



Statement *of* Faith

ALL ELDER APPROVAL AUGUST 2021

Preface

Why do we have a statement of faith? We believe there is an objective reality, a truth that's there whether we acknowledge it or not, and we want to make clear what we believe about reality. There are many things that can be known simply by observing them, but there are also things that can only be known by faith, and these are the most important things: Where did everything come from? Why do we exist? Why are things the way they are? Is history headed somewhere?

How people answer these questions reflects their fundamental beliefs about reality, and as a result, how they live.

This is true whether people verbalize their beliefs or not, and very often we can live out of beliefs without being conscious of them. We want to be conscious and aware of our faith, in order to live accordingly. We also want to be clear with those interested in knowing what drives us and lies at the core of our lives and beliefs. At The Journey, Jesus is the heartbeat of everything we do. He's what makes us go, he's who we live for,

the Person that we orient our lives around. We want our church to embody his love for each other and our city. While the doctrines that express our faith in him aren't everything, they help give shape to our faith.

In this statement, we focus on the core beliefs of Christianity derived from Scripture, faithfully summarized in the historic creeds, catechisms, and confessions of the Christian faith. We expect all members of The Journey to affirm and uphold this statement of faith.

The end of this statement contains a list of topics that we call Theological Distinctives. These are additional beliefs that shape our overall teaching and ministry practices in distinction from other Christian churches and our broader contemporary culture. We emphasize these beliefs, not to be divisive, but because we recognize they make a difference in the way we live and love one another and our city. We do not expect members of The Journey to embrace every aspect of these Distinctives, but we do expect members to respect them and not subvert them.

Lastly, we are not God, but are limited by our human weakness, ignorance, bias, and sin in our expression of these doctrines. What we offer here then is not perfect or complete, and though we wholeheartedly affirm it, we remain open to further light, understanding, and correction.

THE TRIUNE GOD

That there is only one true God eternally existing in three equally divine yet distinct Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) who know, love, and glorify one another in complete harmony. As Sovereign Lord, the Triune God creates, sustains, and rules over everyone and everything with perfect love, wisdom, and power, and is thus worthy of all our worship.

Exodus 3:13-15; 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 5:43-45; John 15:26; 17:5; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Before the creation of time and space, God eternally existed as the only living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4). God is perfect spirit, immortal, invisible, and infinite in his being and perfection (1 Timothy 1:7), who has no changeable attributes in his being or character (Malachi 3:6; John 4:24).

He is holy, loving, gracious, merciful, patient, just, and overflowing with goodness and truth (Exodus 34:6-7). While there is only one God, God consists of three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22; Acts 2:33; 1 John 5:7). Because they have the same substance, power, perfection, and eternity, they are only one God (John 14:11; 1 Corinthians 8:6).

Yet, each Person is distinguished by several distinctive characteristics and personal relations (John 5:36, 14:26). This eternal and indivisible relationship of the Triune God is joined together in love, filled with joy, and produces life. It is from this relationship, and not his need of anything (Acts 17:25), that God creates all that exists, sustains what he has made, and rules over everything and everyone that fills his creation (Genesis 1:26-27) with his goodness, generosity, love, and glory.

This truth of the Triune God serves as the foundation of all of our fellowship with God and should cause us to give to him all our worship, service, and obedience (Revelation 5:12-14).

DIVINE REVELATION

That the Triune God has made himself known through the world he has made, the words he has spoken, and the Son he has sent to us. Through the Holy Spirit's guidance over human words, God is clearly revealed in the Bible, which tells a unified story of his gracious work in human history. As God's Word, the Bible is true, authoritative, and necessary for a right relationship with God and his world, and serves as the basis for all of our essential beliefs and practices.

Exodus 17:14; 24:3-4; Psalm 12:6; 19:1-3; 119:160; Nehemiah 9:1-38; John 1:1-3; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; Romans 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 1:1-3.

While God has graciously revealed his existence and power through creation, we need more if we want to know him deeply and personally (Psalm 19:1-3; Romans 1:19-21). So, God revealed himself personally to people like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, John, Paul, and many others who, in turn, shared God's words with others.

These people were God's prophets and apostles, sent by God to communicate on his behalf, and much of these words and interactions between God and people are written down in the Bible (Hebrews 1:1). The Holy Spirit directed different human writers to write the words of God so that the finished product was precisely what God intended (1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 2 Peter 1:19-20).

The Bible consists of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. It is true and without error in its original writings (Psalm 12:6, 119:160; John 17:17). Because the Holy Spirit illuminates the Bible to be our primary and indispensable guide, it is the final authority over every domain of life and the sufficient standard for all that God requires for us to believe and do (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Through the Bible, we encounter the supreme revelation of God in the Son, the living and incarnate Word (John 1:1-2, 14; Hebrews 1:2). Therefore, we should believe, obey, and trust the Bible, since it is God's own word (Romans 15:4; 1 John 5:2). Nothing may be added to or removed from it, either by new revelations or by human tradition (Deuteronomy 12:32; Luke 16:17). When we have questions about the true and full meaning of any part of the Bible, we must understand those parts in light of other passages that speak more clearly (2 Peter 1:20-21)

CREATION

That out of his love, wisdom, and power, God created all things, speaking them into existence. On earth he established a kingdom, where everything was very good, holy, and flourishing, sustained and cared for by him. As the crown of his creation, God made human beings, male and female, in his image, giving us stewardship over his kingdom, inviting us into his work, rest, and love.

Genesis 1:1-3; 1:26-31; Exodus 20:8-11; Psalm 8:1-9; 33:4-6; Proverbs 8:22-31; Isaiah 45:18; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17.

The Bible's story begins with God creating all things, visible and invisible: heaven, earth, and everything in between (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 45:18; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). God did not use any pre-existing materials but spoke the universe into existence out of nothing (Psalm 33:6; John 1:3; Hebrews 11:3).

Everything exists simply because God willed it to be (Genesis 1:3). As the source and author of everything, God stands outside of creation yet he engages it, sustaining all things by his power, ensuring the fulfillment of his good purpose, disclosing himself to his creatures, particularly human beings.

In the beginning, everything in creation was good, true, and beautiful, intended by God to be enjoyed, cared for, and cultivated to even greater flourishing by Adam and Eve, the first humans. In creation, we see the pattern of God's kingdom as God's people living in God's place under God's rule. God created us male and female in his own image, blessed with his presence and provision, called to learn wisdom from him and multiply his image over the earth (Genesis 1:26-28).

As one means of bearing his image in the world and reflecting his exclusive covenant love, God designed the gift of marriage and sex between one man and one woman for one lifetime (Genesis 2:24-25). As image-bearers, every human life is equally sacred, valuable, and worthy of honor and protection. We are invited to partner with God in his work, join God in his rest, and become like him in his love.

REBELLION

That the first humans rejected God's rule, alienating all humanity from God and fracturing the world placed under their care. As a result, the image of God is distorted in each one of us as we seek to live apart from our Creator, leaving all of creation marked by sin and death, under God's righteous judgment, subject to spiritual forces of evil, and without hope in the world apart from God's grace and mercy.

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7, 16-19; 6:5-6; Psalm 51:1-5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 1:18-25; 3:22-23; 5:12-21; Ephesians 2:1-3, 12; James 1:14-15.

Instead of partnering with God, the first humans rejected him, believing Satan's lie that they could live autonomously and be their own gods. Their choice to rebel against God and his ways resulted in humanity's fall from glory into ruin (Genesis 2:15-17, 3:19, 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9).

Because Adam and Eve were meant to rule the earth under God as his image-bearers, when they fell, the whole creation fell, too, and everything under their care suffered (Romans 5:12-21). By believing Satan rather than God, Adam and Eve gave over their birthright as rulers of the earth to spiritual forces of evil. All human beings since have followed in the footsteps of Adam and Eve, rebelling against God as our Father and Source of Life, defining for ourselves what is good and evil, looking to ourselves and this world for our life and flourishing, falling short of our glorious calling, enslaved under the rule of Satan, condemned to death, and without hope apart from God's gracious intervention (Romans 3:22-23, 5:8; Ephesians 2:1-3).

Even in the history of Israel, God's covenant people, we see that despite God's power and love shown to Israel again and again, even the best among them fell far short of their calling as God's covenant partners, and most of them rebelled, not trusting God or honoring him, choosing instead their own way, refusing to own or repent of their sin against God and others (Psalm 106). This way leads to condemnation, death, and ruin, not only for us but also for the whole creation. There is no way back to life and flourishing except God's way, revealed in the gospel.

RESCUE

That despite our rebellion against him, God has been working throughout history to rescue the world from ruin and renew human beings to their high and noble position as his image-bearers. God has ultimately rescued us from sin, his righteous judgment, and spiritual evil through his Son, Jesus Christ, the true image of God, who became human, dying in our place on the cross, rising from the grave, conquering death, and ascending to heaven where he reigns as King over all the earth. This is the gospel, or good news, of Jesus Christ. All who give their allegiance to him will receive forgiveness and new life with God.

Genesis 3:15; 9:1-17; 12:1-3; Exodus 2:23-25; 19:1-6; 2 Samuel 7:8-16; Jeremiah 34:14-16; Ezekiel 36:22-28; Matthew 1:20-23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:16-22; Acts 3:22-39; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Colossians 1:12-14, 19-23; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 10:11-14; 2 Peter 1:3-4.

God has never abandoned his creation but has been working throughout history to rescue the world from the ruin of sin and death and renew humans to their role as his image-bearers. When Adam and Eve sinned, God promised that one of Eve's offspring would rescue humanity and all of creation from its ruin (Genesis 3:15). Since that day, God has been working in the world, sustaining it despite its brokenness, and inviting people back into relationship with him. God chose to partner especially with the weak and unpromising people of Israel, promising to bless all nations through them (Genesis 12:1-3). Through God's partnership (or covenant) with Israel, the whole world would be rescued.

In Israel's history, we see the story of all human beings, who, like Adam and Eve, are exiled from life in God, wandering as refugees in a broken world, suffering under sin and Satan's oppression, fearing death, and desperately needing rescue. But in Israel's story we also see God's gracious covenant given and reaffirmed to people like Abraham, Moses, David, and the people of Israel, and we hear repeated prophecies about one who would rise up as a King, or Messiah, and who would fulfill both God's side and humanity's side of the covenant partnership between them (2 Samuel 7:8-16; Jeremiah 34:14-16; Matthew 1:20-23). This Messiah would be the Rescuer not just of Israel but of the whole world.

Around 30 A.D., when the rabbi Jesus of Nazareth began teaching and healing people in Roman-occupied Palestine, most people didn't understand who he was (Luke 4:16-22). The power and love he showed people—men and women, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, oppressed and oppressor—broke their categories and expectations of a messiah. Many followed him, hoping he might be their Rescuer, but then the Jewish leaders had him crucified, handing him over to the Roman authorities for torture and execution, and his body was buried in a tomb. His death was seen as a shameful defeat, but his resurrection declared who he really was: not just a martyr, but the Messiah, and God's own Son.

As the fully divine Son of God, Jesus rescued us, having both the power to bring life out of death in resurrection and the love to willingly lay down his life for us in crucifixion. As the fully human Son of Man, Jesus represented us and took the responsibility for humanity's sin on himself, dying in our place, and yet also, because he himself was wholly good and without sin, sharing with us his righteousness and its reward, eternal life.

This is the gospel that Christianity proclaims (1 Corinthians 15:1-8). After Jesus's resurrection, he commissioned his disciples to tell the world, calling everyone to give their allegiance to him as their only hope in life and death. Jesus has taken his place next to God the Father, ruling the universe (Philippians 2:5-11), interceding for his people and empowering them to represent him on earth until the day appointed when he will return to finally set all things right (Romans 8:18-39; 2 Peter 3:1-13). At present, we have the choice to submit to him or to continue in our own way, and everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13).

THE HOLY SPIRIT

That after ascending to heaven, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to renew the image of God in believers, enable us to grow in Christlikeness, and empower the church for ministry and mission. As the unseen yet active presence of God in the world, the Holy Spirit awakens the hearts and minds of people to love, trust, and hope in Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

Genesis 1:1-2; Ezekiel 36:25-27; John 3:5-8; 16:7-11; Acts 1:8; 2:1-21; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Galatians 5:23; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Titus 3:5.

In the beginning, the Spirit of God hovered over the formless and empty world (Genesis 1:1-2). As God spoke all things into existence, the Holy Spirit breathed life into creation (Psalm 104:30) and animated the first Adam with God's empowering presence (Genesis 2:7). As part of God's plan to rescue and recreate the world, the Holy Spirit revealed God's word, empowered God's servants, and sanctified God's people under the old covenant. In the incarnation, the Holy Spirit hovered over the virgin Mary's womb, from where Jesus, the Son of God and second Adam, was brought forth into the world. The Holy Spirit filled and empowered Jesus throughout his earthly ministry (Luke 4:1, 14).

After Jesus's body was broken and blood was shed on the cross as the sign of the new covenant, God raised Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11). After Jesus ascended to heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit upon the new covenant community at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13), filling and empowering the multiethnic church in its witness to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8, 8:29, 13:2-4, 16:6-7), in fulfillment of God's promises under the old covenant to undo the effects of humanity's rebellion.

The Holy Spirit continues to graciously give new life to men and women by opening their hearts and minds to see the truth and goodness of the gospel in the word of God, convicting them of their sin, and stirring them to faith and repentance (John 3:5-8, 16:7-11; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Titus 3:5). The Holy Spirit unites all those who believe in the gospel in fellowship with the Triune God and one another (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:1-7).

The Spirit is always present and active in those of us who believe, dwelling in our hearts and strengthening us in our inner being. He gives us assurance of our identity as God's beloved children in the midst of doubts and trials (Romans 8:11-17; Galatians 4:6-7) and equips us with gifts and abilities for the benefit and building up of God's covenant people (Exodus 31:1-6; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Peter 4:10-11). Through the empowering presence of the Spirit, we can resist sin and grow in Christlike character (2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Galatians 5:23).

THE CHURCH

That all people from every place and age who have been rescued by Jesus are united together in his universal Church. The local church, as one expression of this worldwide Church, is a gathered body of those who are being renewed by the Holy Spirit, to worship God according to the Word of God, display the goodness of Jesus’s kingdom in their shared life, and declare the good news to all peoples in word and works until Jesus returns again.

Matthew 16:13-19; 28:18-20; Acts 2:42-47; 11:19-26; 13:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 3:7-12, 20-22; 4:11-16; Colossians 3:5-17; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 10:19-25; 1 Peter 2:9-10.

Jesus’s rescue was not only to save sinners, but to renew a people for himself. As Jesus proclaimed the arrival of the kingdom of God, he promised to build his church, who would gather together in his name for his glory. The church began with Jesus’s earthly ministry in Jerusalem, yet the church would move the boundaries of God’s people beyond the nation of Israel to the very ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). After Christ’s ascension, the Apostles and disciples of Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaimed the message of the gospel to all people. As people believed the good news of Jesus Christ, they began to gather with other believers in worship, fellowship, and mission (Acts 2:42-47, 13:1-3; Ephesians 4:11-16). The word church, meaning “public assembly,” emphasizes our new identity within a community who have received God’s promises and have been restored to God’s purposes as Christ’s ambassadors in the world (2 Corinthians 5:11-21).

The Bible speaks of the local church, churches across a city or region, and the universal Church, which emphasizes the unity of believers across history (Ephesians 1:22, 3:20-22, 5:27). The local church as “the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15) is where the gospel is preached and displayed through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26); worshipping according to the Word of God, the church represents his kingdom as an embassy or outpost of heaven on earth. As “God’s household” (1 Timothy 3:15; cf. Galatians 6:10), the church is where believers grow in love and service as they submit to one another under the leadership of elders, called to shepherd and strengthen God’s people (Acts 14:23, 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-7).

Strengthened in corporate worship, the church is sent and empowered by the Holy Spirit to embody the Great Commandments—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:34-40)—and enact the Great Commission—“mak[ing] disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that [Jesus has commanded]” (Matthew 28:18-20) until Jesus returns to bring the kingdom of God in fullness on the earth (Acts 3:19-21; 2 Peter 3:10-13).

RE-CREATION

That Jesus will return to fully establish his kingdom on earth, put an end to humanity's rebellion, rightly judge all people, fix what is wrong in creation, and live with his people forever. As we wait in hope for the renewed heavens and earth, we partner now with the Holy Spirit in bringing transformation into every aspect of our lives.

Matthew 24:44; 25:26; Acts 1:9-11; 17:31; Romans 6:22; 8:19-22; 14:17; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 15:50-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 11:15; 21:1-22:5.

After his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father and promised that he would return to make all things new (Acts 1:9-11). The kingdom of God, which began with Jesus, continues to be established and revealed by the work of the Holy Spirit through God's people (Romans 14:17).

Unknown to any person, God has appointed a day when Jesus will return personally, gloriously, and bodily (Matthew 24:44; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Titus 2:13). On that day, Jesus will establish his righteous rule and reign as King and he will reveal the kingdom of God in its fullness (Revelation 11:15). The dead will rise again to life and God will justly judge all humanity according to the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12-13). Those who rejected Jesus as Lord and Savior will be judged to eternal punishment and separation from life with God (Matthew 25:46; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 21:8). And those in Christ, will experience a renewal of their current spirit, mind, heart, and body as they receive eternal life in the fullness of joy and glory (Romans 6:22; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57).

The Lord will not only re-create humanity, but will restore the whole of creation, making all things new again (Romans 8:19-22, Revelation 21:5). On that day, heaven and earth will become one as God permanently dwells with his people face-to-face for all eternity (Revelation 21:3, 7; 22:4). Until that day, we wait in hope and partner in the work of the Holy Spirit to seek renewal, healing, and wholeness personally, culturally, and societally.



Statement *of* Faith