

HARVEST COMMUNITY CHURCH OF WOONSOCKET
STATEMENT OF FAITH
March 4, 2015

BIBLIOLOGY

The Study of the Word of God

REVELATION: The written content of the Bible was revealed by God in order to unveil Himself and His eternal plan to men.

INSPIRATION: Through inspiration, God moving holy men to write, the Lord made certain that His revelation about Himself was recorded without error in the original documents. Every facet of Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

ILLUMINATION: Illumination is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to believers teaching them all things from the closed canon of Scripture, through study and meditation for the purpose of glorifying Christ. The Spirit also uses those who have the gift of teaching to carry out this ministry, including the written works of those now dead (Psalm 119:99; John 16:12-15; Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 2:9-3:3; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 John 2:27).

AUTHORITY: Since the Bible's ultimate Author is God, it is without error and is our authoritative guide in all matters of faith and practice (John 16:12-15).

CANONICITY: The canon of Scripture is a closed collection of writings, consisting of all writings and only those writings inspired by God. The 39 books of the Hebrew Old Testament and the 27 books of the Greek New Testament contain the whole canon of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16; Jude 3; Revelation 22:18-21). Because Scripture is God's only written revelation to men, it is our sole source of infallible guidance for faith and practice. We do not accept the apocryphal books as canonical (Matthew 5:17-18; cp. Revelation 22:18-19; Jude 3). We believe in a normal (literal), grammatical and historical interpretation of Scripture that affirms, for example, the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in seven literal, 24-hour days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17).

SUFFICIENCY: Scripture states that it is able to equip us for every good work. Also the Lord states that He has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the body of knowledge wherein His great and precious promises are recorded. Therefore, we believe that the Bible alone, as one applies it to his life, is a sufficient resource to prepare the believer to handle all the problems and difficulties of life and ministry (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3-11).

THEOLOGY PROPER

The Study of God, Including Paterology

The Bible reveals One, triune God, existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, eternal in being, identical in nature, equal in power and glory and having the same attributes and perfections; each member of the trinity is co-equal and co-eternal (Deuteronomy 6:4; John 4:24; 16:8-13; Ephesians 1:11; 3:11; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 Corinthians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 13:4; Hebrews 10:7).

CHRISTOLOGY

The Study of Jesus Christ

THE INCARNATION: We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God (John 1:1-2, 14).

THE VIRGIN BIRTH: Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:35).

HIS SUBSTITUTIONARY DEATH: He accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice for all men (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

HIS RESURRECTION: His literal bodily resurrection from the dead guaranteed redemption forever and the future glorification of believers (Luke 24:39; Hebrews 10:9-14; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Colossians 1:27).

HIS PRESENT SESSION: The Lord Jesus Christ, in His glorified body, is now in Heaven, exalted at the right hand of God the Father, where He presently fulfills the ministries of Representative, Intercessor and Advocate as the High Priest for His people (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1-2).

PNEUMATOLOGY

The Study of the Holy Spirit

HIS SALVATION WORK: We believe that the Holy Spirit is a Person who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; that at the moment of salvation He regenerates and indwells every believer during this present age, baptizes them into the body of Christ, seals them unto the day of redemption, and imparts at least one spiritual gift for the common good (John 16:8-11; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:7, 12-14; Ephesians 1:13-14).

HIS POST-SALVATION WORK: The Spirit continues to minister to believers throughout their lives in the following ways: comforts, convicts, enables, intercedes on behalf of, leads, produces fruit in, sanctifies, teaches, and witnesses to one's human spirit. Also, each believer is commanded to walk by means of the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit is grieved or quenched by acts of personal sin and participation in evil (John 16:12-15; Acts 9:31; Romans 8:14, 16, 26; 9:1; Galatians 5:16-18, 22-23; Ephesians 3:16-20; 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

SPIRITUAL GIFTS: The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to every believer. He gives these gifts "for the common good", and they are God-given abilities that Christians should employ to serve one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. God used some spiritual gifts (such as apostleship, miracles, tongues, healings, prophecy), which were temporary in nature, as signs to unbelieving Jews and to confirm the New Testament message and its messengers. Most of the sign-gifts legitimately functioned until the completion of the canon of Scripture and its promulgation (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 28-30; 13:8-10; 14:21-22; Ephesians 2:20; 4:11; Hebrews 2:3b-4; 1 Peter 4:10). The Gift of tongues was specifically given as a warning to unbelieving Jews as to the impending destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 (1 Corinthians 14:21-22; cf. Isaiah 28:11). Thus, with the implementation of the fifth cycle of divine discipline (Leviticus 26:27-33) God's purpose for the gift of tongues was fulfilled.

ANGELOLOGY

The Study of Angels

EXISTENCE: We believe in the existence of a superior creation called angels, now divided into two categories called "elect" and "fallen." Fallen angels further divide into two sections: imprisoned and free; they are hostile enemies of God and all people (Mark 8:38; 1 Timothy 4:1; 5:21; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

ANGELIC CONFLICT: The Bible reveals a conflict between Satan and his forces (the fallen angels) and Michael, an archangel, and the elect angelic forces. This conflict has a real impact on Christians, and thus they are to ready themselves for effective spiritual warfare. Through observing man, the angels learn the manifold wisdom of God (Daniel 10:13; Ephesians 3:10; 6:10-18; cp. Revelation 12:7-9).

SATAN: God's Word reveals the personality, fall, and program of Satan, the leader of the fallen angels. His future confinement is in the Lake of Fire with all fallen angels and unbelieving humans. There they will experience everlasting conscious torment (Ezekiel 28:12-17; Job 1:6-7; Revelation 12:7-9; 20:10).

ANTHROPOLOGY

The Study of Man

CREATION: We accept the Genesis account of the seven consecutive and literal days of creation in which God created the universe by His spoken word. (Genesis 1; Psalm 33:6, 9).

THE FALL: We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God and that in Adam's sin the human race fell, inherited a sinful nature and became alienated from God (Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:22-23; 5:12; 1 Corinthians 11:7; Ephesians 2:12).

TOTAL DEPRAVITY: We believe that man is neither inherently good nor able to merit eternal salvation. There is nothing in Adam's fallen descendants with which God can be pleased. There is nothing in man's fallen nature that seeks after God (Romans 3:11-12). Man is, therefore, completely dependent upon God's grace for eternal salvation from the conscious torment of a literal, eternal lake of fire (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:9-18; 6:23; 7:18).

EVIDENCES OF MAN'S DEPRAVED CONDITION: We believe that Romans 1-3 give an excellent summary of what man is like before regeneration. He has sinned and falls short of the glory of God. His sinfulness (upon which the wrath of God is presently being revealed) is characterized by lesbianism, homosexuality, covetousness, maliciousness, murder, deceit, gossip, violence, disobedience to parents, and unmerciful attitudes and actions (Romans 1:18, 24-32; 3:23).

SOTERIOLOGY

The Study of Salvation

GENUINE OFFER OF SALVATION: We believe that the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ upon the cross renders the entire human race "savable." Therefore, the atonement is unlimited and the offer of salvation to "whosoever will" come is legitimate in every way (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). However, apart from the drawing ministry of God the Holy Spirit, no man will seek after God (Romans 3:11-12; John 6:44). Thus God uses the drawing ministries of the Father and the Son and the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit to lead the elect into an eternal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ (John 6:44; 12:32; 16:7-11).

ELECTION: We believe that Scripture reveals that God sovereignly chooses His own in Christ (Job 42:2; Psalm 135:6; Isaiah 46:9-10; Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 24:22, 24, 31; Luke 18:7; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:29-33; Galatians 1:15; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2). Of the church Paul declared that “He [God] chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4). Election is declared to be (1) according to God’s merciful choice (Romans 9:16) and (2) according to His own purpose (Romans 9:11).

MEANS OF SALVATION: We believe that salvation is the gift of God, brought to men by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Man appropriates salvation by the sole means of faith alone in Christ alone, whose death and resurrection are the ground of man's salvation. The means of salvation is to be properly correlated with and distinguished from issues related to discipleship (Acts 16:31; 4:12; John 1:12; 3:16, 18; 20:31; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 5:11-12). No act of obedience preceding or following faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, such as commitment or willingness to obey, sorrow for sin, turning from one's sin, baptism, or submission to the Lordship of Christ, may be added to, or considered a part of, faith as a condition for receiving eternal salvation. The saving transaction between God and the sinner is simply the giving and receiving of a free gift that is without cost to the believer (John 4:10; Romans 4:5; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; Revelation 22:17).

ETERNAL SECURITY: Having believed in Christ as Savior at one moment in time, the believer is kept secure forever by God. He does, however, discipline an erring son as a beloved child when necessary. Salvation once possessed cannot be lost. This belief in God's merciful and secure salvation is not a license to careless living. On the contrary, it is a powerful incentive to godly living (John 10:27-30; Romans 8:38-39; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 12:12; Hebrews 10:14; 12:6-13; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

ASSURANCE: One's assurance of eternal salvation comes through faith in the promise God makes in His Word that everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ possesses eternal life. Good works, that can and should follow regeneration, are not necessary to affirm assurance of eternal life (John 5:24; 6:47; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8; 1 John 5:9-13).

HAMARTIOLOGY

The Study of Sin

We believe that the Scriptures reveal three categories of sin: Imputed Sin, Inherent Sin and Personal Sin:

IMPUTED SIN: At conception, God credits to every member of the human race the responsibility and penalty for Adam's sin (Romans 5:12; 5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 15:22).

INHERENT SIN (SIN NATURE): Every person inherits a sinful capacity which causes and leads him to commit personal acts of sin (Romans 6:6; 7:17-18; Ephesians 4:22).

PERSONAL SIN: Personal sin is any lack of conformity to the will of God in word or thought or deed (Mark 7:20-23; Romans 6:12-13; 2 Corinthians 10:5; James 3:5-6).

DISPENSATIONS

The Study of God's Oversight of History

Dispensations are the divine administrations of human affairs from Adam through the end of time. Though time is not a primary consideration, each divine administration or dispensation

relates to a definite period of human history. There are six dispensations: two are Theocentric (the Dispensation of the Gentiles and the Dispensation of Israel), two are Christocentric (the Dispensation of the Unglorified Humanity of Christ and the Dispensation of the Church), and two are eschatological (the Tribulation Dispensation and the Dispensation of the Kingdom). Three dispensations comprise the larger part of the Bible: the Dispensation of Israel (from the call of Abraham to Christ), the present Dispensation of the Church (from Pentecost to the Rapture), and the future dispensation of Christ's 1000-year Kingdom reign. A clear distinction should be maintained between Israel and the Church. God deals distinctly with each group (Genesis 12:1-3; John 1:17; Acts 2; 1 Corinthians 10:32; Galatians 3:19; Ephesians 1:10; Revelation 20:1-7). Dispensations are not different ways of gaining forgiveness and eternal life, but different administrations of God as He superintends man's daily living before Christ, after Christ, and with Christ on earth. Eternal salvation was, is, and always will be a free gift by grace through faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-10).

ECCLESIOLOGY

The Study of the Church

THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH: We believe that the Church, that is, the body and future bride of Christ, is a spiritual entity made up of all born-again believers of this present age despite their affiliation with churches and organizations (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25-27; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Ephesians 4:11-16). The birthday of the Church was the day of Pentecost (cp. Acts 1:5 with 11:15-16 and chap. 2). The Church is a distinct entity not to be confused with Israel (1 Corinthians 11:32).

THE LOCAL CHURCH: The universal Church is visibly functional through fellowship groups, called local churches, meeting in identifiable locations and that should be autonomous and governed by their own leadership (1 Corinthians 1:1-2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17). The congregation is responsible to submit to its leadership (Hebrews 13:17). We further believe that the local church is an assembly of believers meeting together for the purposes of worship, communion, Bible study, prayer, fellowship, mutual care, discipline, and witnessing (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 10:24-25).

CHURCH LEADERS: We believe that God calls qualified men to lead and teach the assembled congregation, and that a woman is not to exercise authority over men. In all other areas of church life and ministry, women may and should serve (1 Corinthians 11:3; 14:33b-37; 1 Tim. 2:12-15). We believe that the scriptures clearly identify the leadership of the local church as being a plurality (Acts 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1, 5) with one elder from among them emerging as the prominent teaching elder or overseeing pastor of that local assembly (Acts 2:37, 5:29, 21:18; 1 Timothy 5:17).

ESCHATOLOGY

The Study of the End Times (Prophecy)

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH: We believe that the next great event in the fulfillment of prophecy is the coming of the Lord Jesus in the air to receive to Himself, in the twinkling of an eye, both the dead in Christ and believers who remain alive. We know this event theologically as the Rapture of the Church (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 4:13-5:10; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:2).

THE TRIBULATION: We believe that the Rapture of the Church will be followed by the fulfillment of Israel's Seventieth Week, a seven-year period of tribulation, the latter half of which is the time of Jacob's trouble, the Great Tribulation (Daniel 9:24-27; Jeremiah 30:7; Matthew 24:15-21; Revelation 6:1-17).

THE SECOND COMING: We believe that the Great Tribulation will be climaxed by the premillennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ who will make His enemies His footstool and set up His Kingdom on earth (Zechariah 14:4-11; Matthew 24-25; Acts 1:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Hebrews 2:8; 10:12-13; Revelation 19:11-20:10).

THE MILLENNIUM: For one thousand years following His Second Coming, Christ will reign over the nations of the earth with a rod of iron in righteousness and justice with peace (Revelation 20:1-10; Isaiah 9:6-7).

THE ETERNAL STATE: We believe that the souls of those who have trusted in the promised Messiah (Jesus Christ) for salvation do at death immediately pass into His presence. They remain there in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body, or translation at the Rapture, when soul and body reunited shall be associated with Him forever in glory. The souls of unbelievers remain after death in conscious torment until the final judgment of the Great White Throne after the close of the Millennium. Then, with soul and body reunited, they shall be cast into the torments of the lake of fire from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (Luke 6:19-25; 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:2-9; 2:11-15).

PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN ISSUES AND ETHICS

The Separated Life of the Believer

SEPARATION: We believe that all believers should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord; and, that separation from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices and associations is commanded of God (Romans 12:1-2, 14:13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11).

CIVIL GOVERNMENT: We believe that God has ordained and created all authority consisting of three basic institutions: (1) Marriage, (2) Family, (3) Government. Every person is subject to these authorities, but all (including the Authorities themselves) are answerable to God and governed by His Word. God has given each institution specific Biblical responsibilities and balanced those responsibilities with the understanding that no institution has the right to infringe upon the other. The home, the church, and the state are equal and sovereign in their respective Biblically assigned spheres of responsibility under God (Romans 13:1-7; Ephesians 5:22-24; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 2:13-14).

HUMAN SEXUALITY: 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 (Genesis 2:24, 19:5, 13, 26:8-9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4). No Pastor/Elder associated with Harvest Community Church will officiate in any wedding ceremony that in any way contradicts our understanding of the biblical view of human sexuality.

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE: We believe that God hates divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. God's heart is always that reconciliation would be the foremost priority in a troubled marriage. However, understanding human capacity and the fallen frame of

man, God allows divorce for the reasons of adultery and/or desertion (Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 19:3-12; Roman 7:1-3).

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. 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; Isaiah 44:24, 49:1, 5; Jeremiah 1:5, 20:15-18; Luke 1:44).

MISSIONS: We believe that God has given the church a Great Commission to proclaim the Gospel and to disciple all nations so that there might be a great multitude from every nation, tribe, ethnic group, and language group who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. As ambassadors of Christ we must use all available means to go to the foreign nations and not wait for them to come to us (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:20).

GIVING: 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 grace as the principle by which the believer's giving should be governed. The believer should give willingly and of a cheerful heart and should not be manipulated in anyway (Proverbs 3:9-10; Act 4:34-37; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; Galatians 6:6; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 5:17-18; 1 John 3:17).