

# Constitution of Rockbridge Church

## Articles IV - Articles of Faith

We believe that the following Articles of Faith embody the essence of the Christian faith, and are consistent with the teachings of Scripture.

### **1. Concerning the Scriptures**

We believe that God has revealed Himself to man in three primary ways: (1) through nature and conscience, which reveal His existence, power and glory; (2) through the Bible, which describes His character of grace and His program of redemption for man (the Bible has been completed and is the only written revelation from God); and (3) through Jesus Christ, His Son.

The sixty-six books of the Bible were written by a process of dual authorship in which the Holy Spirit superintended the human authors (using their individual personalities and different styles of writing), so that they composed and recorded without error God's Word to mankind in the original manuscripts. These books contain the believer's only infallible guide of faith and practice. The extent of divine inspiration of Scripture goes equally and fully to all parts of the writings - historical, poetical, doctrinal and prophetic (*Deuteronomy 4:2; Psalm 19:1-6; John 14:9; 20:30-31; Acts 1:1-3; 14:17; Romans 1:19-20; 1 Thessalonians 2:13-17; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-3; Hebrews 4:12 2 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 22:18-19*).

### **2. Concerning God**

#### **a. The Triune God**

We believe there is but one living and true God who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. He is absolutely separate from the world as it's Creator, yet everywhere present in the world as the upholder of all things. We further believe that God is One in essence, but eternally existent in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each of Whom has precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections, and is worthy of precisely the same worship, confidence and obedience (*Genesis 1:26; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 139:8; Isaiah 45:5-7; Matthew 28:19; Mark 10:18; John 4:24; Acts 17:24-29; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:6*).

#### **b. God the Father**

We believe that God the Father orders and establishes all things according to His own purpose and grace. As the absolute and highest Ruler in the universe, "the Most High" and the "Holy One", He is sovereign in creation, providence and redemption. He created the universe apart from pre-existing materials and without means. He has decreed for His Own glory all things that come to pass and continues to direct and govern all creatures and events. He does those things without being the author or approver of sin, nor does He remove the accountability of morally intelligent creatures - mankind and angels. He relates to all men who come to Him through Jesus Christ as their Heavenly Father and bestows on them the full rights of son-ship (*Genesis 14:18-20; 1 Chronicles 29:11; Psalm 103:19,*

145:8-9; Isaiah 40:25-26; John 1:18; Romans 11:33; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 1:3-6; 3:9; Hebrews 4:13; 1 Peter 1:17)

### **c. God the Son**

We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God and the virgin-born Son of Man who participated in the creation of the world and was incarnated as the God-Man to reveal God, redeem men and rule over God's kingdom just as God The Father purposed beforehand (*Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; John 1:1, 3:18-19; 10:36; Ephesians 1:3-14; Colossians 1:16*).

We believe that in the incarnation He surrendered nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind, all the while voluntarily limiting the manifestation of the divine attributes forming this essence, He was fully man and also fully God; He was without sin as to nature, unable to sin in principle and did not sin in fact (*John 1:14,29; 8:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 1 Peter 2:21-24*).

By His sinless life, miraculous ministry, substitutionary death and efficacious resurrection, He satisfied divine justice concerning sin (*Matthew 11:2-6; 12:28; Romans 3:24-26; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Hebrews 1:3; 10:5-10; 1 John 2:2, 4:10*).

In the resurrection of Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of Christ and accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross, by raising Him bodily from death as a guarantee of the future resurrection-to-life of all believers (*Job 19:25-27; Matthew 28:6; John 14:19; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20; Revelation 1:17-18*).

After His Ascension to the Father's right hand, Jesus sent from the Father at Pentecost the Holy Spirit as a companion like Himself for the purposes of assuming the care and keeping of His own. Throughout this age Christ is seated at the Father's side performing the intercessory aspect of His High Priestly work for believers (*John 15:26; Acts 2:33; Hebrews 7:25; 10:12; 1 Peter 3:22*).

In relationship to people, Christ is the only mediator between God and mankind; the Head of His body, the Church; the coming universal King who will reign on the throne of David. He is both the final rewarder of those who come to Him by faith and the final judge of all who reject Him (*Isaiah 53:10; Luke 1:31,33; John 5:27-29; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 3:5; Hebrews 7:25; Revelation 20:11-15; 22:12*).

### **d. God The Holy Spirit**

We believe that the work of the Holy Spirit is to execute the divine will within the world of mankind. We affirm His sovereign activity in creation, the incarnation, the written revelation and the work of salvation (*Genesis 1:2; John 3:5-7; 2 Peter 1:20-21*).

The work of the Holy Spirit in the church age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father, as promised by Jesus, to initiate and complete the building of the Church, the Body of Christ. The broad scope of this special divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ

and transforming believers into the likeness of Christ (*John 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:7-11; Acts 1:5; 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22*).

His work in believers includes regeneration, baptizing into the body of Christ, indwelling, sanctifying, instructing, empowering for service and preserving to the day of Christ. We believe that He alone administers spiritual gifts to the church, not to glorify Himself or the believer, but to glorify Christ and implement His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the faith (*John 3:5-7; 16:1-16; Romans 8:2; 1 Corinthians 19; 12:4-13; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13*).

### **3. Concerning Angels**

#### **a. Their Origin**

We believe that the angels were all created simultaneously by God as a great host of sinless spirit-beings, most of whom kept their first condition of holiness and presently worship God and serve His purposes (*Psalms 33:6-9; 148:2-5; Matthew 26:53; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:13-14*).

#### **b. The Fall Of Some**

One of the angels, Lucifer, fell through the sin of pride (thereby becoming Satan) and influenced a large company of angels to follow him, who are known as demons (*Isaiah 14:12-17; James 2:19; 2 Peter 2:4*).

#### **c. Satan's Work**

Satan and the demons attempt to subvert and supplant the work of God. By a subtle suggestion, Satan influenced the moral fall of Adam and Eve, thereby subjecting them and all mankind to his own power (*Genesis 3:1-7; Job 1:12; 2:6; Ezekiel 28:12-19; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 2:2*).

Satan continues as the enemy of God and the accuser of God's people and persistently seeks to counterfeit the works and truth of God (*2 Corinthians 2:10-11; 11:13-15; Ephesians 6:12,16; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:10*).

Nevertheless, Satan remains subject to God's power and is able to do only that which accords with God's ultimate purpose (*Job 1:12, 2:6; James 4:7, 1 John 4:4; Jude 9*).

#### **d. Satan's Judgment**

Satan was judged at the cross, though the sentence was not then executed, and he will finally be consigned to the lake of fire at the end of time on earth (*Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 14:12; Matthew 25:41; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; 1&11; Hebrews 2:14; 1 Timothy 3:6; Revelation 12:9; 20:10*).

#### **e. Believer's Defense**

The believer in Christ is in a spiritual warfare with Satan and the forces of darkness. In order for the Christian to be successful in this warfare, he must wear the spiritual armor described in *Ephesians 6:10-18* and must stand firm with all the armor in place.

#### **4. Concerning Man**

##### **a. Original Nature**

We believe that God created Adam directly and immediately in the image of God, free from sin. He was created with a rational nature, great intelligence and a moral responsibility to God. From Adam's rib, God created Eve in the image of God, also free from sin and equal to Adam in rational nature, great intelligence and moral responsibility to God. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons, yet distinct in their manhood and womanhood, and in their God-ordained masculine and feminine roles. (*Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; James 3:9*).

##### **b. Original Purpose**

Adam and Eve were originally created with the divine intention that they and their descendants should glorify God, worship Him, enjoy His fellowship and fulfill His will and purposes on earth (*Genesis 1:26-30; Isaiah 43:7; John 4:23-24; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11*).

##### **c. Subsequent Sin**

Adam and Eve subsequently fell into sin by a voluntary act of personal disobedience to the revealed will of God (*Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; 1 Timothy 2:13-14*).

##### **d. The Fall of Man**

The fall of Adam and Eve was a historical and non-repeatable act, the effects of which are transmitted to all people of all ages with the sole exception of Jesus Christ. Thus, all people are sinners by divine pronouncement, nature and deed (*Psalms 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 2:23; 5:12-19; James 2:10*).

##### **e. Present Condition**

As a consequence of the fall of man and his own personal sin, mankind became subject to the wrath of God, inherently corrupt, and incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. Thus, he is hopelessly lost apart from the salvation which is in the Lord Jesus Christ (*John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 1:8*).

##### **f. Marriage, Family, Sexuality**

We believe marriage was the first institution designed by God. We believe the Bible teaches the covenant of marriage is sacred and life long. The Bible makes it clear that marriage is a legally binding public declaration of commitment and a private consummation between one man and one woman, never between the same sex.

We believe that God created a man and a woman with equal worth but with differing roles and responsibilities in marriage. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. A husband has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself

graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the head-ship of Christ. She has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to be his helper.

We believe God is the originator of the family. It was established by God in His inaugural act of the marriage between a man and a woman. We believe the purpose of the family is to glorify and honor God by forming the spiritual, emotional, physical and economic foundation for individuals, the church and any society. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

We believe the Bible clearly states that the marriage covenant between one man and one woman is the only context for sexual intimacy. Heterosexuality is fundamental to the vitality and even the existence of any society. We believe that the Bible condemns sexual promiscuity and perversions of various kinds, including cohabitation, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography.

We believe that marriage is not required of every man and woman. The single life, indeed, may enable certain individuals to live fully for the glory of God.

*(Genesis 1:24-28; Genesis 2:18-25; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Malachi 2:14; Matthew 19:10; 1 Corinthians 7:32-34; Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Titus 2:4-5; Hebrews 13:4; Psalm 78:5-8; Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 1:24-28; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)*

#### **g. Sanctity of Human Life**

We believe that from the very moment of conception, the miracle at which point God creates life, and throughout the gestation period, God is at work in the womb bringing the embryo to fetal stages and then to birth. We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being, endowed by his or her Creator with divine dignity and the right to life. We believe abortion is murder, the unjustified taking of a human life, and attack against one's fellow man and a violation of God's creation. Abortions of pregnancies due to rape or incest are unjustified because the humanity and sanctity of the unborn child is still the constant and determinative reason for its right to live. Because life is sacred, we also reject the notion that abortion is acceptable for reasons of birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control or the mental well being of the mother. In the rare instance when continuing the pregnancy would result in the mother's death, we would respect the family's decision to preserve the mother's life as an act of self-defense.

For the same reasons, we believe that life continues to be sacred until a person's natural death. Suicide, assisted suicide, euthanasia, or the withholding of medically ordinary and necessary care are not compatible with the sacred value of human life. All of these represent the deliberate taking of a human life, and are therefore always wrong. A family's decision to withhold extraordinary medical technology from a person when that technology would not preserve life but prolong the process of dying is justifiable. Deliberations about such issues should be made with a great sense of humility, and any reasonable doubt should be resolved in favor of life. We believe that mental or physical disability in no way decreases the sacred value of a person's life. Therefore such disabilities should not be taken into

account in life-or-death decisions. (*Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:4-5; Luke 1:15, 41-44; Proverbs 24:11-12; 2 Samuel 11:5; Genesis 9:5-7; Leviticus 19:14; John 9:1-7*).

## **5. Concerning Salvation**

### **a. Elements**

We believe that the salvation of mankind consists in the satisfaction of divine justice, the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the gift of eternal life, the provision of every spiritual resource needed for life and godliness, and the guarantee that those who are saved shall never perish (*Isaiah 53:6, 10; Jonah 2:9; John 10:27-29; 17:13; Romans 3:24; 5:8-9; 8:38-39; 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19, 21; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 1:7; 2 Peter 1:2; 1 John 4:10*).

### **b. Attainment**

Salvation was purchased by Christ on the cross and is based upon the elective grace of God. Salvation is by grace through faith, apart from any person's virtue or work, through the instrumentality of the Word of God as applied by the Holy Spirit (*John 1:12, 3:16; Acts 16:31; Romans 8:29-30; 9:14-24; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:1-10, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Hebrews 11:6*).

### **c. Results**

Salvation results in the forgiveness of sins for the Christian as the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him by faith. The Christian is crucified with Christ, buried, raised and glorified with Him. There is no more condemnation or judgment for sin, and the believer's identity in Christ bestows on him all the glories of heaven, as well as the Father's great love (*Romans 5:8; Galatians 2:20*).

The believer's lifestyle will be affected by the salvation experience. Every believer at the moment of salvation is fully indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and righteous living, good works, and the fruit of the Spirit are the result as the Christian submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his or her life through the interaction of the Word of God. The process of edification is accomplished as the believer is conformed to the image of Christ by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and it culminates in our glorification at Christ's coming (*John 5:24; 10:28; 14:15; Romans 8:13, 29-39; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:10; 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10; 1 John 3:2-3*).

## **6. Concerning the Church**

### **a. Nature**

We believe that the Holy Spirit unites all believers who have placed their faith in Christ alone as their Savior into one spiritual body, the church, of which Christ is the head. This body began on the day of Pentecost and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own. In addition to the spiritual union and communion that enfolded the entire Body of Christ, the members of this one spiritual body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies or churches (*Matthew 16:18; Acts 1:4-5; 2:46-47; 11:15; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:13-22; 3:4-6; 5:25-27; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 10:25*).

## **b. Organization**

The local assemblies of believers have been given the needed authority for administering that order, discipline, and worship which was appointed by Christ, the sovereign Head. The Bible designates elders and deacons as officers to serve under Christ and to oversee the assembly. In keeping with the biblical concept of differing roles for men and women, we believe certain governing and teaching roles are the responsibility of men. The office of elder is assigned to men, as is oversight of the corporate preaching/teaching pulpit ministry. The roles of deacon, and other leadership and teaching roles in the church are given to both men and women. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles in the church are not based on differing value, dignity or worth, but on the biblical concept of male head-ship or leadership.

*(Matthew 18:15-18; Acts 6:1-6; 1 Corinthians 14:40; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 2:12; 3:1-13; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 10:25; 1 Peter 5:1-5).*

## **c. Leadership**

The New Testament describes the primary human leadership in the local church as consisting of a plurality of elders who teach, manage and provide servant leadership to the entire church body. Elders are identified by their character qualities and godly lifestyles. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, elders initiate, supervise, and finalize the recognition of additional leaders, and they shape the process of decision-making in the church. *(Acts 6:1-6; 14:23; 15:1-35; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5).*

## **d. Purpose**

The purpose of the church is to glorify God by worshipping God in spirit and in truth, by evangelizing the lost, by edifying and equipping the saints and by spiritually influencing the world *(Psalm 95; Matthew 5:13-16; 28:18-20; John 4:23-24; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:11-16).*

## **e. Mission**

Mission is a comprehensive word that describes the relationship of the church to the world, and all that God sends the church into the world to be and to do. It includes social service and social action, but at its heart mission is sharing the gospel and introducing people to Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Mission means creating opportunities for every man, woman and child to see, hear and respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ *(John 17:18; Acts 1:8; Luke 24:46-49).*

## **f. Gifts**

To fulfill its God-ordained purposes of worship, evangelism, edification and influence, the church has been given spiritual endowments. One order of gifts provided to the church is gifted leaders, who are given by Christ Himself for the equipping of the saints for the work of this ministry. The second order of gifts is that of spiritual abilities, and each member of the body of Christ receives at least one such gift from the Holy Spirit. Each member must develop and employ his spiritual gift(s) for the church to accomplish its task *(Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 27-31; 14:1-40; Ephesians 4:8-13; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10-11).*

## **g. Ordinances**

Two ordinances have been committed to the local church - baptism and the Lord's Supper. Christian baptism is the immersion of the believer into water to symbolize the believer's identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ to remember Him and His atoning death. These two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are to be observed until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (*Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:41; 10:47-48; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29*).

## **h. Church Discipline**

The local church assembly is responsible for disciplining any of its members who begin to live in gross, overt, willing and habitual sin. If any member should persist in such sin, the church must follow the Biblical guidelines to restore the person to repentance and fellowship. If they should refuse to cease sinning, they are to be cut off from the fellowship of the church (*Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13*).

## **7. Concerning Last Things**

### **a. The Intermediate State**

We believe that at death the souls of the redeemed pass immediately into the presence of Christ and remain there in joyful fellowship with God until the first resurrection - their bodily resurrection unto life. At death, the souls of the unsaved descend immediately into Hades where they are kept under punishment until the second resurrection - their bodily resurrection unto damnation (*Luke 16:22-26; 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Revelation 20:11-15*).

### **b. Future Events**

There is no universal consensus among Christians as to the sequence of events which lead up to and culminate in the final events of history; namely, the return of Christ to earth and the institution of the eternal state. While we exercise tolerance of other responsible views in regard to future events, we believe there is strong evidence for the following:

#### **1) The Rapture of the Church**

The next great event in the fulfillment of prophecy is the personal, bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ to remove from the earth His waiting church and to reward the believers according to their works (*John 14:1-3; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 15:51-53; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; Revelation 3:10*).

#### **2) The Tribulation Period**

After the saints are taken from the earth, the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon the world during a seven-year period of tribulation known as the seventieth week of Daniel. These judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth, at which time the Old Testament and tribulation saints will be also raised and the living will be judged (*Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; Joel 3:1-2; Matthew 24:15-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 16:1-19, 21*).



### **3) The Millennium**

After this judgment, Christ will establish His Messianic Kingdom in which the resurrection saints will reign with Him over all the nations of the earth (*Deuteronomy 3:1-10; Isaiah 11:1-16; 65:18-25; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Revelation 10:11; 14; 20:1-6*).

### **4) Eternal State**

At the close of the millennium reign, the unsaved dead will be raised in the second resurrection and committed to eternal punishment. The saved will then enter the eternal state of glory with God. Having fulfilled His redemptive and kingdom missions as the son of Abraham and the Son of David, Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father in order that the Triune God will reign forever in all spheres (*Mark 9:43-48; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 20:11-15; 21:1-4; 22:5, 11*).