

CRESTWICKE BAPTIST CHURCH AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we affirm the following as a summary of what we believe to be basic truths about God and his works.

Section A – The Bible

Throughout history God has revealed himself in a variety of ways, and God has preserved the substance of this revelation in the Bible. When we say “the Bible,” we mean the sixty-six books of the Old Testament and New Testament. On the basis of their own witness, we recognize these books were written by divinely-chosen authors as they were prompted and guarded by the Spirit of God. Although those writers were genuine authors and in most cases not just secretaries taking dictation, the work of the Spirit was so complete that everything written in the biblical books taught the truth without any errors. This inerrancy of the Bible, strictly speaking, applies to its books as originally written; but God has preserved those writings in such a way that in the copies and translations of the Bible which we possess, for all practical purposes, we can be confident that we have the original text of the Bible. In any attempt to define what we ought to believe or how we ought to live, only the Bible can be used as a final authority. Traditional interpretations of the Bible and confessions of faith are useful guides, but they are always open to correction based on further study of the Bible. Any union with others who profess to be Christians must be based on a shared commitment to the unique authority and complete truthfulness of the Bible. (Matthew 5:17-18; John 16:12-15; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

Section B – The Triune God

There is one, and only one, God, who is the creator of this universe. God has always existed and will always exist. He is the ultimate authority over all persons and things, and he answers to no higher being or principle. In biblical terms we affirm that he is “holy,” which means that he is in every way unique and in a category all his own, free from all the limits and imperfections experienced by creatures. In both the majesty of his being and the moral purity of his nature and action, he is uniquely perfect. Although God is one in his being, he exists eternally in three divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So God is both one and three, but not in the same sense – the Trinity is a mystery but not a mathematical contradiction. The idea of the Trinity is beyond our full comprehension, but we are compelled by the witness of the Bible to affirm it. (Genesis 1-2; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

God the Father

God the Father is described in Scripture as the One who decreed all things in accordance with his perfectly loving wisdom and will. He providentially cares for his universe and all creation with his infinite power. He is the wellspring and fountain of our salvation. (Ephesians 1:3-14; Psalm 104)

God the Son

The supreme revelation of God is found in Jesus Christ, the God-Man. The Son of God, a truly divine Person of the Trinity, existed eternally; but in order to save us humans, he added to his divinity a true and perfect human nature and thus became Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was miraculously conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a Jewish virgin,

Mary. He lived a sinless life in obedience to God the Father, and his obedience culminated in his death as a payment of the penalty for the disobedience of sinful humans. God vindicated him when he raised him bodily from the dead, and he ascended to heaven where he reigns at the right hand of God the Father over all things for the church. He now intercedes for us who believe in him and preserves us in our relationship with the Father while we await his personal return. (Matthew 1:18-23; John 1:1-18; Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8)

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is truly divine and is a personal agent, not just an impersonal force. The Spirit makes the work of Jesus Christ effective in us by convincing us that we have sinned against God, that we therefore fail to meet God's standard for human life, that we are subject to God's judgment for that reason, and that Christ is the answer to our need. The Holy Spirit indwells all those who believe in Christ, and gives to believers a new spiritual ability to understand God's Word and live in obedience to it. By indwelling us he sets us apart as God's children; he continues to transform us into faithful followers of Christ; and he will in the end make us fully Christlike. (John 7:37-39; 14:16-17; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13)

Section C – Angels and Demons

Angels are spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence but without bodies. They were created by God to serve his purposes. Satan (also called the Devil) exists as an evil, personal, spirit-being who opposes the work of God in the world. Although created as a good, angelic being, he originated rebellion against God among other angels (who, having rebelled, are called demons) and subsequently among human beings. He continues to use his real but limited power to oppose all that would serve the glory of God and the good of humankind. Christ defeated Satan and the demons through the cross and though believers are engaged in spiritual warfare in the present time, the victory of Christ will be consummated when he returns. (Genesis 3:1-15; Job 1:6-12; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 1 Peter 5:8-9)

Section D – Humanity

Human beings were created by God to be like him in every way which is necessary to exist in relationship with him and to serve as God's visible representatives in the exercise of responsible dominion over the created world. God's created design is honoured when we align our self-identity with our biological sex. Sexual distinction is honoured when each sees the opposite sex as their equal and when the natural object of sexual desire is agreed to be the opposite sex.

Our first parents sinned by disobeying an explicit divine command and thus brought ruin on the human race. The Bible describes this ruin in terms of "death": spiritual death, which involves corruption at the core of our being, so that humans are by nature totally incapable of pleasing God; physical death, which is the destiny of all humans; and ultimately eternal death, involving permanent separation from God as the destiny of all those who refuse to repent and respond to God's offer of grace. (Genesis 1:26-27; 3:1-24; Romans 5:12-19; Ephesians 2:1-3)

Section E – Salvation

Although God could have left all humans in their sin and guilt, he freely and graciously chose to deliver us from our ruined condition. He provided his eternal Son to become human in

order to save us. Christ lived a sinless life of obedience that fully pleased God the Father. His obedience culminated in his death, by which he bore the penalty which is justly ours, thus satisfying the demands of God's moral law and turning away the wrath of God that we deserve. God signified his approval of Christ's work by raising him from the dead and exalting him as Lord in heaven. On the basis of this work of Christ in our behalf, God accepts as perfectly righteous all those who trust in Christ, who died and rose again. We come to believe in Christ because God does a special work of grace to overcome our sinful disposition and draw us to himself, and God will continue this work of grace, so that all who have been drawn to faith in Christ will be preserved in faith and salvation and will enter into the perfect conditions of eternal life in the age to come. (John 6:35-40; Romans 3:19-26; 8:28-30; 1 Peter 1:18-23)

Section F – The Church

The universal church, the community of believers in Christ, is manifested in local churches throughout the world. A properly ordered local church is a community of persons who have confessed their faith in Christ by being immersed in Christian baptism, and who by their baptism have committed themselves to one another as well as to Christ. Together they seek to proclaim the gospel of Christ, to build up each other as growing followers of Christ, to transmit the Christian faith to succeeding generations, and to worship God as his people called to be a distinct society in this world. Each local church is called to acknowledge Christ as Lord and Head of the church and to use their divinely-given abilities and opportunities to make Christ known in their various communities. Each church needs to be served by two kinds of leaders: some who carry out a ministry of teaching and governing (known in the Bible as elders, overseers, or pastors), and some who lead in the practical implementation of ministry (known in the Bible as deacons). (Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-15; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

Section G – Signs of the Gospel

Among the things commanded by Christ, there are two visible signs of the gospel which he instituted for observance by his followers until he returns, one as a sign of Christian initiation and the other as a means of ongoing nurture.

1. Baptism is the immersion in water of a confessing believer, designed to occur at the beginning of Christian experience as the formal means of response to the gospel and initiation as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. The act is a powerful symbol of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, with all that this implies about our death to our old life and our spiritual rebirth. (Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 6:3-4)
2. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic meal in which believers together partake of bread and wine as a tangible reminder of the body and blood of Christ which were offered up for our salvation. By this act of eating and drinking, the whole community of believers proclaims the Lord's death until he returns. (Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34)

Section H – Religious Liberty

We believe that a free church in a free state is the Christian ideal. Therefore, all men and women have the right to form and promote opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil authorities. Civil government, in its various forms, is designed by God as a means to protect the welfare and good order of society as a whole. Christians are responsible to pray for those who are given this awesome responsibility and to

conscientiously obey the laws imposed by these governing authorities. However, in view of the fact that Jesus Christ is the ultimate Lord of all and the ruler of the earthly authorities, laws which are opposed to the revealed will of Christ must be disobeyed by his followers. But this is the exception, not the rule, and such civil disobedience must occur only when it is regrettably necessary. (Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Matthew 22:21)

Section I – Future Things

In hope we believe that Jesus Christ will return personally, bodily, and gloriously, just as he promised and his apostles affirmed. In the end Christ will raise from the dead all who have ever lived, and he will declare God's perfect judgment concerning every person. Those who have been unrepentant will exist eternally in the conscious punishment of hell and those who have been saved will live eternally in the perfect, renewed creation. (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20-22)

Church Covenant – Crestwicke Baptist Church

Having been led by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now enter into heartfelt covenant with one another, as one body of Christ.

We determine, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to work together in Christian love, and to support the ministry of this church through regular participation in worship, cheerful giving, adherence to its doctrines and obedience to its discipline.

We will be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of God at home and around the world. We will exemplify a lifestyle which promotes physical and spiritual well being in our personal lives, our church life and society. We will be fair and faithful in our dealings, living lives of honesty and integrity.

We covenant to watch over each other in brotherly love, remember each other in prayer, aid each other in sickness and distress, cultivate Christian sympathy in feelings and courtesy in speech, be slow to take offense and always be ready for reconciliation.

We further agree that in all matters brought before the church we will abide by the expressed will of the majority and will co-operate in accomplishing whatever the majority wills. Moreover, if the time shall come when we believe, as individuals, that we can no longer work in harmony with the expressed will of the majority, we agree, without strife or delay, to withdraw from the fellowship of this church. We promise that when we move from this place, we will, as the Lord leads, unite with another local family of believers where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.