effort and by all other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ. Gen 12:1-3; Ex

19:5-6; Isa 6:1-8 Mat 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19 Mat 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53 John 14:11-12; 15:7-8, 16; 17:15; 20:21 Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3 Rom 10:13-15; Eph 3:1-11; 1Th 1:8; 2Ti 4:5 Heb 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1Pe 2:4-10; Rev 22:17

XII. EDUCATION The cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian schools is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people. In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists. De 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Neh 8:1-8; Job 28:28 Psa 19:7; 119:11; Pro 3:13; 4:1-10; 8:1-7, 11; 15:14 Ecc 7:19; Mat 5:2; 7:24; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40 1Co 1:18-31; Eph 4:11-16; Php 4:8; Col 2:3, 8-9 1Ti 1:3-7; 2Ti 2:15; 3:14-17; Heb 5:12-6:3 James 1:5; 3:17

XIII. STEWARDSHIP God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth. Gen 14:20; Lev 27:30-32; De 8:18; Mal 3:8-12 Mat 6:1-4, 19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29 Luke 12:16-21, 42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47 Acts 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Ro 6:6-22; 12:1-2 1Co 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2Co 8-9; 12:15 Php 4:10-19; 1Pe 1:18-19

XIV. COOPERATION Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine; and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament. Ex 17:12; 18:17; Jud 7:21; Ezr 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15 Ne 4; 8:1-5; Mat 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20 Mk 2:3; Luke

10:1; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1; 4:31-37; 13:2-3 Acts 15:1-35; 1Co 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2Co 8:1-9:15 Gal 1:6-10; Eph 4:1-16; Php 1:15-18

XV. THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SOCIAL ORDER Every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in his own life and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus. The Christian should oppose in the spirit of Christ every form of greed, selfishness, and vice. He should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth. Ex 20:3-17; Lev 6:2-5; De 10:12; 27:17 Psalm 101:5; Mic 6:8; Zech 8:16 Mat 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35 Mk 1:29-34, 2:3; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25 John 15:12; 17:15; Rom 12-14; 1Co 5:9-10; 6:1-7 1Co 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Gal 3:26-28; Eph 6:5-9 Col 3:12-17; 1Th 3:12; Phm 1:1-25; Jas 1:27; 2:8

XVI. PEACE AND WAR It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war. The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Isa 2:4; Mat 5:9, 38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38 Rom 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Heb 12:14; Jas 4:1-2

XVII. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has Left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power. Gen 1:27; 2:7; Mat 6:6-7, 24; 16:26; 22:21 John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Rom 6:1-2; 13:1-7 Gal 5:1, 13; Php 3:20; 1Ti 2:1-2; Jas 4:12 1Pe 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19

XVIII. THE FAMILY (Added in 1998) God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church, and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents. Ge 1:26-28; 2:18-25; 3:1-20; Ex 20:12; De 6:4-9; Jos 24:15 1Sa 1:26-28; Ps 78:1-8; 127:1-4; 128:1-6; 139:13-16 Pro 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24 Pro 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15 Pro 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31 Ec 4:9-12; 9:9; Mal 2:14-16 Mt 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9 Mr 10:6-12; Ro 1:18-32; 1Co 7:1-16 Eph 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Col 3:18-21; 1Ti 5:14; 2Ti 1:3-5 Tit 2:3-5; Heb 13:4; 1Pe 3:1-7