

CHURCH OF THE SAVIOUR

Wayne, PA

Constitution

Approved 2004.01.10

Article I Name

Church of the Saviour

Article II Purpose

We believe that.....

A. THE CHURCH EXISTS FOR CHRIST

Our understanding of the purpose of the Church begins with the recognition that we do not belong to ourselves, having been purchased by the death of Jesus Christ; and that He alone is Lord. Enthroned with all authority, He is the Head of the Church, the One to whom entire allegiance is due. We thus seek in all things to follow His will as revealed in Scripture.

B. THE CHURCH EXISTS FOR ITSELF

One of the primary goals of the Church must be the Life-transformation of each of its members. This requires a strong program of Bible teaching and of training in discipleship and personal evangelism. Believers are admonished to be committed to the Lord Jesus Christ; moreover, they are commanded to be committed one to another; The Body of Christ is thus composed of interdependent members, each having received from the Holy Spirit gifts which are to be exercised for the upbuilding of the whole body and for the bearing of one another's spiritual and temporal burdens. We thus desire to encourage the development and use of each member's abilities, knowing that "The whole body, as a harmonious structure knit together by that which every joint supplies, grows by the proper functioning of individual parts to its full maturity in love." (Ephesians 4:16)

C. THE CHURCH HAS BEEN COMMISSIONED FOR PROCLAMATION

Jesus said to His followers, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world". (Matthew 28:19-20)

We accept this commission as a chief priority of the Church collectively, and of each believer individually; and it is our desire to share as widely and effectively as possible the Good News of God's forgiveness in Christ. God equips and calls men into a variety of vocations and ministries, and within the context of every man's calling he is to be a witness by word and deed to the Lord Jesus Christ. God offers His love to all men without distinction, and is concerned that men desire that the proclamation of the Gospel be accompanied by genuine love and concern for all men, and for the whole man.

D. IN SUMMARY, WE SEEK TO DEVELOP THROUGHOUT THE BODY A THREE-FOLD COMMITMENT:

1. To Jesus Christ as Lord.
2. To the Body of Christ, the Church.
3. To the work of Christ in the world.

Article III Statement of Faith

E. THE BIBLE

The sole basis of our belief is the Bible, composed of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. We believe that Scripture in its entirety originated with God, and that it was given through the instrumentation of chosen men. Scripture thus, at one and the same time speaks with the authority of God and reflects the backgrounds, styles and vocabularies of the human authors. We hold that the Scriptures are the unique, full and final authority on all matters on which they speak, and that there are no other writings similarly inspired by God. The Bible is free from any error in the original manuscripts. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises. We will neither add to nor detract from it.

F. GOD

We believe that there is one true God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—each of Whom possess equally all the attributes of Deity and the characteristics of personality. In the beginning God created out of nothing the world and all the things therein; thus manifesting the glory of His power, wisdom and goodness. By His sovereign power He continues to sustain His creation, and by His providence He orders the affairs of men and nations according to His own wise, eternal plan.

G. SALVATION

The central purpose of God's revelation in Scripture is to call men into fellowship with Himself. Originally created to have fellowship with God, man chose to go his own independent way. Thus alienated from God, man suffered the corruption of his nature, rendering him unable to please God. The fall took place at the beginning of human history, and all men since have suffered these consequences and are thus in need of the saving grace of God. The salvation of men is, then, wholly, a work of God's free grace—not the result, in whole or in part, of human works or goodness—and is appropriated by faith alone. When God has begun a saving work in the heart of any man He gives assurance in His word that He will go on performing it until the day of its full consummation.

H. JESUS CHRIST

The saving object of faith is Jesus Christ, the eternal second Person of the Trinity, Who was united forever with a true human nature by a miraculous conception and virgin birth. He lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father and voluntarily atoned for the sins of men by dying on the cross as their substitute, shedding His blood as the propitiation for our sins, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 9:22), thus satisfying divine justice and accomplishing salvation for all who trust in Him alone. He rose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He lived and died. He ascended bodily into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father where He, the only Mediator between God and Man, continually makes intercession for His own. He shall come again to earth, personally and visibly, to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. He has instituted two ordinances—baptism and the Lord's Supper—to bear witness through visible symbols to His saving work.

I. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The essential accompaniment of a genuine saving relationship with Jesus Christ is a life of holiness and obedience wrought in the believer by the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead. He was sent into the world by the Father and the Son to apply to men the saving work of Christ. He enlightens the minds of sinners, awakens in them a recognition of their need of a Saviour, regenerates them, and at the point of salvation permanently indwells every believer to become the source of assurance, strength, wisdom, and guidance. His power and control are appropriated by faith, enabling the believer to live a life of Christ-like character and to bear fruit to the glory of the Father.

J. HUMAN DESTINY

The consummation of God's saving work embraces the whole man—body, soul and spirit. For all men there is a life to come, resurrection of the body, and a future judgment. At physical death, the believer enters immediately into eternal conscious fellowship with the Lord; the non-believer enters into eternal conscious separation from the Lord; bodies of all the dead shall be raised—some to a resurrection of glory, some to a resurrection of condemnation. There are two aspects of the righteous judgment of God: the judgment of believers reveals the quality of works done in the body for the purpose of bestowing rewards, there being no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus; the judgment of unbelievers reveals the depth of sin and the justice of God in allowing people to perpetuate in eternity their rejection of God.

K. THE CHURCH

The corollary of union with Jesus Christ is that all believers become members one of another. There is one true Universal Church, which is composed of all people everywhere, living and dead, who have trusted in Christ alone for salvation, without regard to organizational affiliation. God commands us to assemble together for the purposes of worship, edification, and mutual encouragement; and wherever God's people meet in obedience to this command there is a local expression of the Church. It is the responsibility of each member to keep the unity of the Spirit for the building up of the Body, to work with other members of the fellowship to show Christian concern for the needs of people everywhere, and to fulfill our Lord's final command to His Church: to spread the Good News of redemption throughout the world.

Article IV Principles of Government

L. HEADSHIP

"He (Jesus) is also the head of the body, the Church, and He is the beginning, the first born among the dead, so that He Himself might come to have supremacy." (Colossians 1:18) The only head of the Church is Jesus Christ. He rules in the affairs of His Church by His Word and Spirit. He is the true source of all the Church is and does, and His glory is to be the objective of every act, function and motive of the body, both individually and corporately.

M. UNITY

"Make every effort to maintain the unity of the body in the spirit of peace, for there is one body just as there is one Lord." (Ephesians 4:3)

While diversity within the body is both natural and healthy, we are obligated in obedience to this headship of Christ to seek unity for the sake of the upbuilding and growth of the Body as a whole.

Since in any matter unanimity should be the desired ideal, a unanimous vote should be sought in the Elder Board. For the preservation of peace and unity in the Church, officers and teachers shall be in complete agreement with Article III--Statement of Faith--which this Church holds to be an accurate summary of what the Scriptures teach; and all members shall refrain from imposing doctrines that are not included in the Statement of Faith in such a way as to encourage doctrinal disputes that would tend to destroy the peace and unity of the Church.

N. BIBLICAL BASIS FOR CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, shows that God regulated the structure of the church.

God led Moses to organize the Israelites--(Exodus 18:17-26)

God instructed Moses to organize the Priests and Levites--(Numbers 3 and 4)

David organized the Priests and Levites--(1 Chronicles 23 and 24)

Jesus selected twelve leaders of the early N.T. church (Matthew 20:2-4; Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:13-16)

The N.T. church chose seven men (deacons) for a particular task--(Acts 6:1-6)

The N. T. church had elders--(Acts 14:23; Acts 15:4, 23; Acts 16:4; Acts 20:17; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-5)

The Holy Spirit led Paul to instruct Timothy and Titus regarding the qualification of elders and deacons- (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9)

1 Corinthians 14:40 states, "But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner."

Article V Form of Government

This Church shall be independent and self-governing, though it shall seek to fellowship with other local churches as widely as possible and to cooperate in joint efforts with other believers, which will demonstrate the oneness of the whole Body of Christ.

Scriptures indicate that the local Church is to be governed by a plurality of elders chosen from within the congregation. Scriptures designate those elders that give themselves wholly to preaching and teaching as having the office of pastor. Thus, "pastor" is a term that refers to some of the ruling elders but is not a position with authority above that of the other elders.

Article VI Amendments

This document was drafted by faithful but fallible men. Thus, if it appears that there is need to revise this constitution in any way, the Elder Board shall appoint an Ad Hoc committee to study the need for change and to propose any necessary revisions. The committee shall present its proposed revisions to the Elder Board for approval. If the Elder Board approves the proposed revisions, those revisions shall be presented to the congregation at an annual meeting (as defined by the By-Laws) so that the congregation may carefully consider those revisions. At the next succeeding annual meeting at which a quorum (as defined in the By-Laws) is present, a vote for ratification of the proposed revisions shall be taken. Ratification shall require a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at that meeting.