

Excerpt from:
CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH
of WEST BRANCH, MICHIGAN

CONSTITUTION
(Revised January, 2012)

STATEMENT OF FAITH

I. THE SCRIPTURES

We believe in the authority and sufficiency of the Holy Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, as originally written; that it was verbally and plenary inspired and inerrant in all matters of which it speaks.

We believe the Bible to be the true center of Christian unity and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creed and opinions shall be tried (II Tim. 3:16,17; II Pet. 1:9-21).

II. THE TRUE GOD

We believe there is one and only one living and true God, an infinite Spirit, the Maker and supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption (Ex. 20:2,3; I Cor. 8:6; Rev. 4:11).

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature; that He was active in the creation; that in his relation to the unbelieving world, he restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; that He bears witness to the truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the Agent in the new birth; that He seals, endues, guides, teaches, witness, sanctifies and helps the believer (John 14:16, 17; Matt. 28:19; Heb. 9:14; John 14:26; Luke 1:35; Gen. 1:1-3; John 16:8; Acts 5:30-32; John 3:5,6; Eph. 1:13,14; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Acts 11:16; Luke 24:49; rom. 8:14,16,26,27).

IV. THE DEVIL, OR SATAN

We believe in the reality and personality of Satan, the Devil; and that he was created by God as an angel but through pride and rebellion became the enemy of his Creator; that he became the unholy god of this age and the ruler of all the powers of darkness and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire (Matt. 4:11; II Cor. 4:4; Rev. 20:10).

V. CREATION

We believe the biblical account of the creation of the physical universe, angels, and man; that this account is neither allegory nor myth, but a literal, historical account of the direct, immediate creative acts of God without any evolutionary process; that man was created by a direct work of God and not from previously existing forms of life; and that all men are descended from the historical Adam and Eve, first parents of the entire human race (Gen.1,2; Col. 1:16, 17; John 1:3). We believe that God created the universe in six literal, 24 –hour periods. We reject evolution, the Gap Theory, the Day-Age Theory, and Theistic Evolution as unscriptural theories of origin.

VI. THE FALL OF MAN

We believe that man was created in innocence (in the image and likeness of God) under the law of his Maker, but by voluntary transgression Adam fell from his sinless and happy state, all men sinned in him, in consequence of which all men are totally depraved, are partakers of Adam's fallen nature, and are sinners by nature and by conduct, and therefore are under just condemnation without defense or excuse (Gen. 3:1-6; Rom. 3:23; 3:9-12; 5:12,19; 1:18,32).

VII. THE VIRGIN BIRTH

We believe that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a virgin, as no other man was ever born or can be born of woman, and that He is both the Son of God and God, the Son (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:35; John 1:4).

VIII. SALVATION

We believe that the salvation of sinners is divinely initiated and wholly of grace through the mediatorial offices of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who, by the appointment of the father, voluntarily took upon Himself our nature, yet without sin, and honored the divine law by His personal obedience, thus qualifying Himself to be our Savior; that by the shedding of His blood in His death, He fully satisfied the just demands of a holy and righteous God regarding sin; that His sacrifice consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust, Christ the Lord bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; that having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven, and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate and an all-sufficient Savior.

We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and purpose toward God prompted by the Holy Spirit and is an integral part of saving faith Jonah 2:9; Eph. 2:8; Acts 15:11; Rom. 3:24,25; John 3:16; Matt. 18:11; Phil. 2:7,8; Heb. 2:14-17; Isa. 53; 4-7; I John 4:10; I Cor. 15:3; II Cor. 5:21; I Peter 2:24).

IX. RESURRECTION AND PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ and in His ascension into Heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest interceding for us (Matt. 28:6,7; Luke 24:39; John 20:27; I Cor. 15:4; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:2-6, 51; Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 3:21; Heb. 8:6; 12:2; 7:25; I Tim. 2:5; I John 2:1; Heb. 2:17; 5:9,10).

X. GRACE AND THE NEW BIRTH

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about by our sovereign God in a manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel; that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith and newness of life (John 3:3; II Cor. 5:17; I John 5:1; Acts 16:20-33; II Pet. 1:4; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1,5; Col. 2:13; John 3:8).

XI. JUSTIFICATION

We believe that justification is that judicial act of God whereby He declares the believer righteous upon the basis of the imputed righteousness of Christ; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's shed blood (Rom. 3:24; 4:5; 5:1,9; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9).

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XII. SANCTIFICATION

We believe that sanctification is the divine setting apart of the believer unto God accomplished in a threefold manner; first, an eternal act of God, based upon redemption in Christ, establishing the believer in a position of holiness at the moment he trusts the Savior; second, a continuing process in the saint as the Holy Spirit applies the Word of God to the life; third, the final accomplishment of this process at the Lord's return (Heb. 10:10-14; 3:1; John 17:17; II Cor. 3:18; I Cor. 1:30; Eph. 5:25-27; I Thess. 4:3,4; 5:23,24; I John 3:2; Jude 24,25; Rev. 22:11).

XIII. THE SECURITY OF THE SAINTS

We believe that all who are truly born again are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6; John 10:28,29; Rom. 8:35-39; Jude 1).

XIV. THE CHURCH

We believe that a local church is an organized congregation of immersed believers associated by covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His Word; that its officers are pastors and deacons, whose qualifications, claims and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures. We believe that the true mission of the church is the faithful witnessing of Christ to all

men as we have opportunity. We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self-government free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only Superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it is Scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel; that each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation, that on all matters of membership, of policy, of government, of discipline, of benevolence, the will of the local church is final (I Cor. 12:12,13; Eph. 1:22,23; 3:1-6; 4:11; 5:23; Col. 1:18; Acts 15:13-18).

XV. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that Christian baptism is the single immersion of a believer in water to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our identification with the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, through Whom we died to sin and rose to a new life; that baptism is to be performed under the authority of the local church; and that it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration of His death until He comes, and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination. We believe that the Biblical order of the ordinances is baptism first and then the Lord's Supper, and that participants in the Lord's Supper should be immersed believers (Acts 8:36,38,39; John 3:23; Rom. 6:3-5; Matt. 3:16; Col. 2:12; I Cor. 11:23-28; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:41,42).

XVI. SEPARATION

We believe in obedience to the Biblical commands to separate ourselves unto God from worldliness and ecclesiastical apostasy (I Cor. 6:14-7:1; I Thess. 1:9,10; I Tim. 6:3-5; Rom. 16,17; II John 9-11).

XVII. CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interest and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed, except in those things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the only Lord of the conscience and the coming King of kings (Rom. 13:1-7; II Sam. 23:3; Exod. 18:21,22; Matt. 22:21; Acts 5:29; 4:19,20; Dan. 3:17,18; Acts 23:5).

XVIII. ISRAEL

We believe in the sovereign selection of Israel as God's eternal covenant people, and that she will be saved as a nation at the second advent of Christ (Gen. 13:14-17; Rom. 11:1-32; Ezek. 37). We reject Replacement Theology (the church has replaced Israel as the only covenanted people) as uscriptural.

XIX. RAPTURE AND SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

We believe in the premillennial return of Christ, an event which can occur at any moment, and that at that moment the dead in Christ shall be raised in glorified bodies, and the living in Christ shall be given glorified bodies without tasting death, and all shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air before the seven years of the Tribulation (I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:42-44, 51-54; Phil. 3:20, 21; Rev. 3:10).

We believe that the Tribulation, which follows the Rapture of the Church, will be culminated by the revelation of Christ in power and great glory to sit upon the throne of David and to establish the millennial kingdom (Dan. 9:25-17; Matt. 24:29-31; Luke 1:30-33; Isa. 9:6,7; 11:1-9; Acts 2:29,30; Rev. 20:1-4,6).

XX. THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that only those who are justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Spirit of our God are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death, in the everlasting felicity of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost in the lake of fire (Mal. 3:18; Gen. 18:23; Rom. 6:17,18; I John 5:19; Rom. 7:6; 6:23; Prov. 14:32; Luke 16:25; Matt. 25:34-41; John 8:21; Rev. 20:14,15).

XXI. HUMAN SEXUALITY

1. Sex is a wonderful gift from God given exclusively to a husband and his wife. It is an expression of their deep and intimate and unconditional love for each other. (Gen. 4:1; I Cor. 7:1-5; Heb. 13:4) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 19:5, 13; Gen. 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom 1:26-29; I Cor. 5:1; 6:9; I Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4) We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance.

2. We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman. (Gen. 2:24; Rom 7:2; I Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23)

3. We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home and men are to be the leaders (pastors and deacons) of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination by the church. (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:18; I Tim. 2:8-15; 3:4-5,12)

XXII. DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

The Holy relationship between a husband and his wife was instituted by God Himself in the Garden of Eden. Marriage is a divine institution which is celebrated and elevated throughout Scripture. (Gen. 2:24; Heb. 13:4) We believe that God hates divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. Divorce and remarriage is regarded as adultery except on the grounds of fornication. Although divorced and remarried persons or divorced persons may hold positions of service in the church and be greatly used of God for Christian service, they may not be considered for the offices of pastor, deacons, deaconess, (this principle applies to both potential office holders and his/her spouse and it matters not whether the divorce took place before or after one's salvation.). (Mal. 2:14-17; Matt. 19:3-12; Rom 7:1-3; I Tim. 3:2,12; Titus 1:6)

XXIII. ABORTION

We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. Abortion is murder. We reject any teaching that abortions of pregnancies due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the mental well-being of the mother are acceptable. (Job 3:16; Psalms 51:5; 139:14-16; Isa. 44:24; 49:1,5; Jer. 1:5; 20:15-18; Luke 1:44)

XXIV. LAWSUITS

Christ said that the world would know we are His disciples by our love for each other. God expects brothers and sisters in Christ to treat each other the same way that Christ treats the church. (John 13:35; Eph. 5:1,2) We believe that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander. (I Cor. 6:1-8; Eph. 4:31-32)

XXV. GIVING

The Apostle Paul asks the Christians in Corinth the following question, "What do you have that has not been received?" Everything we have has been given to us by our gracious and good God and we are stewards of these things. (I Cor. 4:2,7) We believe that every Christian, as a steward of that portion of God's wealth entrusted to him, is obligated to support his local church financially. We believe that God has established the tithe as a basis for giving, but that every Christian should also give other offerings sacrificially and cheerfully to the support of the church, the relief of those in need, and the spread of the Gospel. We believe that a Christian relinquishes all rights to direct the use of the tithe or offering once the gift has been made. (Gen. 14:20; Prov. 3:9-10; Acts 4:34-37; I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 9:6-7; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:28; I Tim. 5:17-18; I John 3:17)

XXVI. LIFESTYLE STANDARD ISSUES

We have the privilege of representing Christ in all places and at all times. We believe Christians are responsible to maintain a lifestyle which brings glory to God and exhibits modesty to man. We believe this two-fold principle funnels down to very practical areas of life, such as the Christian's speech, dress, mannerisms, and activities. We believe the above standard applies to every church member, both at and away from the church, and that it applies to all people within the church building(s) and on its grounds. (I Cor. 10:31; Phil. 4:5; Eph. 4:29)

XXVII ASSOCIATIONS

Who and what we associate with is a very significant thing. The wise man Solomon teaches us that we become like those whom we "walk with." (Prov. 13:20) We believe Christians are responsible to maintain those associations only which bring glory to God and are consistent with the principles set forth in God's Word, the Bible. (Josh. 23; II Cor. 6:11-18; Gal. 1:6-9; II John 7-11)

XXVIII EUTHANASIA

We believe that the direct taking of an innocent human life is a moral evil, regardless of the intention. Life is a gift of God and must be respected from conception until natural death. Thus we believe that an act or omission which, of itself or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder contrary to the will of God. Discontinuing medical procedures that are extraordinary or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be a legitimate refusal of overzealous treatment. (Ex. 20:13, 23:7; Matt. 5:21; Acts 17:28)