

THE AUTUMN RIDGE COMMUNITY CHURCH STATEMENT OF FAITH

ADOPTED 2019

PREAMBLE

We believe that the Bible speaks clearly on the essential concepts of the Christian faith and that it is our responsibility to proclaim the doctrinal truths entrusted to us. That is why we have undertaken to define as clearly as possible what we view to be the foundational principles of the Scriptures. The content of this Statement flows directly from the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. A sample list of biblical passages that support these doctrinal statements is included at the conclusion of each respective article. The Abstract of Principles of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary serves as the historical example upon which this statement is modeled.

We do not believe that every doctrine stated below is essential for the salvation of individual people. Furthermore, we acknowledge that genuine believers and true churches alike express the truths of Scripture in language which is different from that which is employed below.

These realities notwithstanding, the following biblical and theological truths will be honored by those who teach and preach for Autumn Ridge Community Church: whether during corporate worship gatherings, in the context of Missional Communities/small groups, or in any other setting of life and training. Acceptance of and adherence to this Statement is necessary for membership with Autumn Ridge Community Church. The only exception to this standard comes with respect to those italicized portions listed as “distinctives.” While members may hold a variety of views in relation to these matters, they must also agree not to teach or minister in ways which are contradictory to these church doctrines.

Members or potential members who find themselves in disagreement with the content or wording of any article contained below should make such dissension known to the elders of the church. The elders must discern whether or not the disagreement(s) preclude(s) these people from being united with Autumn Ridge Community Church in formal membership.

I. THE SCRIPTURES

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by the inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, inerrant and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.

Psalm 19:7-10; Psalm 119:89, 140; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 5:17-18; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12.

II. GOD

There is only one God who is the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of Himself all perfections, and being infinite in them all. To Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence and obedience.

Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 19:1-3; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 1:17.

III. THE TRINITY

God exists as a unity of three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being.

Matthew 3:13-17, 28:19; John 1:1, 8:58-59, 20:27-29; Acts 5:3-4.

IV. PROVIDENCE

From eternity past, God decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any way to be the author or approver of sin, nor to destroy the will or responsibility of intelligent creatures.

Exodus 4:11; Psalm 103:19; Isaiah 45:7; Lamentations 3:37-38; Matthew 10:29; Acts 17:24-29; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:4; James 1:13-15.

V. ELECTION

Election is God's eternal choice of some people to receive everlasting life on the basis of His mercy in Christ – in consequence of which choice these people are called, justified and glorified.

Matthew 22:24, 22:31, 25:34, John 6:35-40; Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:3-23.

***DISTINCTIVE:** Election is not on the basis of any merit that God foresees in those whom He chooses. God elects people solely on the basis of His merciful will. (Romans 9:6-18; Ephesians 2:4-10).*

VI. THE CREATION AND FALL OF MANKIND

God originally created Adam and Eve in His own image, and free from sin. Through the temptation of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, they broke the command of God and fell from their original state of holiness and righteousness. As a result, all people are born with a nature that is corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law. They are born under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of doing so, become actual transgressors of His law.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:7, 2:18-22; 3:1-24; Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:9-23; 6:23.

VII. THE MEDIATOR

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the divinely-appointed mediator between God and people. Having taken upon Himself the fullness of the human nature, yet without sin, He perfectly fulfilled the law of God. Then He suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. He was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended to His Father, at whose right hand He lives interceding for His people. He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church, and Sovereign of the Universe.

Isaiah 7:14; 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 5:17-20; 27:32-28:10; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-18; Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:18; 4:15.

***DISTINCTIVE:** The redeeming work of Jesus Christ has benefits for all people, and it was effectual for the eternal salvation of those sinners whom God the Father chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. (Matthew 24:22; John 6:35-40; 1 Timothy 4:10; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 5:9-10).*

VIII. REGENERATION

Regeneration is a change of heart, accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who enlivens those who are dead in the trespasses of sin: enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the Word of God and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness. Regeneration is a work of God's free and special grace alone.

Ezekiel 37:14; John 3:3-8; Titus 3:3-6; James 1:14-18; 1 Peter 1:3-5.

IX. REPENTANCE

Repentance is a gift of God's grace. By the work of the Holy Spirit, a person becomes aware of the evil of his/her sin, humbles himself/herself on account of it, and with godly sorrow and detestation turns away from sin and endeavors to walk before God so as to please Him in all things.

Ezekiel 36:27; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 2:29.

X. FAITH

Saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of all the things that are revealed in His Word concerning Christ: accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. Saving faith is given through the work of the Holy Spirit, is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness.

Acts 4:12; 16:14; Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 John 5:1.

XI. JUSTIFICATION

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of the sin of those who believe in Christ. Justification is not granted on account of anything done by sinners, but only on account of the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ.

Romans 3:4; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Titus 3:7.

XII. SANCTIFICATION

Those who have been regenerated are also sanctified by God's Word and by the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. This sanctification is progressive throughout all of life and is supplied by Divine strength. Throughout the process of sanctification, the people of God seek to lead lives of joyful obedience to all of Christ's commands.

Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Galatians 5:16-26; Titus 2:11-14.

XIII. PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

Those whom God has justified and sanctified will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace. They may fall into sin through neglect or temptation, in which case they grieve the Holy Spirit, decrease their comforts, bring reproach on the Church, and personally suffer sin's temporal consequences. Nevertheless, they will be renewed again to repent of sin and will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

John 6:35-40; 10:28-30; Ephesians 1:13-14; Philippians 1:6.

XIV. THE CHURCH

The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, which is composed of all His true disciples. All power for the government of the Church is invested in Christ. According to His commandment, Christians are to associate themselves in local churches; to each of these churches He has delegated the necessary authority for administering the order, discipline and worship which He has appointed. There are two regular officers of the church: the first office is referred to by the interchangeable terms pastor, elder, and overseer, and the second is the office of deacon.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-10; Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 5:4-5; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Timothy 3:1-15.

XIV.A. THE OFFICE OF PASTOR/ELDER/OVERSEER

The qualifications for the office of pastor/elder/overseer are outlined in the biblical passages of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Within the scope of these qualifications, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to biblically-qualified men. Those who hold this office are especially responsible for teaching (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9), leading (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, 1 Timothy 5:17) praying for (Acts 6:4; James 5:13-15), and shepherding (1 Peter 5:1-4) the members of the local church. Accordingly, the authoritative preaching of God's Word within the church's corporate worship is also limited to men who meet the qualifications associated with this office (1 Timothy 2:9-14).

XIV.B. THE OFFICE OF DEACON

The qualifications for the office of deacon are outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The office of deacon is open to both men and women who meet the biblical qualifications. Those who hold this office are recognized servants of the church who take on a variety of service-oriented roles which thereby allow the pastors/elders/overseers to give their undivided attention to matters related to teaching, leadership, prayer, and shepherding.

XV. BAPTISM

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he/she is immersed under water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a sign of the Christian's fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ; of the removal of the penalty of sin; and of giving himself/herself in surrender to God, to live and walk in newness of life.

Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41; 8:35-39; Acts 16:30-33; Romans 6:3-5.

XVI. THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, and to be observed by His churches until He returns. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate His death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, a pledge, and a renewal of their communion with Him and with the other members of His Church.

Because the Lord's Supper unites believers both with their Lord and with the other members of His Church, it is open to all who profess Christ as Savior, who hold with a sincere conscience that they have been baptized in a manner befitting Christ's command, and who are in no need of reconciliation with another believer or with the members of a Christian church.

Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:7-23; 1 Corinthians 10:14-17; 10:21; 11:17-34.

XVII. A DAY OF REST

The rhythm of a day of rest each week is rooted first and foremost in God's action in the biblical narrative of Creation. Therefore, such a day of rest is a Divine institution for regular observance, given so that people might have opportunity to engage in public worship, private devotion, and rejuvenation. Activities on this day of rest should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Genesis 2:1-3; Matthew 12:1-2; Mark 2:27-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10.

XVIII. 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. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience to civil authorities in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God.

A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

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.

Genesis 1:27; Matthew 22:21; Acts 4:19-20; 5:27-29; Romans 13:1-7; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

XIX. THE RESURRECTION

After death, the bodies of people return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God: the righteous to rest with Him, and the wicked to be reserved under darkness to the final judgment. At the last day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised.

Genesis 3:19; Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21-24.

XX. THE FINAL JUDGMENT

God has appointed a day upon which Christ will return to earth to judge the world. On that day, everyone shall receive judgment: the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, while the righteous in Christ will enter into everlasting life in the new heaven and the new earth. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God the Father by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ. All sin will be purged and its wretched effects forever banished.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 13:40-43; 16:27; Matthew 24-25; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1; 4:8; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; Revelation 20-22.

RELEVANT ADDITIONS TO THE BODY OF THE ABSTRACT OF PRINCIPLES

XXI. THE FAMILY

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.

Singleness – whether for a season of life or for a person’s entire lifetime – is a gift from God. Those who are unmarried can lead lives that glorify God in exemplary ways, and in ways which are unique from those who are married

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 of 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 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, bear the image of God and are a blessing and heritage from Him. 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.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78:1-8; Psalm 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 13:24; 22:6; 22:13-14; 31:10-31; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7; Ephesians 5:21-6:4; Colossians 3:18-21; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

XXII. MISSIONAL LIVING

The regeneration of a person's spirit by God's Holy Spirit results in the birth of Christ-like love for others. Evangelism and disciple-making are thus inevitable trademarks of the regenerate life, and are expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. Therefore, it is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church to endeavor to make disciples of all nations.

Good works constitute an indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world nor become indistinguishable from it. Recognizing whose created order this is, and recognizing that they are citizens of God's kingdom, Christians are to love their neighbors as themselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God.

Genesis 12:1-3; Jeremiah 29:7; Matthew 5:13-16; 9:37-38; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8; 15:16; 20:21; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:14-17; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 1 Peter 2:9-10.