



ELDER AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

2022

... holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

~Titus 1:9 (NASB95)

ELDER AFFIRMATION OF FAITH FOR ELDERS, DEACONS, TEACHING FACULTY & MISSIONARIES

GRACEPOINT CHURCH OF EPHRATA ELDER AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

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Preface: The Origin of This Document

This Affirmation of Faith originated at GracePoint Church of Ephrata, Ephrata, Washington, as the Elders (Overseers)¹ saw the need to define what they believe and teach for the clarity and continuance of Biblical faithfulness in the church. Over the time period of 2006-2008 the Elders met to pray, study, discuss and formulate this doctrinal statement of what we believe and why we believe it.

We rejoice that God has led us as a church and a ministry to embrace a vision of himself and his work that will guard us and help us spread a passion for his supremacy in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.

Purpose of This Document

GracePoint Church of Ephrata Elders have affirmed this Elder Affirmation of Faith and are to be held accountable to maintain it through life and doctrine. As the Summation of this Affirmation states, the aim of this document is to preserve the unity of the church through sound doctrine. In the words of the Affirmation,

“We believe that the cause of unity in the church is best served, not by finding the lowest common denominator of doctrine, around which all can gather, but by elevating the value of truth, stating the doctrinal parameters of church or school or mission or ministry, seeking the unity that comes from the truth, and then demonstrating to the world how Christians can love each other across boundaries rather than by removing boundaries.” This document, then, and the team of Elders’ adherence to it aims to preserve the unity of the church through a commitment to Biblical truth.

Preamble

The teaching of GracePoint Church of Ephrata is based on the Scriptures. Our statement of faith reflects those doctrines that the Elders and congregation consider essential to understanding, teaching, and practicing God’s Word and is based on an interpretation of the Scripture that is:

1. **Normal** - understanding the words of Scripture in their common usage unless otherwise indicated by the context.
 2. **Literal** - understanding the meaning of Scripture in its ordinary sense unless the context requires a figurative interpretation.
 3. **Grammatical** - using the recognized rules of grammar to interpret the text.
 4. **Historical** - understanding the words of Scripture in the context of the times in which they were written.
 5. **Systematic** - categorizing and comparing the teaching of the Scriptures with the whole of Scripture in view.
- As Elders of GracePoint Church of Ephrata, we believe and affirm that this statement of faith reflects the truth of God’s Word.

¹ The designation, “Elder” refers to the office of spiritual leadership in the local church. The term “Overseer” (giving oversight) describes the activity of the Elder in the local church. Both terms are used interchangeably in this document. See Article 9 for further explanation.

Article 1. Revelation, Scripture, and Authority

We believe that God is revealed in creation, in the Holy Scriptures, and in Jesus Christ, the apex of revelation. The Scriptures, all sixty-six Old and New Testament books, are divinely authoritative in all they affirm. (Ps. 19:1-6; Heb. 1:1-2; John 17:17)

We believe that all the Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work in His first and second coming, and hence that no portion, even of the Old Testament, is properly read, or understood, until it leads to Him. We also believe that all the Scriptures were designed for our practical instruction (Mark 12:26, 36; 13:11; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Acts 1:16; 17:2-3; 18:28; 26:22-23; 28:23; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 2:13; 10:11; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).

We believe in the verbal, plenary² inspiration of Scripture.³ This means the Holy Spirit dynamically superintended the verbal expressions of the human authors of Scripture so that the very thoughts God intended were accurately penned in the wording of the original manuscripts. (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 1 Cor. 2:13)

We believe the Scripture is inerrant⁴ as to fact and infallibly⁵ trustworthy as to truth, and should be interpreted in context to ascertain each author's intended meaning. Our present Bible continues to bear the final authoritative instruction of God for the church and the world. (John 10:35b; Ps. 19:7; Matt. 5:17-18)

We believe that God's intentions, revealed in the Bible, are the supreme and final authority in testing all claims about what is true and what is right. In matters not addressed by the Bible, what is true and right is assessed by criteria consistent with the teachings of Scripture.

Adopted by Elders, 20 March 2006

Article 2. The Godhead ("Tri-unity")

We believe in one only and true God who is perfectly complete and the sole object of our worship. This one God has always existed in eternal relationship as three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who, possessing the same divine attributes, are coeternal and coequal identical in substance (essence) but executing distinct yet harmonious subsistence (necessary existence). (Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-4, 14, 10:30; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 5:7; Hebrews 1:1-3; Revelation 1:4-6)

Adopted by Elders, 20 August 2007

² *verbal, plenary* "This influence of the Holy Spirit over the writers of Scripture extended beyond the thoughts to the selection of the very words which the authors chose. Yet this influence of the Holy Spirit did not amount to a verbal dictation. The term often adopted is that of "concursum," or confluent authorship, i.e. That every word is both fully divine and fully human." –M. James Sawyer, *Theories of Inspiration*, www.bible.org.

³ *Inspiration* is...God's superintendence of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs." - Charles C. Ryrie

⁴ *Inerrancy* means that when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences." –Paul D. Feinberg, *The Meaning of Inerrancy*, [Inerrancy](#), Norman L. Geisler, ed. p.294.

⁵ *Infallible* signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters." – Norman L. Geisler, *Appendix, Inerrancy*, Norman L. Geisler, ed. p.500.

Article 3. God the Father

While it is not given to the finite mind fully to comprehend the infinite God, it may be observed that some knowledge of Him is available and to enter into it becomes a privilege and duty.

We believe that the First Person of the Trinity, God the Father, is revealed through nature as its Designer and Creator. We believe that God the Father is the holy and loving Creator of all things. Unlimited in time, space, knowledge (past, present, and future), and power, the Father has providentially⁶ planned all that comes to pass. Although distinct from His creation, He is immanently⁷ at work. (Ps. 139: 1-16; 1 Cor. 8:6; John 5:17)

We believe that the First Person is revealed also through the Scriptures, which directly testify of Him, and through the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to reveal Him (John 1:18) and to introduce men to Him (Matt. 11:27). We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all that come to Him through Jesus Christ. (John 3.16-17; 4.24; 17.5).

God is to be recognized both as Creator and Father. He has been presented by the Sacred Text as Father in three respects.

#1. We believe that the First Person is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The thought of inferiority or succession is not to be included in a divine Father and Son relationship. It is more nearly that of manifestation as evidenced in the unique, eternal affiliation between the First and Second Persons of the Godhead. Whenever Christ addressed the First Person as *God*, it is clearly indicated by so much that He spoke out from His humanity (cf. Matt. 27:46; Heb. 10:7).

#2. We believe that the First Person is the Father of all true believers.

All who receive Christ (cf. John 6:53), or believe on His name (cf. John 1:12–13), become legitimate offspring of God; they become conformed eventually to the image of God's Son—Christ, which truth requires that they have become actual sons of God, or else Christ would not be able to call them *brethren* (cf. Rom. 8:29), nor could they be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ except they be constituted *actual* sons of God (Rom. 8:17). To the one thus recreated, the measureless value of his estate does not appear in the present world. It will be the major distinction characterizing throughout eternity those who are sons of God. As His present supreme purpose, God is now “bringing many sons unto glory” (Heb. 2:10).

⁶ Providence; a definition: “*God’s providence is His constant care for and His absolute rule over all His creation for His own glory and the good of His people.*” — Jerry Bridges

⁷ A distinction should be recognized between the immensity of God and the omnipresence of God. Immensity emphasizes the transcendence of God and stresses that He is not bound by space, whereas omnipresence emphasizes His immanence, filling all space, including earth. The doctrine of omnipresence is a comfort to the believer who recognizes that no calamity can befall him that God is not present with Him; it is also a warning to the disobedient person that he cannot escape the presence of God.

#3. We believe that the First Person is the Father of Israel.

Several times God addresses the nation of Israel as a father (cf. Ex. 4:22; Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16; 64:8). The latter designation when applied to Israel does not imply that individual Israelites were regenerated sons of God. The term appears to connote national solicitude or fatherhood by reason of parental care for all, much as Yahweh (YHWH)⁸ declared Himself to be a husband unto Israel (cf. Jer. 31:32).

Adopted by Elders, 20 August 2007

⁸ TETRAGRAMMATON* Term referring to the four consonants of one of the primary Hebrew names, for God (from Greek *tetra*, "four," and *gramma*, "a letter of the alphabet"). These letters are the Hebrew equivalents of English Y (or J), H, W, and H. The most widely accepted meaning of the name is "the one who is, that is, the absolute and unchangeable one." This is the name the Lord revealed to Moses (Ex 3:15; cf. vv 13–14; Jn 8:56–58). According to the Ten Commandments, the Jews were not to take this name in vain (Ex 20:2, 7). The Jews, therefore, regarded the name as so holy that they would not pronounce it but said instead *Adonai*, "Lord." Originally the text was written only with consonants, but when the scholars called Masoretes added the vowel points, they inserted the vowels for Adonai as a reminder not to read the sacred name. Non-Hebraists combined the vowels of Adonai with the consonants of JHWH, producing a new form, "Jehovah," which does not exist in the Hebrew language. The correct pronunciation of the name must have been Yahweh, but most translations render it LORD, using capital letters to distinguish it from other uses of the English word "Lord."

Article 4. God the Son

We believe that, as provided and purposed by God and as pre-announced in the prophecies of the Scriptures, the eternal Son of God came into this world that He might manifest God to men, fulfill prophecy and become the Redeemer of a lost world. To this end He was born of the virgin and received a human body, a sinless human nature, and He performed miracles that validated and authenticated His claims to His Person and teachings. (Luke 1:30-35; John 1:18; 3:16; Heb. 4:15).

We believe that on the human side, He became and remained a perfect man but sinless throughout his life; yet He retained His absolute deity being at the same time very God and very man (Luke 2:40; John 1:1-2; Phil. 2:5-8), and that His earth-life sometimes functioned within the sphere of that which was human and sometimes within the sphere of that which was divine.

We believe that in fulfillment of prophecy, He came first to Israel as her Messiah-King, and that being rejected of that nation, He according to the eternal counsels of God, gave His life as a ransom for all (John 1:11; Acts 2:22-24; 1 Tim. 2:6).

We believe that in infinite love for the lost, He voluntarily accepted His Father's will and became the divinely provided sacrificial Lamb and took away the sin of the world, bearing the holy judgments against sin which the righteousness of God must impose. His death was therefore substitutionary in the most absolute sense—the just for the unjust—and by His death, He became the Savior of the lost (John 1:29; Rom. 3:25-26; 2 Cor. 5:14; Heb. 10:5-14; 12 Pet. 3:18).

We believe that according to the Scriptures, He arose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He had lived and died, and that His resurrection body is the pattern of that body which ultimately will be given to all believers (John 20:20; Phil. 3:20-21).

We believe that on departing from the earth, He was accepted by His Father and that His acceptance is a final assurance to us that His redeeming work was perfectly accomplished (Heb. 1:3).

We believe that He became Head over all things to the church which is His body, and in this ministry He ceases not to intercede⁹ and advocate¹⁰ for the saved (Eph. 1:22-23; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1).

Adopted by Elders, 20 August 2007

⁹ *Christ's intercession assures the security of our salvation.* The believer could lose his salvation only if Christ would be ineffective in His role as mediator (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). The intercession of Christ involves (1) His presence before the Father; (2) His spoken word (Luke 22:32; John 17:6-26); and (3) His continual intercession (note the present tense in the verbs).

¹⁰ *Christ's advocacy restores us to fellowship when that fellowship is broken through sin.* Christ is termed the believers' "Advocate" (Gk. *parakletos*), meaning "defense attorney" (1 John 2:1). "In rabbinical literature the word could indicate one who offers legal aid or one who intercedes on behalf of someone else...the word undoubtedly signified an 'advocate' or 'counsel for the defense' in a legal context."

Article 5. God the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, though omnipresent from all eternity, took up His abode in the world in a special sense on the day of Pentecost according to the divine promise, dwells in every believer and, by His baptism, unites all to Christ in one body and that He, as the indwelling One, is the source of all power and all acceptable worship and service. We believe that He never takes His departure from the church, nor from the feeblest of the saints, but is ever present to testify of Christ; seeking to occupy believers with Him and not with themselves nor with their experiences.

We believe that in this age, based on that which the Holy Spirit is to the believer, the Holy Spirit has certain well-defined ministries, and that it is the duty of every Christian to understand what the Holy Spirit is to him, and does to him, and to be rightly adjusted to the Holy Spirit in his own life and experience. We believe that the Holy Spirit, as a special provision of God, is an **anointing** (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20-27), a **seal** (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), and an **earnest** (2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 1:14). His ministries to the Christian are the restraining of evil in the world to the measure of the divine will; the convicting of the world respecting sin, righteousness and judgment; the regenerating¹¹ of all believers; the indwelling¹² of all who are saved whereby they are sealed¹³ unto the day of redemption and anointed of God for service; the baptizing¹⁴ into the one body of Christ of all who are saved; and the continued filling¹⁵ for power, witnessing, teaching, leading, and service of those among the saved who are yielded to Him and who are subject to His will (John 3:6; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:3-14; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:30; 5:18; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 John 2:20-27).

We believe that some gifts¹⁶ of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues and healings were given to be used as signs to authenticate God's message, and messenger of the first century church when the canon of Scripture was being formed. We believe that speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of the baptism nor of the filling of the Spirit, and that the complete deliverance of the body from sickness or death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection (Acts 4:8, 31; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 13:8; 2 Cor. 12:12). We believe that in accordance with the sovereign will of God, miraculous healing may be manifest at God's discretion. We believe that other non-sign gifts were given to the church and that through the exercise of these gifts in the church, believers who learn and apply the truth of Scripture to their lives will mature spiritually. We further believe that ecstatic experiences, though they may be valid manifestations of the grace of God, do not appreciably contribute to one's spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Pet. 2:2).

Adopted by Elders, 20 August 2007

¹¹ Regeneration proves to be the imparting of the divine nature (cf. Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2:2). All believers, then, have divine sonship (Gal. 3:26, R.V.).

¹² A key verse that indicates the unique ministry of the Holy Spirit in this age is John 14:16 where Jesus promised the Spirit would indwell believers and that the indwelling would be permanent. This permanent indwelling would not be for a select few but for all believers.

¹³ The Holy Spirit is given to the person who believes in Christ as a seal, identifying the believer as belonging to God.

¹⁴ The baptizing work of the Holy Spirit may be defined as that work whereby the Spirit places the believer into union with Christ and into union with other believers in the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

¹⁵ The basis for the filling of the Spirit is Ephesians 5:18, "be filled with the Spirit." The meaning of "filled" (Gk. *plerousthe*) is "control." "The indwelling Spirit of God is the One who should continually control and dominate the life of the believer."

¹⁶ A concise definition of spiritual gifts is simply a "grace gift." A more complete definition is "a divine endowment of a special ability for service upon a member of the body of Christ."

Article 6. Angels, Fallen and Unfallen

We believe that God created an innumerable company of sinless, spiritual beings, known as angels. We believe that angels are not the spirits of the departed nor are they glorified human beings. We believe that although angels are “spirits,” they nevertheless oftentimes have appeared to men in visible, and even human form. We believe that angels are beings of great might and power, but that it is always appropriated from God for His holy purposes. We believe that one angel, “Lucifer, son of the morning”—the highest in rank—sinned through pride, thereby becoming Satan; that a great company of the angels followed him in his moral fall, some of whom became demons and are active as his agents and associates in the prosecution of his unholy purposes, while others who fell are “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Isa. 14:12-17; Col. 1:6; Heb. 12:22,23; Neh. 9:6; Heb. 1:14; Gen. 19; Judges 2:1; Mt. 1:20; Luke 1:26; 2 Pet. 2:11; 2 Thess. 1:7; Ezek. 28:11-19; 1 Tim. 3:6; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).

We believe that Satan was the first to sin, and that, under the permission of God, he, through subtlety, led our first parents into transgression, thereby accomplishing their moral fall and subjecting them and their posterity to his own power; that he is the enemy of God and the people of God, opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped; and that he who in the beginning said, “I will be like the most High,” in his warfare appears as an angel of light, even counterfeiting the works of God by fostering religious movements and systems of doctrine, which systems in every case are characterized by a denial of the efficacy of the blood of Christ and of salvation by grace alone (Gen. 3:1-19; Rom. 5:12-14; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 11:13-15; Eph. 6:10-12; 2 Thess. 2:4; 1 Tim. 4:1-3).

We believe that Satan’s judgment was sealed at the cross, thereby suffering defeat, although his imminent penalty has not yet been carried out and that he, a usurper, now rules as the “god of this world”; that, at the second coming of Christ, Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss for a thousand years, and after the thousand years he will be loosed for a little season and then “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,” where he “shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (John 12:31; Col. 1:15-19; 2:15; Rev. 20:1-3, 10).

We believe that a great company of angels kept their holy estate and are before the throne of God, from whence they are sent forth as ministering spirits to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Luke 15:10; Eph. 1:21; Heb. 1:14; Rev. 7:12).

We believe that man was made lower than the angels; and that, in His incarnation, Christ took for a little time this lower place that He might lift the believer to His own sphere above the angels (Heb. 2:6-10).

Adopted by Elders, 20 August 2007

Article 7. Man, Created and Fallen

We believe that man¹⁷ was originally created on the sixth day of creation, by God in the image and after the likeness of God, for the purpose of glorifying and worshipping his Creator.

We believe that material man is a direct creation from existing substances and that immaterial man was breathed into him as the very breath of God and thus became a living soul.

We believe that man left his first estate through willful rebellion against God's will and that he fell through sin, and, as a consequence of his sin, lost his spiritual life, becoming dead in trespasses and sins, and that he became subject to the power of the devil. This fall of man was accomplished through the design and influence of Satan. The sin which caused the fall of man was not only suggested by Satan, but was the identical form of it which Satan had himself followed and by which he fell from that high estate into which he was placed by creation, namely, acting independently of God through disobedience and thus repudiating all divine right and authority over himself (cf. Gen. 3:5; Isa. 14:12-14).

We also believe that this spiritual death, or total depravity of human nature, has been transmitted¹⁸ to the entire human race of man, the Man Christ Jesus alone being excepted; and hence that every child of Adam is born into the world with a nature which not only possesses no divine life, but is essentially and unchangeably separated from God apart from divine grace (Gen. 1:26; 2:17; 6:5; Ps. 14:1-3; 51:5; Jer. 17:9; John 3:6; 5:40; 6:35; Rom. 3:10-19; 8:6-7; Eph. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 5:6; 1 John 3:8).

Adopted by Elders, 20 August 2007

¹⁷ "man" here and following is gender inclusive referring to humanity

¹⁸ We believe that the Fall and its penalty are visited upon the whole human family. That penalty to which spiritual death is due is transmitted *mediately* from parent to child, while the penalty of physical death is imputed *immediately* from Adam to each individual member of his race, the divine reckoning being that each member of the race was seminally in Adam when the first man sinned and therefore each member shared in that sin. This reckoning of Adam's sin to his race is a *real* imputation, rather than a *judicial* imputation. This divine principle of reckoning is clearly indicated in Hebrews 7:9-10, where Levi, who as a priest was supported by the tithes of the people, did, nevertheless, pay tithes when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek since he was as a great grandson in the loins of father Abraham.

Article 8. Salvation

Salvation only through Christ

We believe that, owing to universal death through sin, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless born again; and that no degree of reformation however great, no attainments in morality however high, no culture however attractive, no baptism or other ordinance however administered, can help the sinner to take even one step toward heaven; but a new nature imparted from above, a new life implanted by the Holy Spirit through the Word, is absolutely essential to salvation, and only those thus saved are sons of God. We believe, also, that our redemption has been accomplished solely by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made to be sin and was made a curse for us, dying in our room and stead; and that no repentance, no feeling, no faith, no good resolutions, no sincere efforts, no submission to the rules and regulations of any church, nor all the churches that have existed since the days of the Apostles can add in the very least degree to the value of the blood, or to the merit of the finished work wrought for us by Him who united in His person true and proper deity with perfect and sinless humanity (Lev. 17:11; Isa. 64:6; Matt. 26:28; John 3:7–18; Rom. 5:6–9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 6:15; Eph. 1:7; Phil. 3:4–9; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:18–19, 23).

We believe that the new birth of the believer comes only through faith in Christ and that repentance is a vital part of believing, and is in no way, in itself, a separate and independent condition of salvation; nor are any other acts, such as confession, baptism, prayer, or faithful service, to be added to believing as a condition of salvation (John 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:29; Acts 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 1:16–17; 3:22, 26; 4:5; 10:4; Gal. 3:22).

The Extent of Salvation

We believe that when an unregenerate person exercises that faith in Christ which is illustrated and described as such in the New Testament, he passes immediately out of spiritual death into spiritual life, and from the old creation into the new; being justified from all things, accepted before the Father according as Christ His Son is accepted, loved as Christ is loved, having his place and portion as linked to Him and one with Him forever. Though the saved one may have occasion to grow in the realization of his blessings and to know a fuller measure of divine power through the yielding of his life more fully to God, he is, as soon as he is saved, in possession of every spiritual blessing and absolutely complete in Christ, and is therefore in no way required by God to seek a so-called “second blessing,” or a “second work of grace” (John 5:24; 17:23; Acts 13:39; Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 3:21–23; Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10; 1 John 4:17; 5:11–12).

Sanctification

We believe that sanctification, which is a setting-apart unto God, is threefold: It is already complete for every saved person because his position toward God is the same as Christ’s position. Since the believer is in Christ, he is set apart unto God in the measure in which Christ is set apart unto God. We believe, however, that he retains his sin nature, which cannot be eradicated in this life. Therefore, while the standing of the Christian in Christ is perfect, his present state is no more perfect than his experience in daily life. There is, therefore, a progressive sanctification wherein the Christian is to “grow in grace,” and to “be changed” by the unhindered power of the Spirit. We believe also that the child of God will yet be fully sanctified in his state as he is now sanctified in his standing in Christ when he shall see his Lord and shall be “like Him” (John 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Eph. 4:24; 5:25–27; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 10:10, 14; 12:10).

Eternal Security

We believe that, because of the eternal purpose of God toward the objects of His love, because of His freedom to exercise grace toward the meritless on the ground of the propitiatory blood of Christ, because of the very nature of the divine gift of eternal life, because of the present and unending intercession and advocacy of Christ in heaven, because of the immutability of the unchangeable covenants of God, because of the regenerating, abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all who are saved, we and all true believers everywhere, once saved are kept saved forever. We believe, however, that God is a holy and righteous Father and that, since He cannot overlook the sin of His children, He will, when they persistently sin, chasten them and correct them in infinite love; but having undertaken to save them and keep them forever, apart from all human merit, He, who cannot fail, will in the end present every one of them faultless before the presence of His glory and conformed to the image of His Son (John 5:24; 10:28; 13:1; 14:16-17; 17:11; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 6:19; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2; 5:13; Jude 24).

Assurance

We believe it is the privilege, not only of some, but of all who are born again by the Spirit through faith in Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, to be assured of their salvation from the very day they take Him to be their Savior and that this assurance is not founded upon any fancied discovery of their own worthiness or fitness, but wholly upon the testimony of God in His written Word, exciting within His children filial love, gratitude, and obedience (Luke 10:20; 22:32; 2 Cor. 5:1, 6-8; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 10:22; 1 John 5:13).

Adopted by Elders, 20 August 2007

Article 9. The Church

The Church, Universal and Local

We believe in the one universal Church, whose Foundation and Founder is the Lord Jesus Christ, composed of all those united, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, to the risen and ascended Son of God as members of the church which is the body and bride of Christ. We believe that the functional beginning of the Church occurred on the Day of Pentecost, and that the Church is completely distinct from Israel, and will be consummated at the rapture of the Church wherein the spiritual building will be complete. The Church is chosen in Christ and united to Him through faith by the Spirit in one Body, with Christ Himself as the all- supplying, all- sustaining, all-supreme, and all-authoritative Head. (Matt. 16:18-20; Acts 2; 1 Cor. 3:11, 12:13; Acts 11:15-17, 20:28; 1 Thes. 4:13-18; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-7; Rom. 11:25)

We believe it is God's will that the universal Church find expression in local churches in which believers assemble together for the purpose to worship God, instruction in His Word, participation in fellowship, and actively engage in expressions of faith. Believers gather to hear the Word of God proclaimed, to engage in corporate worship, to practice the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, to build each other's faith through the manifold ministries of love, to hold each other accountable in the obedience of faith through Biblical discipline, and to engage in local and world evangelization. The Church is a body in which each member should find a suitable ministry for His grace-gifts; it is the household of God in which the Spirit dwells; it is the pillar and bulwark of God's truth in a truth-denying world. (Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:19-25).

We believe that the ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God in the everlasting and ever-increasing gladness of worship. (1 Cor. 10:31; Rev. 5:9-12)

We believe that by the same Spirit all believers in this age are baptized into, and thus become, one body that is Christ's, whether Jews or Gentiles, and having become members one of another, are under solemn duty to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all sectarian differences, and fervently loving one another with a pure heart (Matt. 16:16-18; Acts 2:42-47; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:20-23; 4:3-10; Col. 3:14-15).

We believe that whether Christ-followers are *gathered* or *scattered* we are 'the Church' (1 Pet. 2:9-10)

The Church, Christ's Ordinances

We believe that believer baptism is an ordinance of the Lord by which those who have come to faith publicly express their union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, by being immersed in water in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is a one-time outward physical expression of an internal spiritual reality of belonging to Christ, His message and His people.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord in which gathered believers eat bread, signifying Christ's body given for His people, and drink the cup of the Lord, signifying the New Covenant in Christ's blood. We do this often in remembrance of the Lord, and thus proclaim His death until He comes.

We believe that believer baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only ordinances of the church and that they are a scriptural means of testimony for the church in this age (Matt. 28:19; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 10:47-48; 16:32-33; 18:7-8; 1 Cor. 11:26).

The Church, Christ's Organization

We believe that the church has four offices; Jesus Christ the Head (Col. 1:18), the Priesthood of Believers (Rev. 1:6), Elders (Overseers) (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1), and Deacons (1Tim. 3).

We believe that each local church should recognize and affirm the divine calling of spiritually qualified men to give leadership to the church through the role of Elders (Overseers) in the ministry of the Word and prayer.

The Church, the Christian's Walk

We believe that we are called with a holy calling, to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and so to live in the power of the indwelling Spirit that we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. But the flesh with its fallen, Adamic nature, which in this life is never eradicated, being with us to the end of our earthly pilgrimage, needs to be kept by the Spirit constantly in subjection to Christ, or it will surely manifest its presence in our lives to the dishonor of our Lord (Rom. 6:11-13; 8:2, 4, 12-13; Gal. 5:16-23; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 2:1-10; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; 1 John 1:4-7; 3:5-9).

The Church, Christ's Command and Commission

We believe the church is commanded to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind and our neighbors as ourselves. (Matt. 22:37-40)

We believe that the commission given by the Lord Jesus to make disciples of all nations is binding on His Church to the end of the age. This task is to proclaim the Gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation, baptizing them, teaching them to observe the words and ways of the Lord, and gathering them into churches able to fulfill their Christian calling among their own people. The ultimate aim of world missions is that God would create, by His Word, worshippers who glorify His name through glad-hearted faith and obedience. Missions exist because universal, worldwide worship does not exist. When the time of ingathering is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and the goal of missions. (Matt. 28:18-20; Rev. 5:9; Acts 14:23; Rom. 1:5; John 4:23; Rom. 15:8-11)

We believe that it is the explicit message of our Lord Jesus Christ to those whom He has saved that they are sent forth by Him into the world even as He was sent forth of His Father into the world. We believe that, after they are saved, they are divinely reckoned to be related to this world as strangers and pilgrims, ambassadors and witnesses, to make Christ known to the whole world (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15; John 17:18; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:11).

The Church, the Christian's Service

We believe that divine, enabling grace-gifts for service are bestowed by the Spirit upon all who are saved. While there is a diversity of gifts, each believer is energized by the same Spirit, and each is called to their own divinely appointed service as the Spirit may will. In the early church there were certain gifted people—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—who were appointed by God for the perfecting of the saints unto their work of the ministry. We believe also that today some people are engifted by the Spirit to be evangelists, pastors and teachers, and that it is to the fulfilling of His will and to His eternal glory that these shall be sustained and encouraged in their service for God (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4–11; Eph. 4:11).

We believe that, wholly apart from salvation benefits which are bestowed equally upon all who believe, rewards are promised according to the faithfulness of each believer in their service to God, and that these rewards will be bestowed at the judgment seat of Christ after He comes to receive His own to Himself (1 Cor. 3:9–15; 9:18–27; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Adopted by Elders, 25 February 2008

Article 10. Consummation of the Age and Future Things

God's Administration of History

We believe that God has administered His purposes on earth in varying ways known as dispensations. Though time is not a primary consideration, each divine administration, or dispensation, relates to a definite period of human history (Eph. 1:9-10). The vast majority of the Bible deals with three such dispensations: the dispensation of Israel from the call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) to Jesus Christ (Gal.4:4), the present dispensation of the Church from Pentecost (Acts 2) to the Rapture (1Thes. 4:13-17) and the future dispensation of Jesus Christ's 1000-year kingdom reign theologically designated as the Millennium (Rev. 20:6).

We believe that dispensations are not different ways of forgiveness and eternal life, but different administrations of God as He superintends the way mankind lives on earth (Eph. 3:9). Eternal salvation was, is, and always will be a free gift by grace alone through faith alone, based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone (Eph. 2:8-9).

We believe that it has always been true that "without faith it is impossible to please" God (Heb. 11:6), and that the principle of faith was prevalent in the lives of all the Old Testament saints. However, we believe that it was historically impossible that they should have had as the conscious object of their faith the incarnate, crucified Son, the Lamb of God (John 1:29), and that it is evident that they did not comprehend as we do that the sacrifices depicted the person and work of Christ. We believe also that they did not understand the redemptive significance of the prophecies or types concerning the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet. 1:10-12); therefore, we believe that their faith toward God was manifested in other ways as is shown by the long record in Hebrews 11:1-40. We believe further that their faith thus manifested was counted unto them for righteousness (cf. Rom. 4:3 with Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:5-8; Heb. 11:7).

Dispensationalism is a system of a literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic (2 Tim. 2:15). We believe that the promises to Israel are not fulfilled in the Church, but will be literally realized by believing Israel in the future (Rom. 11:25-27).

The Blessed Hope

We believe that, according to the Word of God, the next great event in the fulfillment of prophecy will be the coming of the Lord in the air to receive to Himself into heaven both His own who are alive and remain unto His coming, and also all who have fallen asleep in Jesus, and that this event is the blessed hope set before us in Scripture, and for this we should be constantly looking (John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14).

The Tribulation

We believe that the translation of the church will be followed by the fulfillment of Israel's seventieth week (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 6:1-19:21) during which the church, the body of Christ, will be in heaven. The whole period of Israel's seventieth week will be a time of judgment on the whole earth, at the end of which the times of the Gentiles will be brought to a close. The latter half of this period will be the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7), which our Lord called the great tribulation (Matt. 24:15-21). We believe that universal righteousness will not be realized prior to the second coming of Christ, but that the world is day by day ripening for judgment and that the age will end with a fearful apostasy.

The Second Coming of Christ

We believe that the period of great tribulation in the earth will be climaxed by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth as He went, in person on the clouds of heaven, and with power and great glory to introduce the millennial age, to bind Satan and place him in the abyss, to lift the curse which now rests upon the whole creation, to restore Israel to her own land and to give her the realization of God's covenant promises, and to bring the whole world to the knowledge of God (Deut. 30:1-10; Isa. 11:9; Ezek. 37:21-28; Matt. 24:15-25:46; Acts 15:16-17; Rom. 8:19-23; 11:25-27; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Rev. 20:1-3).

The Eternal State

We believe that at death the spirits and souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation pass immediately into His presence and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the glorified body when Christ comes for His own, whereupon soul and body reunited shall be associated with Him forever in glory; but the spirits and souls of the unbelieving remain after death conscious of condemnation and in misery until the final judgment of the great white throne at the close of the millennium, when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated, but to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power (Luke 16:19-26; 23:42; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Rev. 20:11-15).

The Eternal Abode

We believe that God will prepare the new heaven and new earth and the New Jerusalem in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21).

Adopted by Elders, 25 February 2008

Summation: The Spirit of this Affirmation and the Unity of the Church

We do not believe that all things in this affirmation of faith are of equal weight, some being more essential, some less. We do not believe that every part of this affirmation must be believed in order for one to be saved.

Our aim is not to discover how little can be believed, but rather to embrace and teach “the whole counsel of God.” (Acts 20:27). Our aim is to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fullness of its truth, (Titus 1:1; 1 Tim. 4:1; 6:3-5) and the glory of its Author. We believe Biblical doctrine stabilizes saints in the winds of confusion (Eph. 4:13-14) and strengthens the church in her mission to meet the great systems of false religion and secularism. We believe that the supreme virtue of love is nourished by the strong meat of God-centered doctrine. (1 Tim. 1:5). And we believe that a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ is sustained in an atmosphere of deep and joyful knowledge of God and His wonderful works. (Psa. 9:10).

We believe that the cause of unity in the church (Eph. 4:4-6) is best served, not by finding the lowest common denominator of doctrine, around which all can gather, but by elevating the value of truth, stating the doctrinal parameters of church or school or mission or ministry, seeking the unity that comes from the truth, and then demonstrating to the world how Christians can love each other (John 13:34-35) across boundaries rather than by removing boundaries. In this way, the importance of truth is served by the existence of doctrinal borders, and unity is served by the way we love others across those borders.

We do not claim infallibility for this affirmation and are open to refinement and correction from Scripture. (1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Pet. 3:18). Yet we do hold firmly to these truths as we see them and call on others to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11). As conversation and debate take place, it may be that we will learn from each other, and the boundaries will be adjusted, even possibly folding formerly disagreeing groups into closer fellowship.

* * *

NOTE: The many Biblical descriptions of God’s work in salvation are diverse. Therefore, similar or identical terms may be used differently in different contexts. Our aim in this affirmation of faith is not to limit how Biblical writers can use the terms we use here, or to say that the terms of this affirmation may not be used differently by the Biblical writers in various contexts, but rather our aim is to claim that the reality described here is in fact Biblical reality.

Statement of Agreement

I am signing this *Elder Affirmation of Faith of GracePoint Church of Ephrata*, indicating my agreement and with any exceptions noted and explained (knowing that these exceptions may limit my teaching opportunities and/or subjects).

(Elder, Deacon, Faculty, Missionary)*

(Date)

*Sign both copies, retaining one for your records and returning the other to the church office.

Exceptions (with explanations):