**ARTICLE III - STATEMENT OF FAITH**

***Concerning the Scriptures:***

 We believe that the Holy Bible was written inerrant in its original languages by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction (II Timothy 3:16, 17); that it has God for its Author, salvation for its end (II Timothy 3:15), and truth without any mixture of error for its matter (Proverbs 30:5, 6); that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us (Romans 2:12), and therefore, is, and shall remain to the end of the age, the true center of Christian union (Philippians 3:16), and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinions should be tried (I John 4:1).

***Concerning the True God:***

 We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent, perfect Spirit and personal being, the Creator, preserver, and Supreme Ruler of the Universe (I John 4:24),inexpressibly glorious in holiness (Exodus 15:11), and all other perfections, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love (Mark 12:30);

 that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19),equal in every divine perfection (John 10:30), and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption (Ephesians 2:18).

***Concerning the Fall of Man:***

 We believe: that man was created by the special act of God, as recorded in Genesis 1:27 and 2:7.We believe that man was created in a state of holiness, under the law of his Maker (Genesis 1:27); but through the temptation of Satan he voluntarily transgressed and fell from this holy state (Genesis 3:6-24); in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners (Romans 5:19); not by constraint, but choice (Isaiah 53:6); being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil, and therefore, under just condemnation to eternal ruin (Ephesians 2:13); without defense or excuse (Ezekiel 18:19, 20).

***Concerning the Way of Salvation:***

 We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace (Ephesians 2:8);through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God (John 3:16);Who pre-existed (John 8:58),

 and Who, by the appointment of the Father, and Who by the Holy Spirit was conceived, and born of the virgin Mary, freely took upon Him man’s nature, yet without sin (Philippians 2:6, 7);

 honored the divine law by His perfect obedience (Hebrews 5:8, 7:25-27);and after a miraculous ministry, by His death made a full atonement for our sins (Isaiah 53:4, 5);

 that having risen from the dead bodily He is now enthroned in heaven (Hebrews 1:8);

 to reign in eternal sovereignty and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate and all-sufficient Savior and Lord (Hebrews 7:25).

***Concerning Justification:***

 We believe that the great Gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is (John 1:16), — justification (Acts 13:39);that justification includes the pardon of sin (Romans 5:9);and the promise of eternal life on the principles of righteousness (Romans 5:17);that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer’s blood (Romans 4:4, 5);

 by virtue of which faith His perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God (Romans 5:19);that it brings other blessing needful for time and eternity (Romans 5:1, 2).

***Concerning the Freeness of Salvation:***

 We believe that the blessings of Salvation are made free to all by the Gospel (Isaiah 55:1);

 that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith (Romans 16:25, 26); and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the Gospel (John 5:41);

 which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation (John 3:19).

***Concerning Grace in Regeneration:***

 We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated or born again (John 3:3);that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the soul (II Corinthians 5:17);

 that it is effected, in a manner above our comprehension, by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth (John 3:8);so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel (I Peter 1:22-25);and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life (Ephesians 5:9).

***Concerning Repentance and Faith:***

 We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God (Mark 1:15);whereby, being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ (John 16:8);we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy (Luke 18:13);at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as the only and all-sufficient Savior (Romans 10:9-11).

***Concerning God’s Purpose of Grace:***

 We believe that election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which He graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners (II Timothy 1:8, 9);that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of men, it comprehends as well as embraces all the means in connection with the end (II Thessalonians 2:13, 14);that it is a most glorious display of God’s sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy and unchangeable (Exodus 33:18, 19);that it utterly excluded boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active appropriation of His free mercy (I Corinthians 4:7);that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree (2 Timothy 2:10);

 that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel (I Thessalonians 1:4-10);that it is the foundation of Christian assurance (Romans 8:28-31);

 and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence (II Peter 1:10, 11).

***Concerning Sanctification:***

 We believe that sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of His holiness (I Thessalonians 4:3);that it is a progressive work (Proverbs 4:18);that it is begun in regeneration (I John 2:29);and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers throughout their earthly life, by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means, especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness and prayer (Philippians 2:12, 13).

***Concerning the Preservation of the Saints:***

 We believe that all real believers endure unto the end (John 8:31);that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors (I John 2:19);that a special providence watches over their welfare (Romans 8:28);and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (Philippians 1:6, I Peter 1:5).

***Concerning the Harmony of the Law and the Gospel:***

 We believe that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government (Romans 3:31); that it is holy, just and good (Romans 7:12);

 and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin (Romans 8:7, 8); to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy law, is one great end of the Gospel, and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible church (Romans 8:2-4).

***Concerning a Gospel Church:***

 We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers (I Corinthians 1:1-13); associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel (Acts 2:41, 42); observing the ordinances of Christ (I Corinthians 11:2); governed by His laws (Matthew 28:20); and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word (Ephesians 4:7); seeking to extend the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:20); that its only Scriptural officers are Bishops, or Pastors and Deacons (Philippians 1:11); and whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the epistles to Timothy and Titus.

***Concerning a Gospel Church in its Independence and Relationships:***

 We believe that the local visible Church of Christ is a voluntary and independent autonomous group of baptized believers (Matthew 18:15-18);that it is a pure democracy, which organically can join nothing (Romans 12:16); and that it has the power and right within itself to confess its own faith in accordance with the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:15); and that each congregation recognizes its own democratic self-containing government as its highest authority for carrying out the will of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:15-18; Acts 1:23-26).

***Concerning Baptism and the Lord’s Supper:***

 We believe that both Christian baptism and the Lord’s Supper are each a memorial, a symbol and a prophecy (Romans 6:3); We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer (Acts 8:36-39); into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19); to show forth, in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:4); that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation (Acts 2:41, 42); in which the members of the Church, by the sacred use of bread and fruit of the vine are to commemorate together the dying life of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:26); preceded always by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28).

***Concerning the Lord’s Day:***

 We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord’s Day and is a Christian institution (Acts 20:7); it is to be kept sacred to spiritual purposes (Exodus 20:8); by abstaining from all unnecessary secular labor and sinful recreations (Isaiah 58:13, 14); for it commemorates the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead (Acts 20:7); by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private (Psalm 118:15); and public (Hebrews 10:24, 25); and by preparation for the rest that remaineth for the people of God (Hebrews 4:3-11).

***Concerning Civil Government and Religious Liberty:***

 We believe that civil government is a divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society (Romans 13:1-7); and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed (Matthew 22:21); except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 5:29); Who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the Kings of the earth (Matthew 23:10); and that church and state should be separated, the state owing the church protection and full freedom (1 Timothy 2:1, 2); no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be preferred above another by the state (James 4:12); and the state should not impose taxes for the support of any form of religion; a free church in a free state is the Christian ideal (1 Corinthians 3:5).

***Concerning the State of Righteous and the Wicked:***

 We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked (Malachi 3:18); that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in His sight (Romans 1:17); while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked, and under the curse (1 John 5:19); and this distinction holds among men both in and after death (Proverbs 14:32).

***Concerning the Resurrection:***

 We believe the Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus rose from the dead bodily, His grave was emptied of its contents (Matthew 28:1-8);that He appeared to the disciples after His resurrection in many convincing manifestations (Matthew 28:6);that He now exists in His glorified body at God’s right hand (1 Peter 3:22);and that there will be a resurrection of the righteous and a resurrection of the wicked, separated in time (John 5:28);and that the bodies of the righteous will conform to the glorious spiritual body of the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:21).

***Concerning the Return of the Lord:***

 We believe that the end of the age is approaching (1 Peter 4:7);

 “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18);“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (John 5:28, 29);“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. And when the thousand years were expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.” (Revelation 20:5-7);

 that a solemn separation will then take place (Matthew 13:49);that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy (Matthew 25:31-46);

 and that his judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven and hell, on principles of righteousness (John 14:2, 3);and Pretribulation, Premillenial eminent visible return to the world according to His promise.

***Concerning Christian Education:***

 We believe that Christianity is the religion of enlightenment and intelligence; that in Jesus Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Matthew 28:20; Colossians 2:3);and that all sound learning is therefore a part of our Christian heritage (Deuteronomy 4:1, 5, 9, 13, 14);and that the new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge; that an adequate system of school is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ’s church; and that the causes of evangelism, missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches (Matthew 28:20).

***Concerning Social Service:***

 We believe that every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ regnant (reigning) in his own life and in human society (Luke 10:25-27);

 to oppose in the spirit of Christ every form of greed, selfishness, and vices; to provide for the orphaned, the aged, the helpless, and the sick; to support everything that is good and righteous in industry, government and society as a whole for the benefit of men so that all men may live spiritually and righteously before God (Leviticus 6:2);

 and that all means and methods used in social service for improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men must finally depend upon the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus (Hebrews 2:15).