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PREFACE

DOES EVERY MEMBER HAVE TO AGREE WITH THESE BELIEFS?
(What is the relationship between doctrine and unity of the Body at GRBC?)

We, the elders, affirm wholeheartedly the concept of “confessional Christianity.” That is, individuals that make up a church need some way of knowing if their beliefs, goals, and ideals are the same. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to measure unity without some such standard.

For Green Run Baptist Church, this standard of unity is the Membership Covenant. By signing this document, one is affirming agreement with, among other things, the doctrinal statement of the church (Article III, “Foundational Beliefs”, in the Constitution). The more doctrine a church can agree on, the greater its unity and strength. Every prospective member of Green Run is required to pledge his agreement with these beliefs.

We further realize that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to come up with a set amount or percentage of doctrine that a person has to agree on to become and remain a member in good standing. Each individual is at varying stages of Christian growth and understanding, and this must be taken into consideration. For example, many in first-century churches were spiritual “infants” in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:12-13), having limited understanding of basic doctrine, yet their church membership was not denied.

While understanding is one consideration, however, disagreement is quite another. While there is certainly room for disagreement on some issues among the members of Green Run, there are some areas we consider “essential” to the faith, and therefore essential to church membership. These include: the deity of Christ; the inerrancy of Scripture; the tri-unity of the Godhead; salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone; the reality of the indwelling Holy Spirit; eternal security for the believer. These minimum elements of distinctive Christian doctrine and the Christian gospel must be adhered to for one to come into and continue in membership at Green Run Baptist Church.

The elders understand that absolute doctrinal agreement is not realistic. However, we remain committed to not only protecting the church from false doctrine, but also to teaching our members and prospective members the elements of Christian doctrine we believe to be essential. After all, the apostle Paul was ready to pronounce eternal judgment on anyone (even an angel from heaven) who proclaimed “another gospel” (Galatians 1:9). The elders of Green Run take the issue of doctrinal integrity just as seriously and we are glad for every opportunity to discuss these particular areas with all who have honest questions, and even disagreements.

FOUNDATIONAL BELIEFS

THE BIBLE

Authorship and Inerrancy

The sixty-six books of the Bible are collectively God’s revelation of Himself to mankind, and it is the sole authority for faith and practice. The Bible is verbally inspired by God in every word (2 Timothy 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible and understandable. The Holy Spirit so moved on the hearts of men as to author the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:20-21); therefore, they are without error in whole or in part (Matthew 5:18).

Interpretation and Application

Whereas there may be more than one application of any given passage of Scripture, there is only one correct interpretation. It is to be interpreted literally using a grammatical-historical method. It is the responsibility of all believers, with the aid of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:27), to carefully ascertain the true intent and meaning of Scripture, keeping in mind the context and intent of the original author (Acts 17:11). Proper application is binding on all people, in all places, in all times

(John 10:35). The Scriptures stand in judgment of men; men never stand in judgment of the Scriptures (Hebrews 4:12).

GOD

The Trinity

There is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4) who exists eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and co-eternal, yet separate in function (Genesis 1:1,26; John 1:1,3; Matthew 28:19).

God the Father

The first person of the trinity is an infinite, personal spirit (John 4:24), perfect in holiness, goodness, wisdom, power and love. He orders and disposes all things according to His grace and good pleasure (Psalm 145:8-9). He is sovereign in creation, providence and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). He infallibly foreknows all that will come to pass and He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men.

Jesus Christ

He is God's only begotten Son (John 1:18). He is truly God as well as truly man, possessing all the attributes of deity (Philippians 2:5-11). He was conceived of a virgin (Luke 1:26-38; Isaiah 7:14); lived a sinless life (1 Peter 2:22); died on the cross as the substitute for all who trusted in God prior to the cross and all who would trust in Christ thereafter (Romans 3:25,26; Galatians 2:16); was buried and arose bodily from the dead (John 2:19-21; Romans 8:11); ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:11; 2 Timothy 3:16) and is now seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for His people (Hebrews 7:25). He will soon return visibly to earth (Zechariah 14:4; Revelation 1:7) to gather His children, execute judgment on believers (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10) as well as unbelievers (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11-15) and rule and reign on earth (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Zechariah 14:9).

The Holy Spirit

He is a divine person (Acts 5:3-4), is eternal (Hebrews 9:14) and possesses all the attributes of deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotion (Ephesians 4:30) and will (1 Corinthians 12:11). He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscient (Isaiah 40:13-14) and omnipotent (Romans 15:13). He was sent from the Father (John 15:26) and the Son (John 16:7) to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:7-11) and to guide believers into all truth (John 16:13). He indwells every true believer (Romans 8:9) as He has baptized them into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit bestows spiritual gifts on every believer for the purpose of building up the church (1 Corinthians 12:11; 1 Peter 4:10).

MAN

Creation

Man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness, free of sin with a rational, intelligent nature that included free will and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 1,2). He was created to glorify God, enjoy fellowship with Him and accomplish His plans in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

Sinfulness and Separation

However, mankind, in Adam, chose to sin and so incurred the penalty of physical and spiritual death (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12). He is now hopelessly depraved and sinful (Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:10; Romans 3:10-18) and under condemnation (John 3:18). He can only be saved from eternal judgment, which is separation from God, by God's grace through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23).

SALVATION

Saving Work of Christ

Salvation is completely of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not by human merit or works (*John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10*).

Sovereign Plan of God

In order to display the full extent of His glory, it pleased God to choose, before the foundation of the world, those whom He would graciously regenerate, justify, sanctify and glorify (*Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2*). This act of choosing, predestination or election, is God's eternal choice of some persons unto everlasting life- not because of foreseen merit in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ- in consequence of which choice they are called, justified and glorified. God's sovereign election does not negate the personal responsibility of every individual to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (*John 3:18-19; Romans 9:22-23; Revelation 22:17*), nor does it negate the responsibility of every believer to make known the gospel of the glory of Christ (*Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:11-15*).

Power of the Gospel Unto Salvation

The Holy Spirit does this saving work in connection with the presentation of the gospel of the glory of Christ. Thus neither the work of the Father in election, nor the work of the Son in atonement, nor the work of the Spirit in regeneration is a hindrance or discouragement to the proclamation of the gospel to all peoples and persons everywhere. On the contrary, this divine saving work of the Trinity is the warrant and the ground of our hope that our evangelism is not in vain in the Lord. The Spirit binds His saving work to the gospel of Christ, because His aim is to glorify the Christ of the gospel (*John 16:14*). Therefore, we do not believe there is salvation through any other means than through receiving the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit, except that infants and severely retarded persons with minds physically incapable of comprehending the gospel may be saved (*Romans 1:19-20*).

Regeneration and Preservation by the Spirit

Apart from the effectual work of the Holy Spirit, no one would come to faith, because all are dead in trespasses and sin; that they are hostile to God, and morally unable to submit to God or please Him, because the pleasures of sin appear greater than the pleasures of God (*Ephesians 2:4-6; Romans 8:7-9*). Thus, for God's elect, the Spirit triumphs over all resistance, awakens the dead, removes blindness, and manifests Christ in such a compellingly beautiful way through the gospel that He becomes irresistibly attractive to the regenerate heart (*2 Corinthians 4:4-6*) guaranteeing the sinner will repent and believe. All who are justified are kept by the power of God and will persevere in faith until their ultimate triumph in glorification. This perseverance is the promise of the New Covenant (*Jeremiah 32:40*), obtained by the blood of Christ, and worked in us by God Himself, yet not so as to diminish, but only to empower and encourage, our vigilance (*Philippians 1:6; 2:12,13; 2 Timothy 4:7,8; 1 Peter 1:5*).

THE CHURCH

The Universal Church

A living spiritual body made up of all who have placed faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, having been placed into this body by the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians 12:13*) immediately upon their conversion. The formation of this spiritual body began on the Day of Pentecost (*Acts 2:1-21*) and will continue until the Coming of Christ for His own (*1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*).

The Local Church

The establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught in Scripture (*Acts 14:23,27; 20:17; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1*). The members of any given local church are instructed to organize and associate themselves together (*Hebrews 10:25*). Jesus Christ is the Head and Lord of the Church (*Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18*); every true Christian church exists to exalt, glorify and

magnify Him. To accomplish this, He has instituted officers under Himself and over the assembly called elders (pastors, bishops; *Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11*) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (*1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5*). These leaders rule and have authority in directing the church as servants of the Lord (*1 Timothy 5:17-22*), and the congregation is to submit to their leadership (*Hebrews 13:7,17*). The local church is the setting where discipleship is to take place (*Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2*), believers are to be accountable to each other (*Matthew 18:5-14*), and sinning members of the congregation are disciplined according to the standards of Scripture (*Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16*). Each local church is free to govern its own affairs under the Headship of Christ. It is the responsibility of the elders to determine matters of policy, membership, discipline, benevolence, government, and the degree to which the local church will partner with other churches or organizations to propagate the Gospel (*Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7,13; 1 Peter 5:1-4*). Every Christian has been gifted by God to serve Him in the local church (*1 Corinthians 12:27; 1 Peter 4:10*). Members, therefore, should use their gifts in active service to God in the church, thereby building the church in the faith (*Ephesians 4:13-16*) and glorifying God (*Ephesians 3:21*). Indispensable elements of building up the church are: instruction in God's Word (*2 Timothy 2:2,15; 3:16-17*); fellowship (*Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3*); observation of the ordinances (*Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*); and advancement of the Gospel around the world (*Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8*). All Christians are called by God to do the work of the ministry (*Ephesians 4:12*).

Baptism and Communion

The two ordinances given to the church to observe regularly are baptism and the Lord's Supper. In baptism, a person is placed under water into the name of the triune God as a symbol of his previous conversion experience, which includes the death of the old self. As he is raised from the water, it is symbolic of his new life in Christ (*Romans 6:3-5*). Baptism is not essential for salvation; it is, however, a significant act that all obedient Christians should follow, considering the example and command of Christ (*Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 1:9*). The Lord's Supper (or Communion) is to be practiced on a regular basis by a local assembly of believers, always preceded by self-examination (*1 Corinthians 11:23-32*). It, like baptism, is a symbolic act, but extremely meaningful nevertheless, as it is an actual communion with Christ Himself, foreshadowing the Day when all Christians will enjoy unbroken, perfect fellowship with Him (*Revelation 19:7-10*).

LAST THINGS

Return of Christ

The Lord Jesus will return personally and visibly to the earth to administer the final judgments and establish His eternal kingdom (*Revelation 20:11-15*).

Judgments of Christ

The wicked face an eternity of endless suffering (*Matthew 16:27*) and the righteous receive an eternity of ever-increasing joy (*1 Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 21:1-8*).