

MISSIO DEI CHURCH | Constitution

SECTION 1: NAME

The name of this church congregation shall be called Missio Dei Church, located in Cincinnati, OH.

SECTION 2: PURPOSE

The purpose of this church congregation shall be to participate with God, who is on mission by the power of His Spirit, to transform people into the image of His Son, so that the culture takes on the image of His Kingdom.

SECTION 3: POLITY

1. Missio Dei Church shall acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as her founder and head, and shall be governed by a plurality of ordained Elders who seek the will of Jesus to guide and make decisions for the congregation.
2. All internal groups created or empowered by Missio Dei Church shall report and be accountable to the Elders of Missio Dei Church.

SECTION 4: MEMBERSHIP

1. Members shall be baptized believers in Jesus Christ and embrace and uphold the articles of faith for Missio Dei Church.
2. Mode of baptism is not a basis for membership, but baptism practiced by Missio Dei will be as follows:
 - a. Reserved for those making conscientious confession of belief in Jesus Christ as Lord
 - b. Administered by immersion, unless circumstances require administration by pouring or sprinkling
 - c. Officiated by ordained Elders of Missio Dei Church
3. Procedure for Membership
 - a. Prospective members shall
 - i. Attend membership classes
 - ii. Read Constitution and Articles of Faith for Missio Dei Church
 - iii. Fill out application for membership and be announced by name to the congregation
 - iv. Undergo interview by an Elder of Missio Dei Church
 - v. Be approved by Elders of Missio Dei Church
 - vi. Be presented to congregation and sign Membership Covenant following approval
 - b. This procedure shall cover a minimum of four weeks. Objections to membership may be voiced to the Elders at any time during the membership application procedure.

4. Members shall not be received into Missio Dei Church by letter from other churches.
5. Expectations of Membership
 - a. Participation with the Missio Dei Church community for spiritual formation, discipline, exercising gifts and cooperating in God's mission.
 - b. Consistent attendance and participation at regular gatherings/activities to encourage faith and be encouraged in the faith.
 - c. Commitment to personal discipleship and disciple making.
 - d. Commitment to give financially to Missio Dei Church according to the member's ability and the dictates of his or her own conscience. A tenth (or tithe) of a person's income is generally a good place to start.
 - e. Prayerful submission to the Leadership and Authority of the Elders of MDC
6. Inactive Membership
 - a. Those who no longer reside in this area, but desire to hold their membership in this church. This intent must be presented in writing to the Elders.
 - b. Those who have been absent from the gatherings/activities of the church for a period of three months without having given satisfactory explanation for their absence to the Elders. After six months of absence or sporadic attendance they will be dropped from the membership role.
 - c. Those who substitute attendance at Missio Dei Church gatherings to attend other congregations for a period of three months. After six months of sporadic attendance they will be dropped from the membership role.
 - d. Those who have come under some disciplinary action of the church. If the situation for discipline is not rectified within a period of six months, the member's name shall be dropped from the membership roll.
 - e. Inactive members shall not have the right to hold office, teach, etc. in the church.
 - f. Inactive members must apply to the Elders and be approved for reinstatement to active membership

SECTION 5: DISCIPLINE

1. It shall be the basic purpose of Missio Dei Church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member.
2. The Elders are available for counsel and guidance. Reconciliation rather than punishment should be the principle that governs the attitude of Missio Dei Church.
3. Should any matter arise, every reasonable measure will be taken by the Elders to resolve the problem in accordance with **Matthew 18:15-35, I Corinthians 5:1-13, II Corinthians 2:1-11.**
4. If it is determined that any member shall be excluded, the church may take this action by a unanimous decision of the Elders present at a meeting called for this purpose and the church may proceed to declare the offender to be no longer in the membership of the church.
 - a. Any person whose membership has been terminated for any condition that has made it necessary for the church to exclude him may, upon his request, be restored to membership by the recommendation of the Elders and an affirmation of the congregation upon evidence of his repentance and reformation.
 - b. All matters of exclusion shall be conducted in the spirit and letter of the Scriptures. Such discipline shall be entrusted to the Elders who shall take the case or cases into prayerful consideration and act with promptness and, if deemed advisable, bring the matter before the church. No action calling for suspension or dismissal shall be

taken against any person until said member is informed and the charge cited; and the member shall be given an opportunity to appear at a meeting of the Elders, at which time the charge shall be considered.

SECTION 6: MEETINGS

1. Our regular worship gatherings will be held on the first day of the week (Sunday), commemorating and celebrating the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Gatherings may be held throughout the week as Elders determine. We have two primary emphases at our worship gatherings:
 - a. Revelation – the preaching of a God-centered, Gospel-themed message shall be the focal point of each worship gathering. While exceptions to this norm are permitted, the majority of our time spent together will be to receive God’s instruction through the preaching of His Word.
 - b. Response – the response of the assembly is secondary to the Word being preached, but is an integral part of our worship gatherings. Responses may include, but are not limited to, singing, prayers of supplication and praise, stories, offerings, Eucharist, invocations and benedictions. Because the New Testament does not have a prescriptive list of what must be included in group worship or in what forms group worship should take place, Missio Dei Church is at liberty in her expression of group worship in terms of liturgy, musical styles, etc. provided that gospel preaching remains the central aspect of worship.

SECTION 7: FINANCES

1. Missio Dei Church is supported by the voluntary contributions of her attendees and members who shall give according to their abilities and the dictates of their own consciences.
2. Accountability for the handling of finances are as follows:
 - a. At no time shall only one person be responsible for the counting of funds received through worship offerings.
 - b. A treasurer shall be appointed by the Elders to handle finances for Missio Dei Church with the following responsibilities:
 - i. The treasurer shall keep an itemized record of all financial transactions
 - ii. The treasurer shall have oversight to receive, preserve and pay out funds in accordance with the dictates of the Pastor/Elders of Missio Dei Church
 1. Treasurer cannot do initial counting of funds received at Gatherings.
 - iii. The treasurer shall have oversight of the budget to ensure that spending is in keeping within the approved parameters.
3. Budgeting
 - a. To ensure financial responsibility, Missio Dei Church shall operate under a budget that is approved by the Elders.
 - b. Budgets must receive affirmation from the Elders. Missio Dei Church will operate with an Elder Advisory Council until the Elder board consists of three or more ordained Elders.
 - c. Budgets may be altered at any time during a fiscal year to adjust to giving patterns and expenditures, but any alterations must receive affirmation from the Elders.
 - d. A quarterly budget report should be available to all members and any adjustments to budgets should be communicated to the members at least two weeks prior to adjustments taking effect.

SECTION 8: OFFICERS

1. Senior Pastor

- a. Missio Dei Church recognizes Jesus as the sole head of all authority in the Church. Other than Jesus, no one person may make independent decisions for Missio Dei Church.

2. Elders

- a. The Elders are the senior leadership team of Missio Dei Church, synonymously called "Pastors, Bishops, Overseers, Ministers, Reverends, Rectors and Shepherds, etc."
- b. Missio Dei Church operates under a plurality of Elders.
 - i. While Missio Dei Church does not financially support all Elders, all hold equal authority. All decisions must pass affirmation by the Elders.
 - ii. The Elders will seek unanimity in all decisions. This will be the rule until such time as the board consists of three or more ordained Elders and will be the guiding principle thereafter. Unity will always be upheld.
- c. The Elder Board is comprised of men who meet the minimum requirements of I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-7 and have successfully completed all requirements for Ordination at Missio Dei Church.
 - i. Once ordained, Elders are life-long, unless exclusion from membership or voluntary/required sabbatical is enforced.
 - ii. Voluntary/required sabbatical policies will be determined by the Elders
 - iii. Any consideration of dismissing an Elder must follow the procedure outline in **Section 5 - Discipline**, with the caveat that the Elder under consideration may not participate in the decision.
- d. One Lead Elder will emerge as a "first among equals." It will fall on this Pastor to lead the Elders and congregation in the vision of Missio Dei Church. This will be the primary teaching Pastor/Elder for Missio Dei Church.
 - i. The Lead Pastor may be appointed/dismissed by a unanimous decision of the Elder board. The Elder up for appointment or dismissal may not participate in the decision.
 - ii. The Founding Pastor will serve as the Lead Pastor until resignation or dismissal.

3. Deacons

- a. Deacons are the secondary leaders under the Elders who care for the temporal needs of the congregation, attend to the accommodations for public worship, and encourage and support those with gifts of administration.
 - i. The Deacons do not function as a board of Missio Dei Church
 - ii. Deacons are comprised of men and women who meet the minimum requirements of I Tim. 3:8-13
 1. General requirements (I Tim. 3:8-10)
 2. Additional Female requirements (I Tim. 3:11)
 3. Additional Male requirements (I Tim. 3:12)
- b. Deacons are appointed by the Elders
 - i. Once appointed, Deacons will be presented to the congregation
 - ii. The office of Deacon is a membership office. Non-members may not hold the office of Deacon at Missio Dei Church.
- c. Term
 - i. Office proceeds at the discretion of the Elders who deem the continuation based on need.

- ii. Office may terminate due to exclusion from membership, or if required or voluntary sabbatical is enforced.

4. Members

- a. Members serve and lead under the Elders and the Deacons
- b. Membership provides accountability to live according to the Gospel
 - i. Membership is a public commitment, which reflects Jesus commitment to the Church and the Church's commitment to individuals.
 - ii. Membership identifies true followers of Jesus Christ.
 - iii. Membership places one in an environment of protection and growth.
 - iv. "Dismemberment" from a body is just as gruesome spiritually as it is physically.
- c. Membership procedures are outlined in Section 4 and Section 5

SECTION 9: ORDINATION & LICENSURE

1. Missio Dei Church has authority as a local church body to ordain candidates to the Pastoral ministry
2. A candidate seeking ordination in this church must approach the Elders
 - a. Ordination or licensure from other congregations does not automatically qualify a candidate to become an official Elder at Missio Dei Church.
 - b. Candidates must be members of Missio Dei Church for a minimum of 6 months before they may be approved for examination.
3. Ordination
 - a. The Ordination process will follow three phases
 - i. Phase 1 – Assessment Phase
 1. Six-month probationary period to learn of the background, calling and giftedness of a candidate.
 - ii. Phase 2 – Training Phase
 1. This phase can run concurrently to the Assessment Phase and involves, but is not limited to: training on the theology, missiology, ecclesiology and ministry of Missio Dei Church.
 - iii. Phase 3 – Ordination/Examination Phase
 1. The candidate must write a thorough doctrinal statement defending beliefs on such topics as:
 - a. Bibliology and the Kingdom of God, Theology Proper & Anthropology, Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology, Missiology
 2. The candidate must orally defend calling and doctrine before a council comprised of any available Elders of Missio Dei Church as well as any other approved ordained ministers
 - b. Upon successful completion of the Ordination process, the candidate will sign the Elder Covenant, be presented to the congregation as an ordained Pastor of Missio Dei Church, and is considered officially an ordained minister and is entitled to all rights and privileges thereto.

SECTION 10: AMENDMENTS

1. As a working, flexible document, this constitution, except those articles listed in **Section 10 – Amendments**, Paragraph C, may be amended, altered, or revised.
2. Amendments, alterations, or revisions to this constitution must be presented, in writing, to the Elder Board and, if accepted, shall be presented to the church at a called meeting.

- a. Notice of amendments, alterations, or revisions shall be sent, in writing, to each member at least fourteen days prior the scheduled meeting.
- 3.
4. The following Sections, Paragraphs or clauses shall not be revised or amended:
 - a. Section 3, Paragraphs 1, 2
 - b. Section 4, Paragraph 1
 - c. Section 6, Clauses a, b
 - d. Section 7, Paragraphs 1, 2
 - e. Section 8, Paragraphs 1, 2, & 3

MISSIO DEI CHURCH | Articles of Faith

ARTICLE 1: Theology Proper (God as Holy Trinity)

1. Trinity

- a. There is only one God and in the unity of the one God, there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son (**Gen. 1:26, Deut. 6:4, Matt. 28:19, II Cor. 13:14**).
- b. Many heresies have been attributed to attempts to describe the Trinity. This is one of God's "secret things." (**Deut. 29:29**) "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever." What is revealed is that God is a triune unity, how that works out remains a mystery.

2. Creation

- a. The work of God whereby everything that came into being was made by God Ex Nihilo, in the span of six days, by the word of His power, and all very good (**Gen. 1:31, Acts 17:24**)
 - i. All three persons of the Trinity were involved in the work of Creation:
 1. Father (**Psalm 98:6**)
 2. Son (**Col. 1:15-16**)
 3. Holy Spirit (**Job 33:4**)
- b. Purpose - the declarative glory of God (**Isaiah 43:7, Rom. 11:36**).
 - i. Creation was a *free act* of God NOT a necessary act of God. God is self sufficient and not dependent upon His creatures in any way (**Job 42:2, Acts 17:25**).

3. Providence - God's holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and their actions. This doctrine distinguishes theism from deism (where God is not personally involved in His creation) and pantheism (where God is part of the creation). (**Psalm 104:14, Psalm 22:28, Luke 1:52, Prov. 16:33, Phil. 4:19**).

- a. Decrees - God's eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He foreordained whatever comes to pass. The decrees of God extend to the acts of His creatures. While God assumes responsibility for all things that come to pass, certain actions are not effectuated by God, but are a result of second causes, or God's permissive decrees (**Job 42:2, Psalm 106:13-15, Isaiah 46:9-11, Acts 2:23, Acts 14:16, Eph. 1:11**).
- b. Miracles - God's freedom to work without, above, and against His ordinary providence, at His pleasure. Miracles are an extraordinary providence where God works without second causes. The virgin birth and answers to prayer are examples of God's extraordinary providence.

ARTICLE 2: Anthropology (Creation and Humanity)

1. **Origin**
 - a. Imago Dei - God created mankind like Himself with dominion over the rest of creation (**Gen. 1:26**).
 - b. It is meaningless to search for too narrow and too specific meanings for image of God. What this meant to the original readers is that man would be like God and man would represent God in creation. The Bible contains no exhaustive list stating "man is in the image of God in the following ways..." "When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth." (**Gen. 5:3**) Seth would be similar to Adam and represent Adam. It would be impossible for us to discern the certain ways in which he is similar to and does represent Adam.

2. **Nature** – While man was gloriously created to be similar to God and to represent Him in creation, the image of God was completely distorted in the fall through guilt and corruption, but it was not destroyed. (**Gen. 9:6, James 3:9, Eccl. 7:29**).
 - a. Constitution – Mankind is a dichotomy, made up of body and soul or spirit. (**Gen. 2:7, Gen. 3:19**).
 - b. Will – Mankind is responsible for his actions. (**Psalm 1:6**). Our actions have real results and change the course of events in history. The righteous are rewarded for their actions and the wicked are punished for theirs. (**Matt. 25:34-46**). Prayer is an example of an action that has real results. (**John 16:24, James 4:2**).
 - i. Will in the created nature – At creation, mankind's nature was posse peccare (capable of sinning). Adam was created with a will that gave him the ability to sin (**Gen. 2:17**).
 - ii. Will in the fallen nature – After the Fall and Curse, mankind is said to be non-posse non-peccare (not capable of not sinning). Everything man does is in bondage to sin (**Eph. 2:1, Titus 1:15**). In this state, mankind does not have the freedom to believe in God without God's intervention (**John 6:44**).
 - iii. Will in the redeemed nature – In Christ, mankind is said to be posse non-peccare (capable of not sinning). Because Christ has imputed to the sinner His own righteousness and the Spirit begins a sanctifying work in the believer, he is free to make godly choices (**Rom. 6:17-18**).
 - iv. Will in the glorified nature – In the resurrection, mankind is said to be non-posse peccare (not capable of sinning). After Christ's coming, believers will be transformed into His image (**I Cor. 15:50-53, Rev. 21:4-5, Rev. 22:3**).
 - v. Conclusion – Mankind does not have a free will in the libertarian sense (mankind is free and capable of making decisions that are not caused by anything external to ourselves). Neither is it true that man's choices have no real impact on the universe, because the future is already predetermined. While God is sovereign, man is responsible for his choices that have a real impact on the outcome of history. Mankind has a freedom of will in accordance with his nature.

ARTICLE 3: Hamartiology (The Fall of Humanity and Creation)

1. **Representation**
 - a. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, tempted by Satan, rebelled and sinned against God. As a result, they incurred the wrath of God upon themselves and the penalty of spiritual and physical death (**Gen. 2:16-17, 3:1-19, Rom. 6:23**). The fall resulted in all of mankind becoming inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or

obeying God apart from sovereign, divine grace (**Rom. 3:23, 5:12-20**). Therefore, all humans are sinners by nature (**Ps. 51:5, Eph. 2:3**), by choice (**Rom. 3:11**), and by divine declaration (**Ps. 14:1-3, Jer. 17:9**).

2. **Sin** – a failure to conform in act, attitude, or nature to the moral law of God.
 - a. *Act* (**Ex. 20:1-17**)
 - b. *Attitude* (**Ex. 20:1-17**)
 - c. *Nature* – (**Eph. 2:3**)
 - d. Sin is not the title given to an eternally existent evil power that is in constant conflict with God (dualism). Sin entered the human race in the garden with our first parents (**Gen. 3:1-19**). The first sin struck at the basis of knowledge, giving a different answer to the question, “What is true?” (**Gen. 2:17 and 3:4**). It also struck at the basis of morality, giving a different answer to the question, “What is right?” (**Gen. 3:6-7**). It plays out in guilt and corruption:
 - i. **Guilt** – The state of deserving condemnation or being liable to punishment because the law has been violated. We have inherited guilt from Adam’s sin (**Rom. 5:12**).
 - ii. **Corruption** – The moral condition of mankind is wholly inclined to all evil. With the guilt of sin, we have the corruption of sin (**Psalm 51:5; Eph. 2:1; Titus 1:15**)
 - e. It is from both the guilt and corruption of sin that mankind needs redemption.
3. **Punishment**
 - a. Because of Adam’s sin, all people are sinful before God (**Ps. 14:3; 1 Jn. 1:8-10**)
 - b. Sin separates man from God and its penalty is physical and spiritual death (**Gen. 2:16; Rom. 6:23**)
 - c. The purpose of Jesus on the cross was to take upon himself the guilt and corruption of mankind and die the death humanity was supposed to die so that humanity could live the life God created it to live.

ARTICLE 4: Bibliology (The Holy Scriptures)

1. **Revelation** – The self-disclosure of God to humanity so that God is knowable
 - a. **General Revelation** – The truth about God is available to everyone generally through nature, history, and God’s image in mankind (**Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:20**)
 - b. **Special Revelation** – What God has revealed about Himself through particular means (i.e. angels, prophets, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures). Certain theological knowledge can come only through special revelation (**Heb. 1:1-2**)
 - i. The Bible is the Authoritative Special Revelation. Nothing will contradict or usurp its authority (**Eph. 5:18-19 AND Col. 3:16** – Being full of the Spirit is equivalent to knowing the Word of Christ).
 - ii. To ignore any word of Scripture would be equivalent to ignoring God Himself.
 - c. While obedience is expected to God’s *revealed will*, the *secret will* of God is shrouded in mystery (**Deut. 29:29**).
2. **Inspiration** – The Spirit’s influence extends not only to the ideas of the human writers, but also to the very words of Scripture when originally written, so that nothing in the Bible is contrary to fact, and is sufficient and trustworthy to tell man what he must know concerning God and life (**II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21**).
3. **Content**

- a. Canon – The list of books acknowledged as God’s Word, thus authoritative for faith and practice
 - i. The 66 books of the Old and the New Testaments
 - 1. 39 books of the OT in the English Bible
 - 2. 27 books of the NT in the English Bible
- b. The Gospel (the plan of God to restore broken creation and humanity)
 - i. The essential story of God as recorded in the Bible is that God brings life out of death.
 - ii. This is most clearly seen in the Old Testament in the Exodus event and in the New Testament in the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, we have the certain hope of rescue from the brokenness in creation and humanity and the promise of a renewed heaven and earth.

4. Interpretation

- a. Continuity – The Old and New Testaments contain the same revelation of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament holds the promises of the coming Savior, while the New Testament explains the promises fulfilled (**John 5:39; Heb. 10:1**).

ARTICLE 5: Christology (The Holy Christ)

1. Person

- a. Humanity – Jesus Christ became man and will continue to be fully man forever.
 - i. *Virgin Birth* – Jesus was conceived in the womb of His mother by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, without a human father (**Matt. 1:18**).
 - ii. This action in the incarnation made it possible for Jesus to be fully human, yet without inherited guilt and corruption of sin (**Luke 1:34-35**).
 - iii. Jesus has a human mind and body (**Luke 2:52**).
 - iv. Jesus was still fully human after the resurrection (**Luke 24:39**).
 - v. Jesus, being fully human, was still without sin (**Heb. 4:15**).
 - vi. It was necessary for Jesus to be fully human for at least two reasons:
 - 1. For representative obedience (**Rom. 5:19**).
 - 2. For a substitutionary sacrifice (**Heb. 2:17-18**).
- b. Deity – Jesus Christ, being the eternal Son of God, will continue to be fully God forever (**John 1:1, 14; Col. 2:9**).
 - i. It was necessary for Jesus to be fully God for at least three reasons:
 - 1. To represent the Father (**John 14:9**).
 - 2. To offer eternal life (**John 10:28**).
 - 3. To conquer sin and death (**John 10:17-18**).

2. Atonement – Christ paying the penalty for sins and setting humanity in a right relationship with God

- a. The atonement is necessary because man is spiritually dead and incapable of pleasing God (**Isaiah 53:6; Rom. 3:10-12,23**).
- b. Because Jesus was both actively and passively obedient, He is the only satisfactory atonement for sin.
 - i. *Active* – (**Rom. 5:19**).
 - ii. *Passive* – (**Matt. 27:46; John 14:6**).
- c. Jesus’ life leading up to the cross qualifies Him to be the only one worthy of bringing a satisfactory sacrifice (**Rev. 5:9**).

3. **Resurrection** – A new kind of human life where body and soul are eternally united, either regenerate and not subject to the curse of sin, or unregenerate and eternally cursed (**John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:6,14-15**).
 - a. Jesus was the “first fruits” (**I Cor. 15:20**) of the new kind of human life not subject to weakness, aging, etc.
 - b. Without the resurrection after the cross, we would still be helpless (**I Cor. 15:14-15**).
 - c. Jesus’ resurrection assures regeneration to believers (**I Peter 1:3**).
 - d. His resurrection also changes our ethic (**Col. 3:1-4**).

ARTICLE 6: Pneumatology (The Holy Spirit)

1. Person

- a. Old Testament – Generally, the Holy Spirit is referred to as the “Spirit of God” or the “Spirit of the Lord”. In the Old Testament, God is often referred to as the “Holy One of Israel.” This is probably due to the fact that it was primarily in the Spirit that God revealed Himself in the Old Testament.
 - i. Divine names are ascribed to Him (**Psalm 51:11; Isaiah 63:10**).
 - ii. Divine perfections are ascribed to Him. (**Psalm 139:7-8; Isaiah 40:13-14**).
 - iii. Divine works are performed by Him (**Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13**).
- b. New Testament – The Holy Spirit has the same revealed attributes in the New Testament.
 - i. Divine honor is paid Him (**Matt. 28:19; II Cor. 13:14**).
 - ii. Divine perfections are ascribed to Him (**I Cor. 2:10-11**).
 - iii. Divine works are performed by Him (**Titus 3:5**).
 - iv. At Pentecost, the Spirit began to indwell and seal the church. This was promised in the Old Testament (**Joel 2:28-29**).

2. Work

- a. Old Testament
 - i. The generator of life (**Gen. 2:7; Psalm 33:6; Psalm 104:30**).
 - ii. Inspiration and qualification of men (**Ex. 31:3-4; I Sam. 16:13**).
- b. New Testament
 - i. Sealing – The Holy Spirit secures the believer, marking him as God’s purchased possession. This is applied to true believers of the gospel (**Eph. 1:13-14**).
 - ii. Indwelling – The Scriptures teach that after the Glorification of Jesus, the Spirit would be received by believers to dwell in them. (**John 7:39; Rom. 8:9**).
 1. The indwelling Spirit enables the believer to live a life in the likeness of Christ (**Gal. 5:22-25**).
 - iii. Filling – Yielding to the Spirit as the dominant influence of our behavior (**Eph. 5:18**).

ARTICLE 7: Soteriology (The Salvation of Humanity and Creation)

1. **Common Grace** – The special favor of God upon all of creation that is only a shadow of salvation in the sin-cursed world. This is an explanation of the relative orderliness of life under the curse of sin. It answers questions such as, “How can the unregenerate speak truth, do good to others, and lead (at least outwardly) virtuous lives?”
 - a. Common Grace is NOT sufficient for Salvation. Our primary motivation for doing what we do should be a love for God, which we do not naturally possess (**Matt. 22:37-38; Rom. 3:10-12,23**).
 - b. The purpose of Common Grace is to lead people to repentance (**Rom. 2:4**).

2. **Election/Predestination** – God’s choosing, before the foundation of the world, people to be saved: not on account of any foreknown merit in them, but because of His sovereign good pleasure “to the praise of His glory” (**Eph. 1:4-6; II Thess. 2:13; Rom. 9:11-13**).
3. **Effectual Calling** – The act of God, summoning His chosen to Himself through the proclamation of the Gospel (**Rom. 8:30**).
4. **Regeneration** – Being “born again.” This is the secret act of God, in which He imparts new life to His chosen. This is what gives man the freedom to respond in faith and repentance (**John 1:12-13; John 3:7-8; Eph. 2:4-5; I Pet. 1:3**).
5. **Conversion (*Repentance & Faith*)** – This is the willing response of God’s chosen to repent from sin and trust in Christ for salvation.
 - a. Repentance – A turning and renouncing from sin toward God. It is both man’s responsibility and God’s gracious gift (**Mark 1:15; Acts 20:20-21; Acts 17:30; Acts 5:31; Acts 11:18**).
 - b. Faith – A knowledge (*notitia*), approval (*assensus*), and personal trust (*fiducia*) in Jesus Christ as a living Person for forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God.
 - i. Knowledge *Noticia* (**James 2:19**).
 - ii. Approval *Assensus* (**John 3:2**).
 - iii. Trust *Fiducia* (**Rom. 10:9-10**).
 - iv. Faith is not the meritorious act of a sinner for which the reward is salvation; it is a gift from God (**Eph. 2:8-9; I Pet. 1:1**).
6. **Justification & Adoption**
 - a. Justification – the legal declaration from God that a man is considered not guilty, but truly righteous by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, received through faith (**Rom. 3:22-30; Rom. 5:1**). Justification declares sinners forgiven AND righteous (**Rom. 4:1-8**).
 - i. Christ gives humanity an imputed righteousness (a forensic legal declaration that he is righteous), thus a stance of “rightness” before God (**Phil. 3:9; II Cor. 5:21**).
 - b. Adoption – The Act of God in which He receives us through faith into His household (**Gal. 4:26; Eph. 1:5; Eph. 2:19; I John 3:1**).
7. **Sanctification** – A progressive work between God and man where believers are enabled to die to sin and live to righteousness.
 - a. Sanctification has a definite beginning with ongoing results (**I Cor. 6:9-11; Rom. 6:11**).
 - b. Sanctification is continual throughout life (**II Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:22-24**).
 - c. Sanctification is not complete until Christ transforms us at Resurrection (**I John 1:8-9**).
 - d. God and man cooperate in the process of Sanctification (**Phil. 2:13; Gal. 5:16; Heb. 12:14; I Thess. 4:3**).
8. **Perseverance** – Those who are truly born again will be kept by God’s power and remain faithful through death, and only those who remain faithful through death have truly been born again (**John 6:39-40; I Pet. 1:3-5; Matt. 10:22; John 8:31; Heb. 4:14; Col. 1:22-23**).
9. **Glorification** – God’s completing our transformation into the likeness of Christ (**Rev. 21:3-6**).
 - a. At death, the spirits of believers go immediately to God’s presence (**Luke 23:43; II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Heb. 12:22-23**).

- b. Scripture is not clear on what happens to unbelievers immediately following death. It is clear that they will not have a second chance at repentance. At the judgment, unbelievers will be raised for eternal punishment (**Luke 16:26; Acts 24:15**).
- c. At the Resurrection, believers will be transformed into the likeness of Christ while unbelievers will be cast into eternal punishment (**I Cor. 15:50-53; I John 3:2; Matt. 25:34-46**).

ARTICLE 8: Ecclesiology (The Holy People of God)

1. God's people make up something called the Church, which we define as the community of all true believers for all time. While the institutional organization of the Church differs greatly in the Testaments (i.e. The Old Testament Church was organized as a nation, while in the NT, it is organized into many nations), the nature of the Church remains constant. The Church is called by God's Word, purchased by God's sacrifice in Jesus, and empowered by God's Spirit. It is through this community that God extends His Kingdom.
 - a. Old Testament - one nation: in preparation for the coming of Jesus, God revealed Himself to the world predominantly through one nation, Israel. They were given the oracles of God and the laws of God to be a light for the nations.
 - b. New Testament - all nations: In Jesus, the promises made to Israel are fulfilled and expanded to all tribes, tongues, and nations (**Rom. 9:6-8; Gal. 3:7-9; Eph. 2:11-3:6**).
 - c. All efforts to make hard and fast, unnatural distinctions between Israel and the Church render a disunity of the Bible and create all sorts of Eschatological problems that must be solved by inventing unbiblical and fanciful doctrines.

2. **Gospel/Mission** – The Church exists to glorify God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and to fulfill her commission to make disciples by preaching the Gospel and identifying/markings true believers by baptism (**Matt. 28:18-20**).

3. **Governance**
 - a. Jesus Christ is the true King, Head, and only Senior Pastor of the Church (**Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18; 2:10, 19; 1 Pet. 5:4**)
 - i. Jesus builds and grows a congregation (**Matt. 16:18**) and Jesus shuts down a congregation for becoming faithless or fruitless (**Rev. 2:5**).
 - b. Elders/Pastors are the senior leaders under Jesus
 - i. Elders/Pastors are the senior male leaders who are synonymously called “overseers” or “bishops, pastors,” or “shepherds” (**Acts 20:28, Eph. 4:11, 1 Pet. 5:2**).
 - ii. Some (but not all) elders are and should be financially supported by the congregation (**I Tim. 5:17-18; I Cor. 9:1-9**).
 - iii. Plurality of elders – the New Testament elders comprised a collective leadership body (**Acts 14:23; Acts 15; James 5:14**)
 1. There are no passages in the New Testament suggesting that any congregation was governed by just one person (other than Jesus).
 - iv. The elders operate under a “primary among equals” modus (**Luke 8:51; 9:28; Mark 14:33; Acts 13:1-3,13; 14:4; 12**).
 - v. The primary responsibility of the elders is to teach the word of God and to be concerned with the mission of God (what is Jesus asking us to do?) and the maintenance of the mission (how are we to do it?).
 1. These decisions are made by intense prayer and applied wisdom (**Acts 1:24-26**).
 - vi. The Elders are well screened and trained for the duty (**Acts 14:19-23; 16:1-5**)
 - vii. Character qualifications are high (**Acts 6:3, I Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9**)

- viii. The gifts for this ministry must be present (**Rom. 12:6-8**)
 - ix. Following the structure of the home, the ministry is restricted to men (**Gen. 2:18-25, Eph. 5:22-33, I Tim. 2:12**).
 - x. They are appointed, not elected, which means they are not representatives of the people to God, but of Jesus to the people (**Acts 14:19-23**)
 - c. Deacons are the secondary leaders under the elders/pastors
 - i. Deacons are the men/women appointed to help alleviate the burden of care for the needy when the elders/pastors are distracted from continued preaching and prayer of Jesus' mission (**Acts 6:1-7**)
 - 1. While the elders/pastors are held accountable for decision-making, the deacons assist them in carrying out their duties.
 - ii. The duties are not outlined in Scripture, because theirs is the role of service (**John 12:26**), relief (**Acts 11:29**), supply (**II Cor. 9:12**), etc.
 - iii. Qualifications and rewards are mentioned (**I Tim. 3:8-13**)
 - 1. General requirements (v. 8-10)
 - 2. Additional requirements for females (v. 11)
 - 3. Additional requirements for males (v. 12)
 - 4. Rewards for deacons (v. 13)
 - d. Congregation members serve and lead under the elders/pastors and deacons
 - i. These are believers committed to a particular community and give their time, talent, and treasure to the mission of Jesus through that particular community.
 - ii. Scripture continually talks about the people of God as "members" of his body. Therefore, to shrug off membership is to discount Scriptural teaching (**Rom. 12:4-5; I Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 2:19, 3:6, 4:25, 5:29**).
 - iii. There should be kept a numerical record of members (**Acts 2:37-47**).
 - iv. There should be kept a record of those in need (**I Tim. 5:9**).
 - v. There should be the exercise of discipline for disobedience (**Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1**).
 - vi. There should be awareness of members (**Rom. 16**)
4. **Sacraments** – Those acts regarded as outward visible signs of inward spiritual grace realities. The two sacraments are:
- a. Baptism - The washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit signifies and seals our union with Christ and the partaking of the benefits of God's covenant.
 - i. This sacrament should be restricted to believers who have first repented (**Acts 2:37-38; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27**).
 - ii. Biblical evidence suggests that it should be administered by immersion.
 - 1. Jesus seems to have been immersed (**Mark 1:9-10**).
 - 2. The Ethiopian Eunuch seems to have been immersed (**Acts 8:36-39**).
 - b. Eucharist (or Communion) - In giving and receiving bread and wine according to Christ's appointment, his death is proclaimed and worthy receivers participate in a mysterious union with Christ where their bodies and souls are nourished (**Matt. 26:26-28**).
 - i. While this is a remembrance of Christ, it goes beyond a mere memorial (**I Cor. 10:15-16**).
 - ii. There is not a metaphysical change in the substance of the elements. Yet, there is a mystical proclamation (**I Cor. 11:23-29**).

ARTICLE 9: Eschatology (The Restoration of Humanity and Creation)

1. **The Parousia** –The second coming of Jesus Christ to claim believers and punish unbelievers.
 - a. This is distinguished from His first coming, whereby Jesus incarnated humanity and offered up himself as atonement for sin.
 - b. The hope of every believer is the Return of Jesus Christ (**John 14:3; Acts 1:11; I Thess. 4:16; Heb. 9:28; I John 3:2; Rev. 22:20**).
 - c. We must keep in mind that of primary importance is the issue of Jesus coming back. The timelines and scenarios presented by various interpretations are of secondary importance. One who believes Jesus is coming back, regardless of his interpreted timetable should be counted as a brother, not an enemy of the Gospel.

2. **The Judgment** – Following the Return of Jesus and subsequent Resurrection of all people, humanity will stand before Christ as he judges both the living and the dead, the righteous and the unrighteous. (**Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 17:30-31, Rom 2:5, Rev. 20:11-15**).
 - a. Unbelievers will stand before Christ and will be judged by what they have done, then delivered to eternal punishment (**Rev. 20:12-13**).
 - b. Believers also will be judged, not for condemnation, but to evaluate and bestow various degrees of reward (**Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:6-10**).
 - c. Believers will then enter into the full enjoyment of life in the presence of God forever in the new heavens and new earth (**Is. 65:17, Rev. 22:3**).

3. **The Kingdom of God** – The Kingdom of God has a broad and a narrow implication
 - a. Kingdom in the broad sense - God reigns over all the earth as King (**Psalms 103:19**).
 - b. Kingdom in the narrow/special sense - The goal of history is the transformation of the earth to look like the Kingdom of Heaven (**Matt. 6:10**).
 - c. The Kingdom through history
 - i. Israel was a stage of the Kingdom. God calls out a nation as a stage to assert His kingship (**Gen. 12:2-3**).
 1. In the Old Testament, the Kingdom of God on earth was primarily limited to Israel, but this was not the eternal plan.
 - ii. The New Testament teaching
 1. Jesus' work is proof that the Kingdom has begun (**Matt. 12:28**).
 2. The Kingdom is not of this world (**John 18:36**).
 3. Kingdom begins in the hearts of redeemed men (**Col. 1:13; Luke 17:20-21**) and moves outward wherever men are subject to Christ. Wherever the gospel breaks into the heart of sinful man, bringing him into submission to Jesus Christ, there is the kingdom of God. As more people are converted by Jesus and reorient their lives to the Scriptures, the kingdom of God extends throughout the earth in all spheres (vocation, technology, education, economics, science, the arts, etc.).
 4. The kingdom of God is both a present reality and a future promise until its consummation at Jesus' return. The Kingdom is a present reality in the fact that it is a realm into which the followers of Jesus Christ have entered (**Luke 16:16, 17:20-21; Col. 1:13**). At the same time, the Kingdom is an inheritance that God will bestow upon His people when Christ comes in glory (**Matt. 8:11; 25:34; 2 Pet. 1:11**). The Kingdom is a realm into which men enter now (**Matt. 21:31**), and yet it is a realm into which they will enter tomorrow (**Matt. 8:11**). It is at the same time a gift of God that will be bestowed by God in the future (**Luke 12:32**) and yet, which must be received in the present (**Mark 10:15**). The kingdom has already come, but it has not come in its fullness. This is the

doctrine of the “already, not yet” and it is the realm in which we currently find ourselves.