



CENTRE STREET CHURCH

STATEMENT OF THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES & MINISTRY PRACTICES

Board Approved June 5, 2012
Updated February 19, 2019

Contents

Foreword.....	2
We May Know God Because God Reveals Himself	3
Who is God?	3
God’s Revelation of Himself through His Covenant with Israel	3
God’s Revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ	3
God’s Revelation of Himself by His Holy Spirit.....	4
God is Love	4
God is Love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit	5
Three Foundational Doctrines of God.....	5
God the Father	6
God the Son.....	6
God the Holy Spirit	6
The Trinity	7
God’s Mission of Love in the World	8
Creation.....	8
Sin and the Fall of Humanity	9
Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ	9
Salvation: Faith, Justification, Sanctification, Glorification	10
Communion with Christ and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit.....	11
The Church	11
End Times	12
Loving God and Loving His World	12
Christian Worship.....	13
Baptism and Communion.....	13
Christian Mission.....	14
Christian Stewardship of Spiritual Gifts, Abilities, Time and Resources	15
Freedom in Christ.....	16
Christian Spiritual Life	16
Christian Marriage and the Family.....	17
Dedication of Children	18
Human Sexuality.....	18
The Sanctity of Persons	19
Stewardship of the Earth.....	20
Christians, Civil Society and Government	20

Foreword

This **Statement of Basic Theological Principles and Ministry Practices** has been developed in order to provide the reader with a clear and comprehensive understanding of what Centre Street Church believes the Christian scriptures teach regarding basic theological principles and ministry practices of the Christian faith.

We recognize that not all followers of Christ will subscribe to every declaration included in this Statement. Nor does Centre Street Church require members or attendees of Centre Street Church to subscribe to this Statement as a condition of membership or attendance.

All people who follow Jesus Christ, or who are exploring Christian faith, are welcome to fellowship at Centre Street Church.

Scripture quotations in this Statement are taken from: The Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright 1971, 1978 by International Bible Society.

This Statement is based on upon a document prepared for Centre Street Church by Dr. Mark Mealey whose contribution is gratefully acknowledged.

We May Know God Because God Reveals Himself

Who is God?

The most important question to ask is, “Who is God?” We believe that if we search for God in order to discover who He is, but He does not reach out to us to reveal Himself, we can have no reliable answer to the most important question. We would in fact find many answers to the question, “Who is God?”, but not know which answer is true.

God’s Revelation of Himself through His Covenant with Israel

We believe that God revealed Himself through His covenant with Israel.

God revealed His nature, including His love and His righteousness, through His covenant with the people of Israel. He called Abraham out of the nations (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-16), brought him to a promised land he had never seen, provided for his needs, gave him a son, and made a perpetual covenant with him and his descendants. God revealed Himself to the patriarchs Isaac (Gen. 26:2) and Jacob (Gen. 28:13).

He revealed Himself to His servant Moses at the burning bush, when He declared His name: **“I am who I am,”** (Ex. 3:14) or “Yahweh,” which is usually translated as “Lord.” He revealed Himself through His servant Moses, by bringing the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt (Ex. 1-14), by providing for their needs as they wandered in the desert without a home, by protecting them from their enemies, and by being present with them through the visible means of their worship in the tabernacle (Ex. 33:7-11). God gave Israel the Ten Commandments through His servant Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 20:1-17), and He restored Israel to a covenant which is recorded in the Old Testament.

God preserved a faithful witness to Himself in Israel. Faithful witnesses to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob wrote the Old Testament, which is God’s revelation of Himself through His covenant with Israel.

God’s Revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ

We believe that in Jesus Christ God has entered human history in His own being, in the person of the Son of God, and in so doing has revealed Himself to the world.

The death of Christ and His bodily resurrection from the dead are God’s own confirmation of Jesus’ teaching about Himself. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the Father’s vindication of His Son’s death on a cross. **“God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ....”** (2 Cor. 5:19). Christ’s death and resurrection demonstrate more clearly than anything else in history the identity of Jesus and the true nature of God. Together, the death and resurrection of Jesus are the summit of God’s long revelation of Himself in Israel and in Christ.

We believe that the whole of the New Testament is a faithful and completely trustworthy witness to Jesus as the fullest possible revelation of God in the world. He is **“...the fullness**

of Him who fills everything in every way.” (Eph. 1:23), for ***“God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him....”*** (Col. 1:19; 2:9), Jesus is ***“Immanuel,”*** which means ***“God with us.”*** (Matt. 1:23) ***“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory....”*** (John 1:14). Therefore, it is right to say that Jesus is the “incarnation” of God, which means God become a true human being. God cannot reveal Himself more fully than to be personally present in the world, as He was indeed present in Jesus.

God’s Revelation of Himself by His Holy Spirit

We believe that God revealed Himself to Israel and to Christ’s disciples by His Spirit. But we also believe that even now God reaches out to us by His Spirit, to reveal Himself to humanity and to His people.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 15:26). He witnesses to the world and the church on behalf of the Son, and He leads the church into all truth by revealing Christ to us. He reveals Christ and the Father to us by witnessing directly to us, confirming and illuminating the words of the gospel and of all the scripture.

We believe that the both the Old and New Testaments are the true, faithful and fully adequate witness to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, inspired by God through His Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16). Through the work of His Spirit, God helps us to understand and accept the witness of the Old and New Testaments to Jesus and the covenants God has made with all of humanity. ***“...but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”*** (1 Cor. 2:10)

Through the activity of the Spirit, we come into personal contact with the depths of God. For the Spirit reveals the Son, and the Son reveals the Father. In this way, the Spirit turns our hearts to love and worship the Father. ***“And by Him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ....”*** (Rom. 8:15-17) By the work of the Spirit, we learn to pray; and by His work our prayers are received by God.

God is Love

God Himself answers the most important question anyone can ask which is, “Who is God?” In Christ, He has made ***“...plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.”*** (Eph. 3:9) When we accept God’s revelation of Himself in Jesus, we come to see that Jesus reveals the foundation for faith, for hope and for love in those who believe. We may know God, and we may love and serve Him, because He has made Himself known and because by His Spirit He makes Himself known to us even now. Jesus reveals not only the beautiful truth that God loves the world, and loves each person in it, but the even more beautiful and worship-inspiring truth that ***“God is love.”*** (1 John 4:8)

Truly, we are not alone. For the one true God—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Jesus Christ—has come and found us, and dwelt with us, and revealed Himself to

us. He has done so in the incarnation of Christ, and He does so now by His Spirit. ***“And in [Christ] you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.”*** (Eph. 2:22)

“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins... We know that we live in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.” (1 John 4:8-10, 13-14)

God is Love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Three Foundational Doctrines of God

“This is what God the Lord says—He who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: ‘I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give My glory to another or My praise to idols.’” (Is. 42:5-8)

Monotheism

We believe there is only one God (Deut. 6:4; Is. 45:5; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6). This is the teaching of the whole Old Testament. This is Jesus’ own teaching (John 5:44; 17:3) and it is also the teaching of the apostles (Acts 17:16-31; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6; Rom. 16:27; Rev. 1:8).

God and Creation

We believe that God made the whole universe that exists (Gen. 1:1), both visible and invisible, as an act of His will and His love, and as the theatre of His glory. We believe God is eternal (Gen. 21:33), and as an eternal being He is all-knowing and everywhere-present in the created world (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16). Whereas everything in the created world is caused by God and has a beginning in time, the eternal God has no cause outside of himself, and no beginning.

Providence

We believe that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). Therefore, we believe that God is not an impersonal power but a personal, moral being who knows, who loves and who receives love for all eternity. He is infinitely good, righteous and holy (Lev. 19:2). God intends what is truly good for the entire world He has made, and is bringing about that good by His grace through His own purpose and His own acts, which He accomplishes in Christ and by His Spirit.

God the Father

We believe in God the Father.

By “Father” we mean first of all that He is the eternal Father of the Son, Jesus Christ. The Son proceeds from the Father eternally, without a beginning. Out of love for the Father and all humanity, the Son became human, dwelt among us, taught us, died for us and was raised from the dead for us. In all of these ways He revealed the Father **“Jesus answered: ‘Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father.’”** (John 14:9)

By “Father” we also recognize that God makes us His children through the work of the Holy Spirit when we place our faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. When we cry ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit **“that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ....”** (Rom. 8:15-17). When we receive this witness from the Spirit of God, it confirms that we have been made God’s children, and the Spirit reveals the Father to us.

God the Son

We believe in God the Son. Together with the eye witnesses of the gospel who wrote the New Testament, and with all Christians since Jesus rose from the dead, we confess in worship and adoration that **“Jesus Christ is Lord.”** (Phil. 2:11)

We believe that the incarnate Jesus Christ is without qualification a man, but also is without qualification God. Our Lord is fully God from all eternity. In time He united human nature to Himself and was made a complete man. Thus the incarnate Son has both a divine nature and a human nature.

In time He was **“born of a woman”** (Gal. 4:4) and in every respect He is human like we are. Like us, He was born, He was hungry and tired, He prayed and He wept. Like us, He experienced human weakness, though without sin (Heb. 4:15). Like us, He died. On account of His resurrection from the dead, the way has been made for all of humanity to receive eternal life, the life which was with the Father and revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

But this very person who became human was from all eternity the Lord, the Son of God, the Word of God. He spoke the world into existence and sustains it by His word of power. **“For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible....”** (Col. 1:16). **“He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together... For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him....”** (Col. 1:17-19). Thus our Lord Jesus is one person in two natures – fully divine, fully human.

God the Holy Spirit

We believe in God the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is not an impersonal power, but rather a divine person and a full member of the Trinity, along with the Father and the Son.

God created the world through His Son and by the power of His Holy Spirit. The Son prays to the Father to send the Holy Spirit. The Father sends the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit

witnesses to us the life that is with the Father. God reveals Himself to the world, and witnesses to His Son by His Spirit. He revealed Himself to His prophets in Israel and His apostles in the Church by His Spirit. By His Spirit He leads us into all truth. He convicts us of sin in order to draw us to Christ, receive His forgiveness and grow in holiness (John 16:8; 1 Thess. 1:5)

The Holy Spirit gives us the eternal life that belongs to the Father and the Son. ***“And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.”*** (Rom. 8:11) God ***“...poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit....”*** that has been given to us. (Rom. 5:5) By the Spirit, God gives His grace to the world He loves and empowers His church with the spiritual gifts necessary for its mission (1 Cor. 12:7).

The Trinity

We believe that God is one being in three persons.

There is only one eternally existent God, who has His being from Himself without beginning. He has no external cause, and He brought into being everything else that exists apart from Himself. He is one in being, one in nature, and one in power. He is perfect in love and holiness, justice and goodness, wisdom and truth.

The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. The three persons are equally God and fully God, and each is worthy of honour and glory forever. God has one being and one nature and exists in three persons. Each of God’s three persons in themselves are elements of the one God working together to enact His will.

The Father is not the Son or the Spirit, and the Son is not the Spirit. The three persons are distinct from one another as persons, and only as persons. The three persons are not distinct in name only, or as parts of God, or aspects of God, but as persons. The one God exists and acts as three persons, in a community of love, for ***“God is love.”*** (1 John: 4:8; John 5:20)

The Father is without origin or cause. We believe that the Son comes from the Father eternally, without a beginning. And we believe that the Spirit comes from the Father eternally, without a beginning. The differences in the origin of the persons are the only differences between the persons.

We believe that God cannot be divided in being, in space or in time. When He acts outside of Himself in time, in His mission of love in the world, He acts through the persons of the Son and the Spirit, but He is fully present in every act as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Since all humans are made in the image of God, our highest calling and our greatest mission is to take up the journey to know and to enjoy ***“...the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit....”*** (2 Cor. 13:14)

God's Mission of Love in the World

Because God is love, He acts His love out in the world He has made. By His Son and through His Spirit, God created the world as an act of love. God's mission of love in the world is to redeem and heal the world from the destruction of sin in order to bring us back into right relationship with Him and with one another. He does this in our own lives through the gift of faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8) and through the power of the Spirit of Christ given to every believer. He has given His Church the mission to bear witness to God's love and forgiveness, and His power to heal people and the world from the destructive effects of sin.

On account of the effective witness of the Spirit, we may believe in God through the Son and know God through the Son. Through this gift of faith, we receive a sure ground for hope, and receive **"...His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit..."** (Rom. 5:5). Thus we personally know the love of God and His forgiveness, and receive the ability to love God and to love as He loves.

We look forward to the completion of God's mission of love, when all those powers that oppose God's just rule in the world finally submit to the authority of the risen Lord Jesus Christ so, **"...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."** (Phil. 2:10-11)

Creation

We believe that, **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** (Gen. 1:1)

Everything that exists outside of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was made by God as an act of His will and love. The world has a beginning in time, whereas God has no beginning in time. God created the world with a purpose; this purpose is consistent with His nature, and is an expression of His love.

Humans have a unique place in the created world, because we were created **"...in the image of God.** Furthermore, God created men and women in His own image and pronounced them good. **"...male and female He created them...And God saw all that He had made and it was very good."** (Gen. 1:27-31)

Having been made in the image of God, humans are the highest part of all of creation. God **"...chose us in Him (Christ) before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight."** (Eph. 1:4).

We believe that all of creation fell from its intended state on account of human sin. (Gen.2:17; Rom. 3:23; 1 Cor. 15:21-22)

The highest moment in all of creation was when God became man and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14) God, who exists independently from the created world, united human nature to Himself in the person of the Son, as an act of creation.

Thus, we believe that God intends to restore the whole created world through the power of Christ's death and resurrection, as part of His plan of salvation for humans (Rom. 8:18-23).

Sin and the Fall of Humanity

We believe that the first humans, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God by giving in to Satan's temptation. (Gen. 3) As a result, all of humanity has fallen from the purpose God intended for us when He created us. **"...Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned..."** (Rom. 5:12) As a consequence of our sin, we are morally, spiritually and intellectually broken, and our bodies are prone to many infirmities. **"...All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."** (Rom. 3:23)

Because of sin every person is broken and alienated from God. We are unable to heal ourselves on account of sin, the essence of which is missing the mark of God's righteous requirements for all of us because of our wilful, independent, self-centered living. Our own sins have hurt not only ourselves, but have also harmed others. The sins of others have wounded and harmed us. This brokenness on account of sin is not only in the world around us, but also in the church. We recognize that our primary spiritual struggle is **"...against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."** (Eph. 6:12)

The natural consequence of sin is eternal separation from God. **"For the wages of sin is death."** (Rom 6.23) Apart from God's grace, we cannot escape the bondage of sin or the just penalty for sin. As the Apostle Paul said, **"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"** (Rom. 7:24)

Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ

We believe that God Himself has acted in human history—in the incarnation, the death on a cross, the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven of our Lord Jesus Christ—to break the power of sin and death. Through these acts of God in time, God revealed the depths of His love from all eternity. In a costly way God, in Jesus Christ, has acted out of His love both to save us from the power of sin and death and to release us from the just judgment our sins deserve.

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day..." (1 Cor. 15:3) By His death on a cross for all humanity and His bodily resurrection from the dead, Christ has made the just foundation for the forgiveness of sins and for the gift of new life in all persons. **"...Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the One Man the many will be made righteous."** (Rom 5:18-19)

After His resurrection Jesus ascended into heaven where He reigns in glory until He returns. ***“Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*** (Phil. 2:9-11)

Salvation: Faith, Justification, Sanctification, Glorification

We believe that there is ***“...now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”*** (Rom. 8:1-2)

To be saved means to be freed by God from the condemnation of sin and the power of sin. We believe that God has given us free will and that we enter salvation by choosing to repent of our sinful ways, to believe that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead, and to trust Him by faith for our eternal salvation. Faith is believing in God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is trusting in Christ’s righteousness rather than our own and receiving communion with God through our communion with Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. We believe that all those who trust Christ receive the forgiveness of their sins on account of Christ’s righteousness. This is called justification. ***“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (Rom. 5:1)

All those who believe in God through Jesus Christ have received the Holy Spirit, and therefore may begin the long journey towards holiness, which we call sanctification or being filled with the Spirit. All those who are filled with the Spirit are empowered by God to live a life of love and service pleasing to Him. ***“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness....”*** (2 Pet. 1:3) The goal of sanctification is to become like Christ and requires that we live a life of total surrender to Him. ***“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.”*** (Rom. 12:1)

We believe that followers of Jesus are not only being transformed to become more like Christ in this life, but when we see Christ at His return, or following our death, we will all be changed. ***“...Those He justified He also glorified.”*** (Rom. 8:30) ***“Listen I tell you a mystery...the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”*** (1 Cor. 15:51-53) ***“The Lord Jesus...will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body.”*** (Phil. 3:20-21) ***“But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”*** (1 John 3:2)

Communion with Christ and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the foundation of Christian life is communion with God through communion with Christ and fellowship with the Spirit of God.

By receiving God's Spirit, we receive His life (Rom. 8:11), and by receiving God's Spirit, we receive His love (Rom. 5:5). This is what we mean by experiencing the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Because God cannot be divided, we know that when the Spirit of God dwells in us, God dwells in us. He is ***"the Spirit of God"*** (Rom. 8:9), and if the Spirit dwells in us, then we participate in Christ – ***"Christ is in you."*** (Rom. 8:10) ***"Christ in you, the hope of glory."*** (Col. 1:27) Because we participate in Christ by His Spirit, we may participate in God's fullness, His very presence in our lives. ***"For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ...."*** (Col. 2:9-10)

Because we participate in Christ, we are united to Him in His death, in His resurrection, in His ascension and in His glory, and therefore receive everything God has accomplished in Christ on our behalf (Col. 2:10-15; Eph. 1:20-2:7; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Rom. 6:1-11; Rom. 8:9-39; Gal. 3:26-29). This is what we mean by communion with Christ. We believe that we have died with Him, have been raised with Him, and abide with God in Him, ***"...for you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."*** (Col. 3:3)

The Church

We believe that Jesus Christ founded His church (Matt. 16:18), which consists of all those who have been united to Christ by faith, and that Christ ***"...is the head of the body, the Church...."*** (Col. 1:18) In Christ we are ***"...no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household...."*** (Eph. 2:19)

The church is God's own people, the community called together by God to receive the covenant He has made in Christ, to receive communion with God in Christ by His Spirit, to be His faithful servants, to be His witnesses to the world of the Gospel and of His love, and to give glory to God through worshipping Him and imitating Him in His love for the world.

We are called to be united in one body as God's people, His church, because we have the same hope, the same faith and the same baptism. ***"There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."*** (Eph. 4:4-6)

Christ calls His followers to love God and worship Him, to pray together as His gathered church, to love one another in His church, and to work together with other Christians to demonstrate Christ's love for all people.

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” (1 Pet. 2:9)

End Times

We believe that in the fullness of time, according to God’s own purpose, Christ will return visibly and in power to complete His rule over the entire created world, over things in heaven and things on earth (1 Thess. 4:16-18). He will complete His righteous judgement of all persons, both alive and dead (2 Cor. 5:10). There will be a ***“...new heaven and a new earth...”*** (Rev. 21:1) Those who reject God through refusing faith in Christ will be subject to eternal punishment and separation from God (2 Thess. 1:9). Those who accept God through faith in Christ will enter eternal life with God. ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*** (John 3:16-18)

We look forward with certainty to the resurrection of our bodies and to eternal life with God after death, not on account of our own goodness or faith, but on account of Christ with whom we are united by faith. ***“If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection.”*** (Rom. 6:5) We have this hope in our present lives, and we yearn for its fulfillment in the life to come.

Loving God and Loving His World

When Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment, He answered, ***“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.”***

(Mark 12:29-31) When He shared a meal with His disciples on the evening before His death, He declared, ***“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”*** (John 13:34-35)

Because we have God’s love in ourselves by faith, we may be transformed in our lives and join with God in His mission of love in this world. The first and most important part of Christian life is rightly to return our whole lives as a spiritual offering to God on account of His love (Rom. 12:1). We must seek Him and find Him, know Him and worship Him, and love, obey and serve Him.

By faith, we enter into the covenant He has made through Christ and the worship He has commanded for His people who enter this covenant. By faith, we are made alive spiritually and seek to live the habits of a Christian spiritual life. By faith, we generously commit all

our time, talents and resources to His service. By faith, we may experience freedom in Christ to overcome sin in our lives and to be healed from its effects. In all of these ways, God transforms us by His love and calls us to ***“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*** (Mark 16:15)

If we love God, we love what He loves. God loves the world, which He demonstrated in Jesus Christ. Therefore, if we love God, we must love the world that God loves. This love takes shape in many ways, and guides the ways we engage with all people and with important issues in our world, such as: marriage and family, the sanctity of persons, stewardship of the environment, and participation in a civil society.

Christian Worship

We believe that true worship is to ***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”*** (Mark 12:30) The essence of true worship is giving all of ourselves to God.

Worship is a response to God’s own love in Christ, which has been poured out on us by His Spirit. It is to love God because He has first loved us. The love for God that we receive from God by faith is the source of Christian worship.

We cannot love or worship the Lord our God if we reject the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot truly pray to the Father outside of fellowship with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 4:5-6). We cannot truly confess in worship that ***“Jesus is Lord”*** (1 Cor. 12:3) outside of communion with God through fellowship with the Spirit.

Every act of love directed to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is an act of worship, including our prayers and songs of praise, our personal devotion to God in Christ, our obedience to Christ, and our acts of love for all those whom God loves. To love people as God loves people is to love God (Matt. 25:35-36, 40).

We believe that it is necessary for us to give our worship to God corporately as the body of Christ in song and in prayer (Eph. 5:19-20). Since we cannot love God without also loving one another, we must pray and worship together (Col. 3:16).

Baptism and Communion

We believe that Christ commanded His church to baptize all those with faith in Christ and to regularly commemorate His death and resurrection for us until He comes again. These are known as the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of communion.

Christ commanded His church to ***“...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*** (Matt. 28:19-20)

Baptism is an act of obedience to Christ on the part of the church and of the person who is baptized, and represents our identification with Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. It signifies our desire to die to sin and self-centeredness and to live fully in the new life that Christ gives to us. ***“We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in***

order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Rom. 6:4)

As the outward sign of faith, baptism in water cannot substitute for true faith which it signifies. The ritual of baptism in water does not unite us to Christ or make us members of His body and His covenant, but is the sign of these realities. The physical act of baptism expresses the spiritual change which Christ has accomplished in our lives through faith. This is why we publicly baptize those who have expressed faith in Christ.

Christ commanded His church to regularly partake of the symbols (bread and juice) of His body broken and of His blood, shed on the cross for us, and to do this until He returns (1 Cor. 11:23-26; Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:17-19).

“The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” (1 Cor. 11: 23-26)

This is referred to as the “Lord’s Supper,” “Communion” or “the Eucharist.” Communion is an act of obedience to Christ, a remembrance of His death that has atoned for our sins. ***“...that He might make atonement for the sins of the people.”*** (Heb. 2:17)

Communion is an essential part of Christian worship. Partaking in Communion does not produce union with Christ, but is rather the sign of our ongoing union with Christ by faith, a sign that was commanded by Christ and His apostles.

Christian Mission

We believe that the primary outward mission of the church and God’s people is to demonstrate love for God and for the world by sharing the love of God and the good news of Jesus Christ with people who do not know Him and by making disciples for Him in every nation and in every people group (Matt. 28:19).

We declare the love of Christ. We seek to demonstrate that love, and we call people to communion with Him through faith. ***“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.”*** (2 Cor. 5:14-15)

Evangelization is sharing the good news of God’s love in Christ, because God has set out to reconcile the world to Himself. We do not bear witness to our own weak righteousness, or our own weak love, but to the righteousness and love of God made visible in Christ. For God’s weakness, in the cross of Christ, is stronger than human strength, and stronger than

our enemies. His love is stronger than death. We are amazed but grateful that God has entrusted to us as His people the message of reconciliation and forgiveness.

“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”
(1 Cor. 1:27-30)

We gratefully bear witness as God’s own people and as His church that God’s own righteousness has come into this world in His Son. All those who receive Jesus Christ by faith will also receive the Spirit of Christ. Their lives will be hidden with God in Christ. Their sins will be forgiven. The love of God will be poured out on them by the Spirit of God, who will be given to them. They will have the eternal life that comes from God.

Because God is full of justice, compassion and mercy (James 5:11; Ps. 9:16), we believe that those who have experienced new life in Christ are called to express His life in the world (Eph. 5:1), which includes demonstrating His compassion to those in need and working for justice on behalf of those who have been unjustly treated or exploited.

Christian Stewardship of Spiritual Gifts, Abilities, Time and Resources

We believe that God has endowed each Christ-follower with one or more spiritual gifts to be used to build up and minister to other believers and to advance the Kingdom of God in the world (Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). ***“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to us.”*** (Rom. 12:6) ***“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”*** (1 Pet. 4:10) The distribution of these gifts and their ministry is not specific to being male or female.

The exercise of these gifts is not the primary evidence of true spirituality. Rather, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), pre-eminently expressed in love, is the prime evidence of true spirituality (1 Cor. 13:2).

We acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we acknowledge that we owe God our worship with ***“...all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.”*** (Deut. 6:5)

Therefore we recognize that He deserves the complete dedication and service of all our lives to Him. Consequently, because God deserves our best, we believe that we must worship God by dedicating all of our time, all of our talents and all of our resources to Him.

On account of the great generosity of God’s grace to us in Christ, we should live generously – ***“...so that you can be generous on every occasion.”*** (2 Cor. 9:11) Since God

has loved us in Christ and has given us His love through His Spirit, and since God has demonstrated His love for the world, we should be generous to those in the church and in the world, dedicating some portion of our time, our talents and our resources as a practical demonstration of our love for God and our desire to imitate Christ's love for the church and the world.

Freedom in Christ

We believe that Jesus has made it possible for people to live in freedom from the dominion of sin and experience the fullness of his divine life (Col. 2:10). ***"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free."*** (Gal. 5:1) ***"...through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."*** (Rom. 8:1-2) ***"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*** (John 8:32)

Through faith in Christ, we receive both forgiveness for our sins and new life in Christ (Col. 2:12-15; Gal. 5:1). ***"God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ."*** (Eph. 2:4-5) The freedom of a Christian is freedom from the penalty of sin on account of our forgiveness in Christ, which frees us from fear and condemnation for our sin. And the freedom of a Christian is freedom from the power of sin on account of our life in the Spirit, who dwells in us (Eph. 2:4-5, 2 Cor. 12:9-10). The process of gaining freedom from the power and habits of sin is called sanctification.

We affirm that in God's love for us He desires healing for all, including the healing of our bodies and minds. Therefore we can rightly pray for healing (James 5:13-16), which God may impart, whether through natural and medical means or by means of special acts of God's grace and power. It is part of the mission of God's church to be instruments of His peace and of healing for body, soul and spirit.

We do not believe that the freedom from the effects of sin is worked out in us easily or cheaply. We need God's grace, communion with Christ, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, His Word and His people to live in the freedom God wills for us. We believe that God by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus will help us. ***"If God is for us, who can be against us?"*** (Rom. 8:31)

Christian Spiritual Life

"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:34-36)

We believe that healthy Christian spiritual life is the imitation of Christ, which is possible because of our communion with Christ and our fellowship with the Spirit. Christian spiritual life is the spiritual journey and the habits that belong to our communion with Christ and our fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

If we follow Jesus, our spiritual life will be a lifelong process towards conformity with Christ (Phil. 3:7-8) – ***“And we...are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory.”*** (2 Cor. 3:18) The journey of the Christian life often includes struggle, and is more like an athlete who trains for competition than like a spectator watching an athletic contest (2 Tim. 2:3-7). It is a journey towards conformity with Christ in every way, and we recognize that Christ’s way is the way of self-denial, the way of service, the way of cross (Phil. 3:10-14).

Growing into the habits of a mature spiritual life is essential for our communion with Christ and our fellowship with the Holy Spirit. These habits can have many forms, but essential to a healthy spiritual life are the practices of worship, personal and corporate prayer, exposure to God’s Word in the Scriptures, self-examination in the light of Christ and community with other believers. These practices, known as spiritual disciplines help us grow in Christlikeness, along with other spiritual disciplines, such as obedience, fasting, silence, solitude, meditation and confession.

Christian Marriage and the Family

We believe that God in His love for humanity intends marriage as a life-long covenant between a man and a woman for their own well-being and the well-being of children, and for the benefit of the whole human race.

God instituted marriage as a sacred and honourable institution (Heb. 13:4), for the blessing of companionship (Gen. 2:18), and as a continuation of the divine work of creation in the history of the human race (Gen. 4:1). Marriage is a physical union (1 Cor. 6:16). God intends marriage to be a monogamous, life-long union (Gen. 2:24; Ex. 20:14) between a male and a female who are each living in the physical gender/sex in which they were born (Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:18, 20-25; Ps. 139:13-16; Mark 10:7-9). Marriage is constituted first in mutual covenant and is a solemn, binding agreement entered into before God and others (Mal. 2:14). The marriage covenant is intended only to be broken by the death of either the husband or the wife. God views the breaking of this earthly covenant very seriously (2 Sam. 12; Mal. 2:16). While divorce is always contrary to God’s intentions, divorce and remarriage are permitted where the marriage covenant has been violated by adultery (Matt. 5:32) or desertion (1 Cor. 7:15). Separation is permitted where necessary for the safety and wellbeing of the members of the family.

God blesses marriage as a union in which the children who come from that union, or who are adopted into it, are cared for and nurtured and are members with their parents of the blessings of God (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 1:28; Deut. 5:16, 18, 21). Jesus powerfully affirms marriage (Mark 10:1-16; Matt. 19:3-15; John 2:1-11) which is at the heart of Christian moral teaching in the New Testament (1 Cor. 5:1-7:40; Eph. 5:21-6:9; Col. 3:5-4:1). We are married only during our time on this earth, since human marriage serves to point us to the consummate marriage of Christ and the church for all eternity (Matt. 22:30; Eph. 5:30-32).

Singleness is a state of life that honours God, whether it is for a season or life-long, and whether it is freely chosen or is the result of life circumstances (Matt. 19:10-12). As a

single, Jesus modelled a fulfilled life, complete and pure in his union with the Father and the Spirit, but also rich in friendship with both women and men. The New Testament affirms that the state of singleness demonstrates the sufficiency of Christ for all things (Matt. 19:11; Phil. 4:13; Col. 1:28), enables dedicated kingdom service (Matt. 19:11; 1 Cor. 7:32-35), and gives priority to the place of the spiritual family in the life of the believer (Matt. 12:49-50). All believers whether single or married are called to participate in discipling others as spiritual children leading them to full maturity in Christ (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 4:15).

Dedication of Children

“Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him.” (Ps. 127:3) Children are a gift from God, and therefore we practice Child Dedication in which parents publicly dedicate their infants or young children to God and covenant to raise their children to know, love and serve God.

The church body has a significant role to play in the personal and spiritual development of children. However, we believe God calls parents to take primary responsibility for the protection, growth and development of their children (Deut. 6:4-9). Parents are encouraged to raise their children within the context of the community of faith, such as being part of a small group, engaging in children’s and youth ministries, and seeking to develop strong relationships with other Christians (Eph. 6:1-4).

Human Sexuality

All People Matter to God and Need God

We believe all people matter to God. All people are created in his image (Gen. 1:27) and thus have inherent dignity. All people are unconditionally loved by God (Rom. 5:8). Because of this, Centre Street Church welcomes all people to attend our worship services and gatherings, regardless of their sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, gender/sex, marital status or any other distinguishing feature. We do not condone the harassment, alienation or bullying of any person based on their sexual orientation or any other distinguishing characteristic. Furthermore, Centre Street Church does not support or advocate any action that demeans the dignity of human life. This means that everyone is welcome to attend our church. Our desire is that everyone will be treated with love, kindness and respect.

We believe that **“...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”** (Rom 3:23). Therefore all human being fall short of God's holy standards in some way. God’s desire is for all of us to be restored to a right relationship with Him, which happens through faith in Christ and repentance of lifestyle choices contrary to His design. Our desire is to encourage all people to pursue God and surrender every area of life to Him and to grow in living a lifestyle that honours God.

God's Word as our Source of Guidance

We affirm the Holy Bible to be God's revealed truth, which is our final and authoritative source of guidance for Christian doctrine, human living, and human sexuality. We do not derive our guidance from changing cultural values and practices, which may from time to time conflict with the eternal truths of God's Word. As a community of Christ-followers, we seek to honour God by faithfully proclaiming his truth to our world, and by living in accordance with his revealed will for our individual and communal lives. We teach and preach the truth of God's Word regarding his divine will for human living, human sexuality and marriage.

Sexuality and Marriage

We believe that God created men and women in His own image and pronounced them good. **"...male and female He created them...And God saw all that He had made and it was very good."** (Gen. 1:27-31) Human sexuality is therefore a beautiful part of God's creation. All human activity, including the expression of sexuality, should honour God (Eph. 5:2; 1 Cor. 6:13b, 18-20). Followers of Jesus Christ are to live lives of holiness, including sexuality purity. **"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality...For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."** (1 Thess. 4:3-7)

We affirm that God is honoured by the mutually intimate physical expression of sexuality when this expression occurs between a man and a woman within a monogamous marriage. (Gen. 2:20-25; Mark 10:7-9). God intends marriage to be a life-long union (Gen. 2:24; Ex. 20:14) between a male and a female who are each living in the physical gender/sex in which they were born (Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:18, 20-25; Ps. 139:13-16; Mark 10:7-9). We also recognize God's affirmation of celibate singleness as a legitimate lifestyle and an important calling for some Christians. (1 Cor 7:8-9)

God's desire is to bring healing and wholeness to all aspects of our broken lives, including all sexual expression that is outside of God's design for humans. Sexual sins are expressions of sexual intimacy that are practiced outside of a monogamous marriage between a man and a woman or a life of celibate singleness. Sexual sins, like all other sins, can be forgiven by God through faith in Jesus Christ upon confession and repentance (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:8-10; Rom. 6:23; Rom. 6:11-14).

As such, we seek to help everyone come to an understanding of God's perspective on human sexuality. We strive to provide help to all persons who seek to understand and enter into a God-honouring practice of their sexuality.

The Sanctity of Persons

We believe that God created people in His own image. **"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them."**

(Gen. 1:27) Therefore, all humans are made in His likeness. They are loved by God in Christ, and are capable of relationship with God.

We therefore affirm the sanctity of all persons from conception onwards. ***“For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”*** (Ps. 139:13-14) All life is precious, and all persons must be treated with respect and dignity.

We believe that the God of the universe took up human nature and united it to Himself in the person of Christ, distinguishing humanity from the rest of creation. We believe that because of His love for the Father and for us, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered and died to rescue all of humanity from bondage to sin and death. All human beings are of eternal worth because they are made for eternal life with God.

Therefore, we ought not to treat any human being with contempt. Since every person is worthy of the love of God, all people are our neighbours and deserve our love, including those we may perceive as enemies (Luke 6:27).

Stewardship of the Earth

We believe God through Christ has created the universe and all things in it, including the earth and all humanity. ***“...All things were created by Him and for Him.”*** (Col. 1:16) All that exists therefore belongs to him. ***“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”*** (Ps. 24:1)

Because God has created the earth and all that is in it, His creation is of great value. People are called to steward the earth and its resources in a manner that honours God and preserves His creation. ***“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”*** (Gen. 2:15) Therefore, care must be taken to avoid dishonouring God by exploiting or degrading His created environment and harming it to the detriment of future generations.

Christians, Civil Society and Government

As Christians, we recognize the reign and rule of Christ over every part of our lives, and His authority over the entire world. This is called the Kingdom of God (Luke 8:1; Col. 1:13). Although this kingdom has profound social and political implications, we believe that the Kingdom of God is fundamentally a spiritual kingdom and not a political kingdom. Our communion with Christ, our fellowship with the Spirit, and our worship and obedience to the God of Jesus Christ are of higher importance for us as we ***“...seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...”*** (Matt. 6:33)

We also believe that ***“The authorities that exist have been established by God.”*** (Rom. 13:1) As such, the governing political and social order is important and must be respected and honoured. Christians must ***“Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God***

what is God's." (Mark 12:17). Christians are called to ***"...submit to the governing authorities...Give everyone what you own him: if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, than revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour."*** (Rom. 13:1-7)

However, we must not allow respect for the governing authorities to supersede our ultimate allegiance to Jesus Christ and the authority of God's Kingdom (Acts 4:18-20).

Because we know that God loves the world, and because Christ has taught us to love all of our neighbours, we should not be indifferent to their social and political wellbeing. We believe that institutions of political and social order are necessary for human wellbeing. As such, Christians should obey all just laws and should work for social, political and legal justice where it has been denied.

Christians demonstrate love for the world by seeking to develop and participate in organizations that redemptively impact every area of society, including social, political and advocacy organizations that are dedicated to the wellbeing of all persons according to natural justice and the love of God.

We believe that governments everywhere ought to allow the free exercise of Christian faith in society, and should recognize and welcome the establishment of churches and other Christian organizations as beneficial for the wellbeing of their citizens.