

# friends church

est. 1879

## Core Beliefs

### God

1. We believe in one eternal, omnipresent, unchanging, personal God; perfect in holiness, wisdom, love, power, and justice without preceding cause or beginning; creator and preserver of all things, visible and invisible. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:29; Psalm 90:1-2; Romans 1:20; Psalm 139:7-12; James 1:17; Malachi 3:6; John 14:9; Isaiah 6:3; 1 Peter 1:15-16; Romans 11:33; 1 John 4:8; 1 Chronicles 29:11-12; Isaiah 40:26-28; Ephesians 1:18-20; Psalm 89:14; Romans 3:26; Psalm 93:2; Genesis 1:1; Romans 11:36; Psalm 104:27-30; Colossians 1:16-17).
2. He exists as one divine being and yet as a trinity of three distinct persons, identical, inseparable, and equal in divinity, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19; John 14:16, 18, 23; 2 Corinthians 13:14). God revealed Himself in the past in many and various ways, though supremely in the person of Jesus Christ. He continues to reveal Himself today through His creation, the Holy Scriptures, and the workings of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people. (Hebrews 1:2; John 1:18; Romans 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Acts 8:29; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6-10).
3. He alone is worthy of our worship, honor, praise, and thanksgiving, now and forevermore. (Galatians 1:5).

## **Jesus**

1. We believe that Jesus Christ, the Word who was with God and was God, is the only begotten Son of God. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary and is the express image of the invisible God. He combines within Himself both the divine nature of God and human nature in one perfect indivisible personality, the God-man. (John 1:1-2; Colossians 1:16-17; John 1:18; 1 John 4:9; Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:34; Colossians 1:15; John 1:14; Colossians 2:9).
2. He lived and suffered in the world to show the Way of Life. He was crucified and died as the atonement for the sins of the whole world, making the only provision whereby people can find forgiveness of sins and cleansing from all unrighteousness. (John 14:6; Romans 5:10; Ephesians 5:2; 1 Peter 2:21; Romans 3:23-25; 1 John 2:2; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13-14; Titus 2:14).
3. He died in our place and was raised the third day for our justification; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, ever living as our only Mediator and High Priest making intercession for us, and from there will return again to receive His church unto Himself and to judge the world in righteousness. (1 Corinthians 15:4; 1 John 4:10; Romans 4:25; 2 Corinthians 15:4; Acts 1:9; Ephesians 4:8; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; Romans 2:16; 2 Timothy 4:1).

## **The Holy Spirit**

1. We believe in the Holy Spirit, not as an impersonal principle or influence, but as a divine person, and though distinct from the Father and Son, proceeding from both, with whom He is equal in authority, power, glory, and titles. (John 14:16-17, 26; 16:13-14; John 15:26; 16:7; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).
2. He is the divine agent in conviction of sin, regeneration, sanctification, and the believers' assurance. (John 16:8; 3:5; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:6).

3. He is given as an indwelling Presence to every believer to be a teacher, guide, and source of comfort. He purifies the heart of the believer and imparts at His own choosing spiritual gifts for service and the building up of the body of Christ. He produces in believers the fruit of the Spirit so that they may conform to the image of Christ. (John 14:26, 16:13; Acts 9:31, 15:9; 1 John 1:9; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:7-13; Galatians 5:22-23).

### **Holy Scripture**

1. As with early Friends, we believe that all Scripture, both of the Old and New Testaments, is given by inspiration of God, without error in all that it affirms, and is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It is fully authoritative and trustworthy, fully sufficient for all believers now and always, and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 19:7-11; 119:4, 105, 119:89; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
2. Thus, the declarations contained in it rest on the authority of God Himself, and there can be no appeal from them to any other authority whatever. They are the only divinely authorized record of the doctrines which we are bound as Christians to believe, and of the moral principles which are to regulate our behavior. Only such doctrines as are contained in the Scripture can be regarded as Articles of Faith. The Holy Spirit, who inspired the Scripture, must ever be its true interpreter. Whatever any person says or does which is contrary to the Scripture, though under profession of the guidance of the Spirit, must be reckoned and accounted a delusion. (1 Thessalonians 2:13; Romans 1:16-17; Psalm 119:9; John 17:17; 14:26; 16:13; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:1).
3. The Scripture demands of believers complete obedience and is made increasingly open to those who study and obey it. (Psalm 119:4; 1 Corinthians 4:2; 2:4-5, 12).

### **Creation**

1. We believe creation to be that free act of the triune God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by which in the beginning and for His own glory God made, without use of

pre-existing material, the whole visible and invisible universe. (Genesis 1:1; 1:26-27; Hebrews 1:2; Colossians 1:16; Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30; 19:1; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3; Nehemiah 9:6; John 1:3).

## **Satan**

1. We believe in the existence of the Evil One, "that old serpent which is the Devil, and Satan," the old deceiver who by his own choice rebelled against God and became evil, who tempted our first parents to sin, and who through their disobedience brought about the fall of the human race, with all its attendant degeneracy, unhappiness, and misery. (Revelation 20:2; 12:7-9; Genesis 3:1-6; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Romans 5:12, 15-19; Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 8:18-22).
2. Satan demonstrated his evil character and purpose in his perpetual opposition to Christ by the temptations in the wilderness, and to His people and to His kingdom. But Satan's power is limited, and in God's own time he will be chained and finally cast into the lake of fire. (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-15; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; Job 1:12; 2:6; 1 Corinthians 10

## **Humanity**

1. The Creation: We believe that by a definite act God created man and woman in His own image, holy and capable of knowing and obeying God's will, in order to glorify God and enjoy His fellowship forever. (Genesis 1:26-27, 31; 2:7; James 3:9b)
2. The Fall: We believe that Adam and Eve fell from this original state by a voluntary act of disobedience, thus suffering the immediate loss of a perfect relationship with God and making self the center of their lives. By this act, they suffered spiritual death, and sin entered the world and death by sin, so that death passed upon all. The devastating effects of the Fall extend to all areas of God's created order, including our physical bodies, our relationships with others, and the cosmos. (Genesis 3:6-24; Romans 5:12-13; Genesis 2:17; Isaiah 59:2; Ezekiel 18:19-20; Romans 5:12-14, 17-19; 6:23a; Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Genesis 3:14-19; Genesis 6:5-6; Romans 5:12, 18; 8:19-23)

3. We further believe that as a consequence of the Fall, all people are born with a nature which is thoroughly sinful and not subject to the law of God, so that only through the operation of the grace of God can they repent and call upon Him. However, by God's grace infants are not under condemnation but are heirs of salvation. (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:12-16; Titus 1:15; Ephesians 2:1; 4:18-19; Matthew 18:3)
  
4. Equality: We believe that, as image bearers of God, all human beings are of infinite and equal value, worthy of dignity and respect from conception through natural death. We reject all forms of racism and any philosophy that claims the inherent superiority of one group of people over others. We recognize and celebrate the great diversity of human ethnicities as we together reflect the image of God, affirming our biblical duty to seek justice for all people. (Genesis 9:6; Psalm 139:13-16; Matthew 10:29-31; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11; Acts 17:26; James 2:8-9; Leviticus 19:15; Isaiah 1:15-17; Zechariah 7:9-10)
  
5. Gender: We believe that, as part of God's good design for humankind, people are purposefully and immutably created as male or female. These two distinct genders together reflect the image and nature of God and are essential to God's design for human flourishing. Consequently, God's holy purposes in creation serve as the foundation for our identity as male or female in accordance with our biological sex at birth. (Genesis 1:27; 5:1-2; Matthew 19:4-6)
  
6. Family: We believe that family is the basic unit of human relationships and, as such, is also the foundational unit of society. From the beginning, God blessed and encouraged families, commanding Adam and Eve to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." The Bible describes children as a gift to be received with joyful gratitude and to be lovingly disciplined in the ways of the Lord. The Trinitarian family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit demonstrates the unique bond of self-giving love and nurture that God intends to be shared within our own families. (Genesis 1:28; Psalm 127:3-5; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 2 Timothy 1:5; Matthew 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2)

7. Singleness: We believe that those who are called to singleness within God's family receive a good gift from God as seen in the life of Jesus and later affirmed by the apostle Paul. It is an opportunity for focused communion with God, increased opportunity for community with others, and service for God's purposes. (Matthew 12:46-50; 1 Corinthians 7:25-35; Matthew 19:12)
  
8. Marriage: We believe that God designed marriage for humanity. As first described in Genesis and later affirmed by Jesus, marriage is a God-ordained, covenant relationship between a biologically born male and a biologically born female. This lifelong, sexually exclusive relationship brings children into the world and thus sustains the stewardship of the earth. Biblical marriage—marked by faithfulness, sacrificial love, and joy—displays the relationship between God and His people. We believe it is God's intention that sexual relations occur only within the marriage covenant between one man (husband) and one woman (wife). (Matthew 19:12; Genesis 2:18, 20b-25; Matthew 19:4-7; Ephesians 5:31-32; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; 7:1-3)
  
9. We believe that God created mankind and that He created them male and female. As such He created them differently so as to complement and complete each other. God instituted monogamous marriage between male and female as the foundation of the family and the basic structure of human society. Therefore, we perform marriages only between one man and one woman in accordance with the Bible consistent with the Old and New Testaments. (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 5:11, 6:9-11, 6:18-20, 7:1-3, 7:8-9; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-7; 1 Timothy 1:9-11)
  
10. We believe that any sexual activities outside of marriage, including but not limited to, premarital sex, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, pedophilia, and pornography, are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex and are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and the Church. The creation and/or distribution and/or viewing of pornography are incompatible with the biblical witness. (Genesis 2:24, 19:5, 13; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4)

11. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. Furthermore, lascivious conduct and transgender behavior are incompatible with the biblical witness. (Deuteronomy 22:5)
  
12. We believe that marriage is an ordinance of the Church. This church defines "marriage" as the exclusive covenantal union of one man and one woman in which such is a lifetime commitment. A civil government's sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of "marriage" found in these Articles. (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22, 23)

## Salvation

1. **We affirm the truth that salvation can only be found through faith in Jesus Christ.** We believe that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the direct and immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, persons may be reconciled to God and recovered from their fallen state through justification, regeneration, sanctification, and ultimately the resurrection of the body. (John 14:6; Galatians 1:3-5; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 3:5; Romans 5:5; 4:25; 5:1; Titus 3:7; Colossians 3:9-11; Titus 3:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22)
  
2. **Justification:** In response to sinners' repentance, surrender of themselves, and sincere faith in the power and sufficiency of Jesus' atoning death and shed blood, God pardons them from past sins and declares them righteous, not for anything they have done but because of the obedience and atoning death of Christ. (Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:8-2:2; Romans 3:23-26; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21)
  
3. **Regeneration:** In response to sinners' repentance, surrender of themselves, and sincere faith in the power and sufficiency of Jesus' atoning death and shed blood, God also by His gracious power makes them new creatures. By the Holy Spirit they are born again into the family of God to a new life of love to God and to

people. Their minds are enlightened to understand His truth, and their wills are renewed to do His will, as He begins to conform them to His image. The evidence of this regeneration of the believer is the fruit of the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:14-16; John 3:3; 1 John 4:7-21; John 16:12-15; Romans 12:1-2; 1 John 2:17; Galatians 5:22-23)

4. **Sanctification:** We believe that children of God receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of their conversion. As they trust in Him and obey His will, they manifest more and more of the fruit of the Spirit, conform more and more to the likeness of God, and thus are being continuously sanctified. (John 3:5-8; Romans 8:14-17; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 5:22-25)
  
5. **It is also the will of God that believers receive the fullness of the Spirit, which He will graciously grant in response to their full consecration to His will and their faith in Christ's promises and in His atoning death.** Sanctification is thus a process in which the Holy Spirit continuously disciplines the believer into paths of holiness and an act in which He cleanses the heart from an imperfect relationship and state. (Acts 2:38-39; Ephesians 3:14-19; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Romans 8:5; 12:1-2; John 17:17; Romans 6:1-2, 22-23; Acts 15:8-9)
  
6. **We further believe that the fullness of the Holy Spirit does not make believers incapable of choosing to sin, nor even from completely falling away from God, yet it so cleanses and empowers them as to enable them to have victory over sin, to endeavor fully to love God and people, and to witness to the living Christ.** (2 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Acts 1:8)
  
7. **Evangelical Friends believe that the security of the believer, even for eternity, is indicated in God's Word and witnessed by the Holy Spirit to the individual, but we do not hold this security to be unconditional.** As repentance and faith are the human conditions of acceptance of God's free offer of salvation, so faith manifested by obedience is necessary to continuance in that salvation. (Hebrews 5:9; 1 John 2:4)



## The Church

- 1. We believe that the Church is made up of all those from the apostles until now, both the triumphant dead and the living, who through response to God's gracious offer of salvation by repentance of their sins and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior have been born again as new creatures in Christ.** This Church is spiritual in nature, universal in scope, holy in character, and redemptive in its life and purpose. (Matthew 16:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 2:38; John 1:12; Romans 5:1; John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 4:23-24; 1 Peter 2:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Hebrews 12:22-24; Psalm 24:3-4; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7-8; Luke 24:46-48)
- 2. Its purposes are to make disciples of all nations by its witness to the grace and love of God and to live as a loving fellowship, which builds up one another in the grace and knowledge of God.** (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2:41-47; Ephesians 4:11-16)
- 3. The Church accomplishes these purposes by its existence as particular local congregations gathered out of the world and as associations of congregations in larger organizations under the leadership and service of those called and gifted to such service.** It worships in prayer, thanksgiving, and song; diligently studies the Word of God; witnesses to and proclaims the gospel of God's Son; exercises the gifts of the Spirit; administers discipline; and performs works of blessing and service both physical and spiritual to its members and to all in need. (1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 11:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; Romans 16:4, 16; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Corinthians 8:1; Galatians 1:2, 22-23; Ephesians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:17; Isaiah 56:7; Luke 19:45-46; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; James 5:13-16; Psalm 100:1-4; Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Psalm 100:2; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Acts 17:10-11; Colossians 3:16; 1 Peter 2:2-3; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Ephesians 4:11-13; 2 Timothy 1:6; Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Corinthians 2:5-8; Galatians 6:1; Matthew 25:34-40; John 13:12-17)

## Last Things

1. **We believe that upon death, the mortal body returns to the dust from which it came. The spirits of the righteous will experience joy and life in the presence of God, but the unrighteous will be separated from His presence in the darkness and torment of their evil.** (Genesis 3:19; Psalm 103:14-16; Ecclesiastes 12:6-7; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 20:10-15; Luke 16:19-31; 23:39-43)
  
2. **We believe in the literal and personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth at a time not revealed.** At His return the righteous dead will be raised and the righteous living will be changed to their glorification in bodies like their Lord's glorious resurrected body—bodies which they possessed in earthly life but now with glorified, heavenly qualities. The unrighteous will also be resurrected for the final judgment. (Matthew 24:42-44; John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; Romans 6:5; Philippians 3:21; John 5:28-29; Revelation 21:1-8)
  
3. **We believe that Christ will consummate His kingdom over all people and nations by His final triumph over Satan.** (1 Corinthians 15:20-26; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 20:10-15)
  
4. **We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will finally judge all persons of their belief in Him as demonstrated by the commitment of their lives to the way of the cross; the lost to everlasting punishment, and the redeemed to eternal blessing and life.** (Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Corinthians 5:10)