

## **Core Beliefs**

Rupertus Meldenius, seventeenth-century Lutheran theologian, wrote, “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.” There will always be peripheral doctrines upon which Biblically rooted and committed Christ followers disagree, and we welcome dialogue on many issues related to Christian doctrine. However, we recognize the importance of having a framework around which we grow in maturity and relate to one another as a community of believers, and we hold the following essentials to be at the core of who we are as a community of believers.

### **1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God.**

The Bible, comprised of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is inspired by God and is the only authoritative written revelation from God to humanity. The Bible is infallible and the trustworthy and reliable rule of faith and conduct (2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:21).

### **2. There is one true God.**

In the Bible, God is called by many different names because there are different dimensions of His personality, but there is still only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). God is not limited by time or space and eternally self-existent (John 8:54-59). God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. He is the creator of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1 and 2). While God is one, He has revealed Himself in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

### **3. Jesus Christ is the Son of God.**

Jesus Christ is the second person of the trinity, the eternal Son of God. The Scripture declares His virgin birth (Matthew 1:18-23), His sinless life (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22; John 3:4-5), His miracles (Acts 2:22, 10:37-38), His substitutionary death on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Corinthians 15:4), His bodily resurrection from the dead (Matthew 28:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:4), and His exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 1:9, 11; Philippians 2:9-11).

### **4. Sin separated humanity from God.**

Man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). However, by a voluntary act of the will, Adam and Eve disobeyed God (Genesis 3:6). That first sin had several repercussions. Man was kicked out of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23), a curse was pronounced (Genesis 3:14-19), the process of physical death began (Genesis 2:17), and man died spiritually (Romans 5:12-19). Sin separated humanity from God (Ephesians 2:11-18) and left humanity in a fallen, or sinful, condition (Romans 3:23).

### **5. Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation.**

The only means of salvation is Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins (1 Peter 2:24). When we trade our sin for his righteousness, it triggers a spiritual chain reaction. Jesus pardons us from our sins and adopts us into God’s family. The Holy Spirit is given to us to guide, comfort, convict, and help us grow to look more like Jesus. Jesus offers people a pardon from their sins (Hebrews 9:26) and adopts us into God’s family (John 1:12).

When we place our faith in Christ, it triggers a spiritual chain reaction. We become the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 3:5), we become citizens of Heaven (Philippians 3:20-21), and we are given eternal life (John 3:16). We are born again (John 3:3). God takes ownership of us (1 Corinthians 6:20) and we receive an eternal inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

The evidence of salvation is two-fold. The internal evidence is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16). The external evidence is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). We become a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and we are transformed into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

#### **6. Baptism and communion are ordinances of the Church and important to the life of every believer.**

**Baptism in Water:** The Scripture teaches that all who repent and believe in Christ are to be baptized by being immersed in water (Matthew 28:19). Baptism is a public profession of faith in Christ. It is symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and it is a declaration to the world that we have died to sin and have been raised with Christ to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

**Communion:** The Lord's table consists of two elements: the bread and cup. Those elements are symbolic of the body and blood of Christ. Communion is a memorial of Christ's sufferings on the cross and a celebration of our salvation. It is an opportunity for a believer to examine oneself and repent in order to experience the forgiveness granted to us in the cross.

#### **7. The Church is the body of Christ.**

The Church is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) and has a four-fold purpose: to glorify God (Colossians 3:16-17, Ephesians 1:12, and Ephesians 5:16-19), make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20, 2 Timothy 2:2), make Jesus known to a lost world (Acts 1:8), and to meet human need (Luke 6:35-36, Acts 11:29, 1 John 3:17, James 1:27).

#### **8. The Holy Spirit is an integral part of the Christian life.**

The Holy Spirit is given to every follower of Christ to guide, comfort, convict, and adopt us into the family of God. The nine fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) are by-products of a Spirit-filled life and evidence of spiritual maturity. The nine gifts of the Spirit are different manifestations of the Spirit to build up the body (1 Corinthians 12:1-11). We are instructed to diligently seek the gifts (1 Corinthians 14:26-33) in the context of love (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).

#### **9. There will be a final judgment in which those found in Christ will receive eternal life.**

There will be a final judgment in which the dead will be resurrected and judged according to their works (Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 2: 1-9). He will judge His creation according to the character that has been revealed to us through His word-- with justice and mercy. Those who have found salvation through Jesus Christ will enjoy His presence forever; those who have not will be consigned to eternal punishment. Everyone whose name is not found written in the Book of Life will be separate from the presence of God for eternity, along with the devil and his angels (Revelation 20:11-15). Those whose names are written in the Book of Life will be resurrected and stand at the judgment seat of Christ to be rewarded for their good deeds (1 Corinthians 4:5).