

NEW HOPE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

STATEMENT OF FAITH AND PRACTICE

Many people look at Christianity as a set of beliefs. We believe Christianity goes beyond a set of beliefs to a personal, living relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship involves loving Jesus, following Jesus, learning from Jesus, believing and obeying his word, the Bible, all of which is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. II Tim. 3:16. What we present here is not to add to or take away from God's Word, but only to summarize some of the principle teachings for the New Testament Church.

GOD THE FATHER

We believe there is but one God [Deut.6:4], eternal [Ps.90:2], perfect [Ps.18:30], and unchangeable [Mal.3:6]. He is the almighty [Ex.6:3] and all-knowing [Heb. 4:13] creator of all things. [Gen. 1] Heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool. [Isa. 66:1]

JESUS CHRIST THE SON

We believe that Jesus Christ is God manifested in the flesh. [John 1:14] He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the virgin womb of Mary. [Matt.1:18] Christ, as God's son, went to the cross and died for our sins. [1 Pet. 2:24] He rose from the grave by the power of God, [Rom.6:4] and ascended to the right hand of the Father. [Eph.1:20] All power is given to him, [Matt.28:18] for in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.[Col. 2:9] There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. [Acts 4:12]

THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe there is a Holy Ghost who proceeds from the Father and testifies of the Son. [John 15:26] He reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. [John 16:8] The Holy Ghost indwells and comforts the believer, [John 14:16-17] guides him into all truth, [John 16:13] empowers him for service, [Luke 24:49] and enables him to live a life of righteousness. [Rom.8:13] He is given by God to all who obey him. [Acts 5:32] It is by receiving the Holy Spirit that we are baptized into one body. [1Cor.12:13]

THE TRIUNE GODHEAD

We believe that God is a triune God expressed in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. [II For. 13:14] These three are one God. [I John 5:7]

THE WORD OF GOD

We believe that the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God, [II Peter 1:21] revealing God and his will both in the Old and New Testaments. [II Tim. 3:15-17] The Word of God is forever settled in heaven. [Psalm. 119:89] The Scriptures bear witness of eternal life through Jesus Christ, [John 20:31] give direction for holy living, [Psalms.119:9] and will be the standard of judgment on the last day. [John 12:48] The Old Testament Law,

which was fulfilled by Jesus Christ, [Matt.5:17-18] has passed away, and God has given to us the New Testament which we recognize to be the Christian churches' guidebook of faith and practice. [Heb. 8:7-13]

THE FALL OF MAN

We believe that man was created in the image of God, [Gen. 1:27] but through disobedience to God fell to a condition of spiritual death and became subject to physical death. [Gen. 2:17] This death passed upon all men. [Rom. 5:12] Man is a helpless creature set only on continual wickedness. [Jer. 17:9] He needs salvation. [Rom. 3:23]

HEAVEN AND HELL

We believe that heaven and hell are real places. People who die without Christ will die eternally [Matt. 25:36] in a burning lake of fire, being tormented in the flames. [Matt. 13:50; Rev.14:11] People who die in the Lord will live eternally with Christ and in beautiful fellowship with him forever. [John 14:1-3; Rev.22]

SALVATION

We believe that man is saved by the mercy and grace of God through faith in the redemptive work of Christ, [Acts 15:11; Eph. 2:8-10; Matt. 1:21; Gal. 3:13] the power of the Word of God, [I Peter 1:22-23] and the indwelling, renewing, and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. [Tit. 3:4-7] We believe that repentance precedes forgiveness of sins, [Acts 2:38; Matt. 3:8; Luke 24:47] and includes "fruit" or evidence of a change of heart and life. Faith issues in obedience, [Acts 5:32; 6:7; I Peter 1:2; Rom. 1:5, 16:25-26] and complete surrender to God. [Rom.6:13-22, 12:1-2] Through this experience man becomes a partaker of eternal life and all spiritual blessings, [Eph. 1:3; II Peter 1:4] and is empowered to live a life of victory over the flesh, the world, and Satan. [I Peter 5:9; Gal. 1:4, 2:20; I Tim. 4:10]

SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER

We believe that those who have been redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ and are born again children of God have the assurance that they are eternally secure as long as they abide in the true vine, Jesus Christ, and continue in the faith. But if we do not abide, and do not continue in the faith, we shall be cast forth as a branch and be burned. [Heb. 3:11-12; John 15:1-6]

SATAN

We believe that Satan is a real person and a fallen angelic being who through rebellion lost his position in heaven. [Isa.14:12-15; John 12:18] He is the god of this world, [II Cor. 4:4] and the prince of devils. [Matt. 12:24] Satan makes war against the saints of God, appearing both as a roaring lion, [I Peter 5:8] and as an angel of light. [II Cor.11-14] Christians can stand against him by putting on the whole armor of God [Eph. 6:10-18] and overcome him by the blood of the Lamb. [Rev.12:18] Satan will finally be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone to be tormented day and night forever and ever. [Rev. 20:10]

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We believe that the kingdom of God, or Christ, is a spiritual kingdom, [Luke 17:20-21] and stands in contrast to the kingdoms of the world. [John 15:19] In the Sermon on the Mount [Matt. 5-7] Jesus presented a higher standard of holiness for his kingdom.

Citizenship in his kingdom therefore:

- Prevents participation in the affairs of state and serving in the armed forces. [John 18:36]
- Enjoins returning good for evil, [I Thess. 5:15] praying for persecutors, [Matt. 5:44] feeding and clothing the needy, [Luke 3:11] and doing good to all men, including enemies. [Rom. 12:14-21]
- Forbids speaking evil of anyone, [Titus 3:2] resisting evil or taking vengeance, [Matt. 5:39] suing by law, or in any way demanding personal rights. [I Cor. 6:1-8]
- Forbids swearing of oaths, [Matt. 5:33-37] and idle words in speech. [Matt. 12:35-37]
- Enjoins an explicit trust in God for material and spiritual maintenance. [Matt. 6:25-34] Trusting in the arm of flesh or human securities is a violation of trust in divine preservation. [Phil. 4:6-9]
- Calls for the subjection of our thought life to the obedience of Christ. [II Cor. 10:3-5]
- Calls for carefulness in personal appearance, not following the fashions of the world, [I John 2:16; Rom. 12:2; Titus 2:11-12] adorning with jewelry or cosmetics but dressing modestly. Long skirts for women and long pants for men reflect the beauty and dignity of Godly femininity and masculinity. [Gen. 1:27]
- The covered or uncovered head is a symbol of God's headship order: God, Christ, man, woman. It signifies to the fallen, rebellious gods of this world that our allegiance is to Christ and his kingdom. A man ought not to cover his head to pray or prophesy, lest he dishonor his head and a woman ought to cover her head to pray or prophesy lest she dishonor her head. I Cor. 11:2-16]

DISCIPLESHIP

We believe that discipleship is a clear characteristic of all true Christians. [Luke 14:33] A disciple willingly bears the cross and denies himself, forsaking all things that hinder his fellowship with God. [Luke 14:26-27] This crucifixion of the flesh and walk in the Spirit is the operation of God by faith, [Col. 2:10-12] a moment by moment surrender of the will to God. [Gal. 5:24-25]

EVANGELISM

We believe that the commission given by Christ to his disciples [Matt. 28:19-20] was a commission given to all believers to testify and spread the gospel to a lost and dying world, as opportunities arise in daily life. [Acts 8:4] We also believe that there are brethren who have a calling to preach the gospel as evangelists, and are sent to this work with fasting, praying, and laying on of hands by the brethren. [Acts 13:3]

SANCTIFICATION

We believe that as we have been saved by grace through faith, we are also sanctified [set apart] for God through Christ. [Heb.10:10] As we follow the Truth, God continues to

work a progressive sanctification in us. [II Cor. 7:1] This is a cleansing work of the Holy Spirit, that our whole spirit, soul, and body be wholly sanctified. [I Thess. 5:23]

THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

We believe that the height of the Christian experience is attained, maintained, and expressed in a life of devotion to God, which is a continual pressing of the heart in love and fellowship with God. [I Cor. 3:18] Prayer, studying the Word, meditation, fasting, [Luke 2:37] and singing from the heart, [Eph. 5:19] are expressions of devotion to God. We believe that the heart that is lifted up to God will then bring forth the holy actions commanded in the scriptures. [Gal. 5:22-23]

MARRIAGE AND THE CHRISTIAN HOME

We believe that marriage is an institution ordained of God and was set apart, or sanctified, in the creation. [Gen. 2:19-24] It was set forth by God for the propagation of the human race, [Gen. 1:28] for the integrity of the human family, [Heb. 13:4] and for the bringing up of godly children. [Eph. 6:4] God recognizes all first marriages where vows have been made. [Mark 10:6-9] In God's eyes only death can break that marriage covenant. [I Cor. 7:39] We further believe that God forbids divorce except in cases of sexual immorality and marriage with a divorced person having a former spouse still living is the forming of an adulterous relationship. [Matt. 19:8-9; Mark 10:11-12] The Christian home is of great importance in the promotion of moral purity and faith. It is the haven of mutual love and godliness, a shelter from the corruption of society. The home should be ordered according to Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3. We believe that godly parents who see their responsibility will raise godly children not accused of riot or unruliness. [Titus 1:6] Husbands are to love their wives, following the example of Christ, and being the spiritual head of the home, [I Cor. 11:3] must assume final responsibility for the direction of worship, for decisions, and for the discipline of the children. [I Tim. 3:4; Eph.6:4] Wives are to be reverent and submissive. [Eph. 5:22] demonstrating their chaste conversation [walk of life] of godliness. [I Peter 3:1-6] Children are to be in subjection and obedient to their parents. [Eph. 6:1; I Tim. 3:4]

CHRISTIAN ORDINANCES

We believe that certain ordinances were instituted by God for the purpose of expressing heavenly thoughts and meaning, given to draw our attention toward spiritual truth. There is a blessing promised in practicing them in the church. [I Cor. 11:2; John 3:17]

- Baptism shall be given to all who have demonstrated repentance and a changed life, [Acts 2:38] to all who truly believe that their sins are taken away by Christ, to all who wish to be buried with him into death, so that they may be resurrected with him. [Rom. 6:3-4] We baptize only those who understand baptism to mean these things and request it for themselves. [I Peter 3:21]
- Communion was instituted to remind us, till the Lord's return, of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. [I Cor. 11:23-26] All who desire to eat this bread and drink this cup shall first examine themselves, lest they partake unworthily, bringing damnation upon themselves. [I Cor. 10:21; I Cor. 11: 27-29]

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

We believe that the church is the body of Christ, both local and worldwide. [I Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22-23] The church consists of those persons from all nations who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and who have responded to the call of salvation with the obedience of faith. [Acts 10:34-35; Rev.5:9] We further believe that the local church is a brotherhood, submitting to one another in the fear of God. [Eph. 5:21] Each individual is set for the edification of the whole. [Eph. 4:12]

- Members address each other privately concerning inconsistencies or error they observe in one another. [Heb. 3:13; James 5:19-20]
- Church discipline must be exercised according to clear biblical guidelines. The motivation for such discipline is love, restoration, and the purification of the church. [Matt. 18:15-20; Rom. 16-17; I Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1; II These. 3:6,14-15; Titus 3:10]
- All property is held in stewardship as God's. There is a conscious effort made to discern the needs of others and share to the point of meeting their needs. [II Cor. 8:11-15] The Bible warns of the accumulation of riches and therefore commands distribution according to ability. [I Tim. 6:17-19; Gal. 6:10]
- Members desire to honor others, esteem others before themselves, freely forgive and live in humble submission to one another, [Col. 3:12-13; Phil. 2:1-4] endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Unity of the faith is attained by acknowledging and benefiting from the spiritual gifts Christ gives to the church. [Eph. 4:1-16; Rom. 12; I Cor.12] Change in belief or practice that affects the local church body shall be discussed with those appointed to lead. A living expression of love and unity in the body of Christ is the strongest testimony for truth to a lost world. [John 13:34-35; John 17:21-23]

THE RESURRECTION

We believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ [Matt. 28:5-6] and in the bodily resurrection of all men, both of the just and the unjust; of the just to the resurrection of life, and of the unjust to the resurrection of condemnation. [John 5:28-29]

THE RETURN OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

We believe that the same Lord Jesus that ascended into heaven will also come to earth again. He will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice the archangel and with the trump of God. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and all those saints who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. This is the comfort and lively hope of the children of God. [I Thess. 4:18]

We also believe that the Lord's return will be a time of horror and wailing for those who have rejected God and his provision for the redemption of the sinner. They will call for rocks and mountains to hide them but it will be too late. [Rev. 6:16]