

# **Statement of Beliefs**

## **Grace Communion International**

### **Introduction**

Grace Communion International is a communion of members, congregations and ministries located in more than 100 countries and territories. Our mission is to live and share the gospel of Jesus Christ and to help members grow spiritually (Matthew 28:19-20).

Christians are exhorted to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). The Spirit of God leads the church into all truth (John 16:13). Accordingly, this Statement of Beliefs is not a closed creed. Grace Communion International constantly renews its commitment to truth and deeper understanding and seeks to respond to God's guidance in its beliefs and practices.

### **Summary of Our Christian Faith**

- There is one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- God the Father made all things through the Son, sent the Son for our salvation, and gives us the Holy Spirit.
- The Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, was born of the virgin Mary, fully God and fully human, and is the perfect revelation of the Father and the perfect representative of humanity. He suffered and died on the cross for all human sin, was raised bodily on the third

day, and ascended to heaven. Standing in for all humanity before the Father, Jesus Christ provides the perfect human response to God. Since he died for all, all died in him, and all will be made alive in him.

- The Holy Spirit brings sinners to repentance and faith, assures believers of their forgiveness and acceptance as God's dearly loved children, and works in them to conform them to the image of Jesus Christ.
- The Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God that testifies to Jesus Christ. The Bible is fully authoritative for all matters of faith and salvation.
- Salvation comes only by God's grace and not by works, and it is experienced through faith in Jesus Christ. Christians respond to the joy of salvation when they gather in regular fellowship and live godly lives in Jesus Christ.
- We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come.

### **The Triune God**

God, by the testimony of Scripture, is one divine Being in three eternal, co-essential, yet distinct Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The One God may be known only in the Three and the

Three may be known only as the one true God, good, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, and immutable in his covenant love for humanity. He is Creator of heaven and earth, Sustainer of the universe, and Author of human salvation. Though transcendent, God freely and in divine love, grace and goodness involves himself with humanity directly and personally in Jesus Christ, that humanity, by the Spirit, might share in his eternal life as his children.

(Mark 12:29; Matthew 28:19; John 14:9; 1 John 4:8; Romans 5:8; Titus 2:11; Hebrews 1:2-3; 1 Peter 1:2; Galatians 3:26)

### **God the Father**

God the Father is the first Person of the triune God, of whom the Son is eternally begotten and from whom the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds through the Son. The Father, who made all things seen and unseen through the Son, sends the Son for our salvation and gives the Holy Spirit for our regeneration and adoption as children of God.

(John 1:18; Romans 15:6; Colossians 1:15-16; John 3:16; 14:26; 15:26; Romans 8:14-17; Acts 17:28)

### **The Son of God**

The Son of God is the second Person of the triune God, eternally begotten of the Father. He is the Word and the express image of the Father. The Father created all things through the Son, and the Son sustains all things by his word. He was sent by the Father to be God revealed in the flesh for our

salvation, Jesus Christ. Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, fully God and fully human, two natures in one Person. He is the Son of God and Lord of all, worthy of worship, honor and reverence. As the prophesied Savior of humanity, he suffered and died for all human sin, was raised bodily from the dead, and ascended to heaven. Taking on our broken and alienated humanity, he has included the entire human race in his right relationship with the Father, so that in his regeneration of our humanity we share in his sonship, being adopted as God's own children in the power of the Spirit. As our representative and substitute, he stands in for all humanity before the Father, providing the perfect human response to God on our behalf and reconciling humanity to the Father. He will come again in glory as King of kings over all nations.

(John 1:1, 10, 14; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:3; John 3:16; Titus 2:13; Matthew 1:20; Acts 10:36; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Titus 3:4-5; Hebrews 2:9; 7:25; Galatians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Ephesians 1:9-10; Colossians 1:20; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 1:8; Revelation 19:16)

### **The Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the triune God, eternally proceeding from the Father through the Son. He is the Comforter promised by Jesus Christ, who unites us with the Father and the Son, and transforms us into the image of Christ. The Spirit works out in us the regeneration Christ accomplished for us, and by continual renewal empowers us

to share in the Son's glorious and eternal communion with the Father as his children. The Holy Spirit is the Source of inspiration and prophecy throughout the Scriptures, and the Source of unity and communion in the church. He provides spiritual gifts for the work of the gospel, and is the Christian's constant Guide into all truth.

(Matthew 28:19; John 14:16; 15:26; Acts 2:38; Matthew 28:19; John 14:17, 26; 1 Peter 1:2; Titus 3:5; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Romans 8:16; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 16:13)

### **The Kingdom of God**

The kingdom of God in the broadest sense is God's supreme sovereignty. God's reign is now manifest in the church and in the life of each believer who is submissive to his will. The kingdom of God will be fully manifest over the whole world after the return of Jesus Christ when he delivers all things to the Father.

(Luke 17:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:6; 11:15; 21:3, 22:27; 22:1-5)

### **Humanity**

God created humanity male and female in the image and likeness of God. God blessed them, telling them to multiply and fill the earth. In love, the Lord gave humans stewardship over all the earth and its creatures. Typified by Adam who sinned, humanity lives in sin against its Creator, thus spreading suffering and death in the world. Despite human sinfulness, humanity continues in and is defined by having

been created according to God's image. Thus all humans, collectively and individually, deserve love, honor, and respect. The eternally perfect image of God is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the last Adam. God creates through Jesus Christ the one new humanity over which sin and death have no power. In Christ, humanity bears perfectly the image of God, and in union with Christ, humanity is included in the relationship Christ has with the Father.

(Genesis 1:26-28; Romans 5:12-21; Colossians 1:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 3:18; Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; 47-49; 1 John 3:2; Colossians 3:3-4)

### **The Holy Scriptures**

The Holy Scriptures are by God's grace sanctified to serve as his inspired Word and faithful witness to Jesus Christ and the gospel. They are the fully reliable record of God's revelation to humanity culminating in his self-revelation in the incarnate Son. As such, the Holy Scriptures are foundational to the church and infallible in all matters of faith and salvation.

(2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 5:39; 17:17)

### **The Church**

The church, the Body of Christ, consists of all who trust in Jesus Christ. The church is commissioned to make disciples of Jesus by reaching out in love to all people, nurturing and baptizing those who believe, and teaching believers to obey all that Christ commanded. In fulfilling this mission, the church is directed by the Holy

Scriptures, led by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and looks continually to Jesus Christ, its living Head.

(1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9; Matthew 28:19-20; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22)

### **The Christian**

The Christian is any person who trusts in Jesus Christ. Christians experience new birth through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, embrace their adoption as children of God and enter a right relationship with God and fellow humans by God's grace as they are empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. The Christian's life is characterized by the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

(Romans 10:9-13; Galatians 2:20; John 3:5-7; Titus 3:5; Mark 8:34; John 1:12-13; 3:16-17; Romans 5:1; Romans 8:9, 14-15; John 13:35; Galatians 5:22-23)

### **The Gospel**

The gospel is the good news of the kingdom of God and salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the message that Christ died for our sins and has made us his own before and apart from our believing in him and has bound us to himself by his love in such a way that he will never let us go. Therefore, he calls on all humans to repent and believe in him as Lord and Savior.

(1 Corinthians 15:1-5; Colossians 2:13; 1 John 2:2; Romans 5:8, 18-21; John 3:16-17; Luke 24:46-48; Colossians 1:19-23; Acts 8:12; Matthew 28:19-20)

### **Christian Conduct**

Christian conduct is characterized by trust in and loving allegiance to Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us. Trust in Jesus Christ is expressed by belief in the gospel and by participation in Jesus Christ's works of love. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ transforms the hearts of believers, producing in them love, joy, peace, faithfulness, meekness, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control, righteousness, and truth.

(1 John 3:16, 23-24; 4:20-21; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Ephesians 2:10; Galatians 5:6, 22-23; Ephesians 5:9)

### **God's Grace**

God's grace is free and unmerited and is expressed in everything he does. By grace, the Father redeemed humanity and the entire cosmos from sin and death through Jesus Christ, and by grace, the Holy Spirit empowers humans to know and love the Father and Jesus Christ and thereby experience the joy of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God.

(Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 John 2:1-2; Colossians 1:20; Romans 11:32; 8:19-21; 3:24; 5:2, 15-17, 21; John 1:12; Titus 3:7)

### **Sin**

Sin is the state of alienation from God of all humanity and consists of anything that is contrary to God's will, including acts of wrongdoing, neglect to do good and unbelief in the God of grace and love as made known in Jesus Christ. The Bible associates sin with the devil, whose work Jesus came to

destroy. Sin results in damaged relationships, suffering and death. Because all humans are sinners, all humans need the good news that God loves them unconditionally and has forgiven their sins and reconciled them to himself through Jesus Christ.

(1 John 3:4; James 4:17; Romans 14:23; Romans 5:12, 17-19; 7:24-25; Mark 7:21-23; 1 John 3:8; Ephesians 2:2; Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 6:23; 3:23-24; Ephesians 2:12-13)

### Faith in God

Faith in God is a gift of God, rooted in Jesus Christ and enlightened by the witness of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. Through faith, God prepares and enables our minds to participate in Jesus Christ's communion with the Father by the Spirit. Jesus Christ is the Author and Perfecter of our faith.

(Ephesians 2:8; Romans 12:3; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:1; Romans 5:1-2; 1:17; 3:21-28; 11:6; Ephesians 3:12; 1 Corinthians 2:5; Hebrews 12:2)

### Salvation

Salvation is the restoration of human fellowship with God and the deliverance of the entire creation from the bondage of sin and death. Salvation is given by the grace of God and experienced through faith in Jesus Christ, not earned by personal merit or good works. God calls on every person to enter that divine fellowship, which has been secured for humanity in Jesus Christ and is embodied by him as the beloved of the Father at the Father's right hand.

(Romans 8:21-23; 6:18, 22-23; 1

Corinthians 1:9; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; Matthew 3:17; Colossians 3:1; Ephesians 2:4-10)

### Repentance

Repentance toward God is a change of mind and attitude in response to the grace of God prompted by the Holy Spirit and grounded in the Word of God. It includes awareness of personal sinfulness and trust in and allegiance to Jesus Christ through whom all humanity has been reconciled to God and accompanies a new life sanctified by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ.

(Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Romans 2:4; 10:17; Colossians 1:19-20; Romans 12:2)

### Baptism

The sacrament of baptism proclaims that we are saved by Christ alone and not through our own repentance and faith. It is a participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in which our old selves have been crucified and renounced in Christ and we have been freed from the shackles of the past and given new being through his resurrection. Baptism proclaims the good news that Christ has made us his own, and that it is only in him that our new life of faith and obedience emerges. Grace Communion International baptizes by immersion.

(Romans 6:3-6; Galatians 3:26; Colossians 2:12; Acts 2:38)

### The Lord's Supper

In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we partake of bread and wine in remembrance of our Savior, proclaiming

his death until he comes. The Lord's Supper is a participation in the death and resurrection of our Lord. Just as the bread and wine become part of our physical bodies, so we are made by grace to partake spiritually of Jesus Christ in his body and blood. Thus the Lord's Supper declares to believers that in every aspect of our Christian life we rely not on any obedience or righteousness of our own, but solely upon the grace of God incarnate in Jesus Christ.

(1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 10:16; Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Timothy 1:9)

### The Second Coming

Jesus Christ, as he promised, will come again to judge and reign over all nations in the kingdom of God. His second coming will be visible, and in power and glory and will bring the final end to evil. This event inaugurates the resurrection of the dead and the reward of the saints.

(John 14:3; Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; Revelation 12:10-12; Revelation 22:12)

### The Judgment

God judges all humans through Jesus Christ as those who belong to God through him. Therefore, all humans are, in spite of themselves, loved, forgiven, and included in Jesus Christ, who is their Lord and Savior. God's love will never cease or diminish even for those who, denying the reality of who they are in him, refuse his love and consign themselves to hell; they will not enjoy the fruit of his salvation but rather will

experience his love as wrath. God disciplines those he loves so that they will return to him and live; he stands at the door and knocks, urging them to open the door to his everlasting love. God's judgment in Christ means the ultimate end of evil and the renewal of the earth and all creation.

(Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; John 3:17; Romans 5:6; Colossians 1:20; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; 2 Peter 3:9; Romans 5:15-18; Acts 10:43; John 12:32; 1 Corinthians 15:22-28; Hebrews 12:6; Ephesians 1:10; Revelation 3:19-20)

## Historical Documents of the Christian Church

A creed is a brief statement of faith used to enumerate important truths, to clarify doctrinal points, and to distinguish truth from error. Creeds are usually worded to be easily memorized. The word creed comes from the Latin word *credo*, meaning, "I believe." The Bible contains a number of creed-like passages. For example, Jews used the *Shema*, based on Deuteronomy 6:4-9, as a creed. Paul wrote simple creed-like statements in 1 Corinthians 8:6; 12:3; and 15:3-4. 1 Timothy 3:16 also appears as a creed, a concise statement of belief.

As the early church spread, there was a practical need for a statement of faith to help believers focus on the most important doctrines of their Christian faith. The Apostles' Creed is appropriately named not because the original apostles wrote it, but because it accurately reflects the teaching of the apostles. Church fathers Tertullian, Augustine, and other leaders had slightly different versions of the

Apostles' Creed, but the text of Pirminius in A.D. 750 was eventually accepted as the standard form.

As the church grew, heresies also grew, and the early Christians needed to clarify the defining boundaries of the faith. In the early 300s, before the canon of the New Testament had been finalized, controversy developed over the divinity of Jesus Christ. At the request of Emperor Constantine, Christian bishops from across the Roman Empire met at the town of Nicea in 325 to discuss the matter. They wrote their consensus in the form of a creed, called the Creed of Nicea. In 381, another major council was held at Constantinople at which the Creed of Nicea was slightly revised to include a few more doctrines. The resulting Creed is called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, or more commonly, the Nicene Creed.

In the next century, church leaders met in the city of Chalcedon to discuss, among other things, questions about the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ. The result was a Definition of Faith they believed to be true to the gospel, true to apostolic teaching, and true to the Scriptures. This statement is called the Definition of Chalcedon or the Faith of Chalcedon.

Regrettably, creeds can become formal, complex, abstract, and sometimes equated with Scripture. When properly used, however, they facilitate a concise basis for teaching, safeguard correct biblical doctrine, and create a focus for church fellowship. These three creeds are widely accepted among Christians as consistent with the

Bible and as statements of true Christian orthodoxy, or right teaching.

### **The Nicene Creed (A.D. 381)\***

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy, all-embracing and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

### **The Apostles' Creed (c. A.D. 700)\*\***

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy all-embracing Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

### **The Definition of the Union of the Divine and Human Natures in the Person of Christ (Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451)\***

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach people to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in humanness, truly God and truly human, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance (*homoousios*) with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his humanity begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer (*Theotokos*); one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way

annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.

\*Translation from *The Book of Common Prayer, 1979*

\*\*Translation based on *I Believe* by Alister McGrath, Downer's Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1997)

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*Living and Sharing the Gospel*