



OFFICIAL DOCUMENT

<b>Title:</b>	<b>ACC Doctrinal Basis: Theological Supplement</b>
<b>Document Type:</b>	Policy
<b>Version:</b>	2021:1
<b>Date:</b>	April 2021
<b>Approval:</b>	National Conference – April 2021

# THEOLOGICAL SUPPLEMENT FOR THE ACC STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

*[NIV used throughout Supplement, unless specified]*

## 1. THE ETERNAL GODHEAD

We believe in God, who is eternal and self-existent, revealed as one being in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the Creator of all things.

“I am the LORD, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:18). Who is God? The term ‘Godhead’ is used to refer to the nature and being of the Triune God, who is uncreated, self-sufficient, and self-existent—from and in Himself (1 Timothy 1:17). The doctrine of the Trinity is core to the Christian understanding of God and to the Christian message.

Christians believe that God is One Triune Being: the relational fellowship of the three equal and eternal divine persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who co-exist in eternal harmonious unity. The Old Testament writers affirm that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4–5), which was reinforced by Jesus Christ that “The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Mark 12:28–29; also Galatians 3:20). The Father is distinct and divine (Malachi 2:10; John 20:17; Ephesians 4:4–6), but divinity is not the Father alone. The Son is distinct and divine (John 1.1, 14:6–7; 20:28; Romans 9.5; Titus 2.13), but divinity is not the Son alone. The Holy Spirit is distinct and divine (Romans 8:26–27; 1 Corinthians 2:9–12), but divinity is not the Holy Spirit alone. God is the indivisible and unblended relations of Father, Son and Spirit who are eternally unified in glory and majesty. There are not three Gods but one God of one substance, will and nature. Therefore, the works and activities of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are neither separate nor independent from each other (1 Corinthians 12:4–7).

The relational nature of the Triune God is characterised by love, which believers are called to mirror—love for one another, love for others (1 John 4:7–21). For this reason, the Triune God is identified as three ‘persons’. Personhood does not refer to being human or require individual substances, but in the context of the Trinity refers primarily to their relationality and agency.

The life of the Triune God is revealed to us in Scripture: Jesus is the Son of God who proclaims the nearness of the kingdom of His Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. Whilst the word ‘Trinity’ is not explicitly used in the Bible, the basis for the concept of the Trinity is biblical and implicit in various Old and New Testament statements, including:

- People are created in the image of God: “God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image’” (Genesis 1:26 NRSV), reflecting Triune moral agency, rationality, and relationality.
- The involvement of Father, Son, and Spirit in the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16–17: “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’” All three persons of the Trinity are active in this moment as at every moment.
- In the Gospel of John, Jesus says: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13–15 NKJV).

- The baptismal formula described by Jesus in Matthew 28:19–20: “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
- The benediction of Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:14: “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

There are three key heresies regarding the Trinity that have been rejected by the historic Church as error. These are Tritheism (belief in three separate Gods), Modalism (belief in One God who appears in different modes) and Subordinationism (belief that the three divine persons have unequal levels of divinity; also expressed in Adoptionism and Arianism). Jesus proclaimed in John 10:30: “I and the Father are one.”

Therefore, Christians worship One God in Trinity—three persons yet one God: (1) God is One in Three; (2) God is Three in One; (3) God is indivisible diversity; and (4) God is unblended unity. The eternal Three do not come prior to the One; nor the eternal One prior to the Three. The equal and non-hierarchical eternal relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit *is* the Being of God.

## 2. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

We believe in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, ministering in teaching, healing, and miracles. He was crucified and died on our behalf. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, where He is now seated and exalted at the right hand of the Father as the risen Lord and Intercessor.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). John’s statement makes clear that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son, is the eternal God—both fully God and fully human, united in one Person. As co-creator of the world (John 1:2–5; Colossians 1:17), Jesus is one with, equal with, and of the same substance with the Father and the Spirit (John 10:30, 14:9; Matthew 28:19), and as John announces is now made flesh (John 1:14; Philippians 2:7). As the second person of the Trinity, Jesus is identified as the Son, which is a relational rather than a biological descriptor of His divine Sonship. The Gospel of John continues that for the sake of our broken world “God gave his only begotten Son” (3:16), reinforcing that Jesus is the eternal Son, begotten (that is, one and only) but not created.

Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14; also v.18). He is the true representation of God in human form (Hebrews 1:3) in whom “all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9). In Jesus of Nazareth, God became one of us and entered into the fullness of our humanity (2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:6–11, 4:7). He was tested in every way but was without sin (Luke 4:1–13; Hebrews 2:17–18; 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22). Jesus, the incarnate Son, willingly submitted Himself to the Father’s will (John 6:38; Philippians 2:5–9). Jesus Christ (Messiah) was empowered by the Holy Spirit in His public ministry (Luke 4:1, 14–19). Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God as emphasised in His teachings, actions, and demonstrations of healings and miracles (Luke 7:22).

In 1 Corinthians 15:3–5 (NRSV) the Apostle Paul recites a confession of the early Church, saying: “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.” As affirmed, Christ bodily died on the cross for our sins and the redemption of all creation (Romans 8:19–21; Colossians 1:19–20, 2:13–15). He rose bodily from the dead by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:6; Rom 8:11), the firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:16–20), and thereby conquered the power of sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:20–28). He triumphantly ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9–11), now seated at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33; Hebrews 1:3, 8:1), to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). Philippians 2:9–11 (NLT) says:

“Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor  
and gave him the name above all other names,  
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.”

### 3. THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the Holy Spirit, fully divine, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. He convicts, regenerates and sanctifies, and guides believers into all truth.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and is wholly God (John 4:24; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—equal with, and of the same substance with, the Father and the Son (Acts 5:3–4; Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 12:4–7). The Holy Spirit is neither made nor created. As Paul writes, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17). We are to worship the Spirit, together with Father and Son, as God (John 4:24). The Holy Spirit gives life (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 33:6; 2 Corinthians 3:6) and sustains all human and non-human created things (Genesis 1:2). The Holy Spirit knows all things (Isaiah 40:13; John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:10–11), is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7–8) and is eternal (Hebrew 9:14).

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit empowered specific people for specific tasks (Exodus 31:1–5; Numbers 24:2–3; Judges 3:10; 6:34). The Spirit also inspired the message of the prophets (Matthew 22:43), who spoke of the Messiah upon whom the Spirit would rest (Isaiah 61:1), and who would pour out the Spirit on all flesh (Isaiah 42:1; Joel 2:28–29; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:25–38)—which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16).

The Holy Spirit is all-powerful (Luke 1:35–37; Romans 15:13). The Spirit was at work in the life-giving conception of Jesus in Mary’s womb (Luke 1:35). John announced Jesus as the one who would baptise people with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16). At Jesus’ baptism, the Spirit descended on Him, led Him into the desert (Matthew 3:16–4:1; Mark 1:9–12), and then through the power of the Spirit, Jesus preached and performed miracles (Luke 4:1–19; 10:21). Before His arrest and death, Jesus promised His Holy Spirit to His disciples—an “Advocate” to comfort, teach, and guide them into all truth (John 14:26; 16:7,13–14). The power of the Spirit was also at work in raising Jesus from the dead (Romans 1:4; 8:11). After His resurrection, Jesus breathed on the disciples, saying, “Receive the Spirit” (John 20:22), then later, the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:23). The outpouring of the Spirit, as prophesied, could not be fully given until after Jesus had returned to glory (John 7:39; 16:7).

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son to be with the Church (Luke 24:49; John 16:7). The Holy Spirit empowers the Church to be witnesses of Jesus (Acts 1:8) and gives the Church gifts for service and mission (1 Corinthians 12–14). The outpouring of the Spirit is given as a seal and promise of the future resurrection of the Church (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13–14). The Holy Spirit comes to dwell and live in the believer (John 14:17). Believers are to be led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:18). Life in the Spirit produces fruit in believers that reflect the character of Christ (Galatians 5:22–23). The Holy Spirit brings unity to the Church as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), so that believers may “be one” just as Father, Son and Spirit are one (John 17:21).

Repeatedly through Scripture, we see the Spirit as a person, not an impersonal force we can somehow manipulate; the Holy Spirit teaches (John 15:26), leads (Acts 8:29; 16:6–7), sanctifies (1 Peter 1:2), helps us when we’re weak, and intercedes for us (Romans 8:26). The Spirit can be lied to (Acts 5:3), resisted (Acts 7:51), and blasphemed against (Matthew 12:31–32). The Spirit possesses knowledge of our thoughts, searching all things, even the deep things of God (Luke 10:21; 1 Corinthians 2:10–16). The Spirit teaches believers all things, reminding us of Jesus’ teachings, and significantly, the Spirit inspired the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:20–21). The Spirit testifies about Jesus (John 15:26), and helps believers discern truth (1 John 4:1–3). The Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgement (John 16:7–11). The Spirit is like a floodlight, pointing us to Jesus and the Father;

the Spirit opens our eyes (Luke 24:31) and unblocks our ears (Revelation 2:7), so we can declare "Jesus is Lord" (1 Corinthians 12:3) and cry "*Abba* Father" as God's children (Romans 8:14–15).

Finally, the Spirit's goal is love and fellowship, unity and peace (1 Corinthians 1:10; 3:3; Ephesians 4:2). The Spirit draws us into the fellowship between Father and Son (John 14:15–21; 1 John 1:3–4) and enables believers to authentically love God and humanity (Romans 15:30). As Paul writes in Romans 5:5: "the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

#### 4. THE HOLY BIBLE

We believe that the Bible is the inerrant, inspired and infallible Word of God and our highest authority for faith and practice.

We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. We believe that the 66 books of the Bible were written by people who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to record what God wanted them to write. Each writer's experience and thinking were influenced by the prompting and direction of the Holy Spirit. The words of the biblical text therefore reflect both the thoughts and mind of God as well as the particular personality and context of the author. Paul states that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). Similarly, Peter says, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20–21; similarly, 1 Thessalonians 2:13). Therefore, the Bible originates with, and was providentially directed by, the Triune God.

We believe that the Bible is the infallible truth of God. That is, all Scripture is true, trustworthy, and without error in all that it affirms. The Psalmist says, "All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal" (Psalm 119:160; similarly, Deuteronomy 4:2; Psalm 18:30; Proverbs 30:5–6; Matthew 24:35). Jesus says, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). God's word is living and powerful to transform human lives and achieve God's purposes for creation: "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12; similarly, John 4:39).

We believe that the Bible is the final authority for all matters of the Church and our faith. We believe that the 66 books of the canon, both Old and New Testaments, in their written form, are the measure by which the Church is to be built. This authority was established in their original canonisation. The 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament are the 'canon' (meaning 'measuring rod' or 'standard') of Scripture. By this we mean the books of the Bible have been measured according to certain criteria and found to satisfy all the requirements for them to be approved as God's inspired revelation. They are therefore the standard for all matters of the Church and faith. These God-breathed writings have been set apart and are thereby considered holy. All other sources of knowledge (tradition, reason, experience) are subservient to Scripture.

We believe that the Bible is God's self-revelation of Himself and of His redemptive purposes for creation. God's self-revelation in Scripture draws us into relationship with the Triune God and the Christian community. We believe that it should guide our actions, thoughts and emotions, and that we should study it faithfully and apply its teachings to our lives. In Deuteronomy it states: "The Lord your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 26:16). Finally, Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commands" (John 14:15; similarly, James 1:22; 1 John 2:3–6).

## 5. CREATION

We believe that God created the universe and that all people are created in the image of God, to love and worship God.

The Bible begins with the statement: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). This leaves us with no doubt that the Triune God created the universe, both inanimate objects and living creatures. The biblical account (Genesis 1 and 2) emphasises that God created the world *ex nihilo*, pointing to God's eternal existence, all-sufficient and sovereign power, unchallenged majesty, and distinction from creation (Psalm 90:2; John 1:3; Romans 1:20, 4:17). God's continuous involvement and loving care for His dependent creation is reflected in Romans 11:36: "For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."

Genesis 1 describes how God fashioned the world to be ordered, diverse, harmonious, and beautiful (Genesis 1:3–27). Human beings (male and female) were created unique within, and as the culmination of, God's creation (Genesis 1:26–27). God intended humanity for blessing, fruitfulness, and stewardship over creation (Genesis 1:28). Genesis 1:31 concludes that "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." God's desire is to have a special relationship and close friendship with all humanity (Genesis 3:8–9). The appropriate response of all creation is to worship God (Psalm 148; Acts 17:22–31; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Revelation 4:11). It is for this purpose that we are created. As Psalm 100:2–3 invites us:

"Worship the LORD with gladness;  
come before him with joyful songs.  
Know that the LORD is God.  
It is he who made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture."

Human beings, male and female, are created in the image of the Triune God (Genesis 1:26–27). That is, while God is neither male nor female, the image of God is reflected in both male and female (Numbers 23:19; Hosea 11:9; John 4:24). The creation of humanity in the image of God anticipates the fully manifest image in Jesus Christ who is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15; also 2 Corinthians 4:4). To be made in the image of God, along with being spiritual in nature, essentially refers to our capacity to think (including rational intelligence, creativity, and moral choice), believe, love and hope. While the image of God in humanity has been distorted by sin (except for Christ), it has not been erased (Genesis 5:1–2, 9:6; 2 Corinthians 5:21). There is an inherent dignity in all people and potential for good because they are the work of a good God (Psalm 8:3–8; 139:13–18; 1 Timothy 4:1–6). It was out of love for this world that God gave His Son (John 3:16). The work of salvation in Jesus Christ therefore involves renewing our minds, reconciling our hearts, and reorienting our hopes (Romans 8:5–17, 12:2; Ephesians 4:22–24; Colossians 3:9–10). We also look forward in hope to the renewal of the whole "groaning" creation as foreshadowed in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:18–25).

Scripture is our highest authority; therefore, any scientific account of the origins of the world must affirm and adequately account for these theological truths.



## 6. THE DEVIL

We believe in the existence and person of the devil, who actively opposes the purposes of God.

Our world is not just material but also spiritual. The heavenly realm is distinct from yet fused with the earthly realm (Ephesians 6:12). The Bible points to other spiritual beings and realities that inhabit God's created realm. These spiritual beings possess capacity for will and reason, and function as moral agents. In this way they can be described as 'persons' and 'beings' although not human. These created spiritual realities actively either assist or oppose the purposes of God, and function within God's created order (Psalm 8; Jude 1:6). To worship these created heavenly beings is idolatry.

These spiritual beings include angels and other heavenly beings who worship the Triune God (Isaiah 6:1–8; Hebrews 1:5–14; Revelation 16:5) and assist God in governing the created world (1 Kings 22:19; 2 Kings 6:17). As God's servants they are actively involved in the unfolding of God's plan of salvation (Matthew 13:39; Mark 13:27; 1 Peter 1:12; Revelation 8:1–9:21).

These spiritual beings also include Satan (known as the devil), and demons, who oppose God. According to the Old Testament, Satan, which means 'accuser', had access to God (Job 1:6–12; also Luke 22:31; Revelation 12:1–6) but due to his pride was cast out of heaven (Isaiah 14:12–17; Ezekiel 28:12–17; Luke 10:17; Revelation 12:7–9). In the New Testament, Jesus and others recognised the devil and demons as real. Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:1–13) and called him "the father of lies" (John 8:44). Paul refers to Satan as "the god of this world" whose purpose is to blind "the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:4, also John 14:30, 16:11, Ephesians 2:2). According to 1 John 5:19, "the whole world is under the control of the evil one," but Jesus has come "to destroy the devil's work" (also Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8).

We also recognise the reality of spirits who serve the devil (Matthew 25:41) and oppose God and God's kingdom (Daniel 10:12–13; 10:20–11:1). They seek to harm God's creation, incite humans towards wounding themselves and others, and sometimes co-opt structures of human society to bring oppression (2 Corinthians 10:3–6; 1 Timothy 4:1). They can even take possession of a human being (Matthew 8:28–32; Acts 16:16). Jesus, God Incarnate, is the light of the world so "whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12; also 1 John 1:5). Jesus demonstrated His authority over demons (Mark 1:25–26; Luke 4:18). Jesus defeated the devil at the cross and through the resurrection, is victorious over the powers of darkness (Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14). In His exaltation, at the name of Jesus every knee in heaven and on earth will bow (Philippians 2:9–11). However, we currently live in the age between the triumphant defeat of Satan by Christ at the cross and Satan's ultimate defeat at the return of Christ and final judgement (Matthew 25:41; 1 Corinthians 6:3, 15:23–26; Revelation 20:10).

Christ's authority has now been given to His followers who are called to do "greater works than these" (John 14:12) including healing the sick and casting out demons (Mark 16:17; Luke 10:17–19; Acts 16:16–18). Paul reminds believers that God is for us and that nothing (including these spiritual powers) can separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:37–39).

## 7. THE FALL OF HUMANITY

We believe that all people have rejected God through their sinful acts and are separated from God.

Romans 3:23 states “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Our sinfulness has alienated us from God. The human condition in its fallen state, without intervention, results in guilt and condemnation before God, and ultimately death and eternal separation from God (John 3:18; Romans 1:18–32; Hebrews 9:14). As Paul writes, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

The origins of this fallenness can be found in the Genesis account. Genesis 2–3 describes how Adam and Eve enjoyed fellowship with God, with one another, and lived in harmony with the rest of creation. However, this situation of harmony was shattered as sin entered the world through a wilful human act; Adam and Eve both chose self over God, they chose to disobey a divine prohibition and plunged humankind in sin. This event is called the Fall, resulting in humanity’s state of depravity and spiritual death. Theologically, the consequences of the Fall are broken and inharmonious relationships with God, one another, and the rest of creation. We see the ongoing consequences of the Fall, perpetuated by each generation, in the suffering, wrongdoings, social and systemic injustices, and brokenness that characterise our world today (Romans 1:21). All of humanity bears the weight of sin, all human beings are fallen “in Adam,” and we are all incapable of saving ourselves (Romans 3:9–10, 5:12). While humanity has inherited a shared, corrupted nature, we are each responsible for our actions and response to God, and will be judged accordingly (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12–13).

Because of God’s love for His broken world, the Creator entered creation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, both fully God and fully human (John 1:1; Luke 1:35). Christ, “chosen before the creation of the world” (1 Peter 1:10), took upon Himself the nature of true humanity in every way, yet was without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 3:5). He became the “last Adam” to break the curse of the “first Adam” (Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45). As Paul writes, “Death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:50). By identifying with humanity in His life, suffering and death, Jesus Christ then, through resurrection, opens the way to life eternal. As Hebrews 2:17–18 says, “For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

While human beings will continue to struggle with sin, as believers we are no longer to be slaves of sin (Romans 6:15–7:25). Instead, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1–2) As followers of Christ we are called to live no longer according to the flesh (that is, our old sinful ways) but to live according to the Spirit of God (Romans 8:4; Ephesians 4:22–24). This new life in Christ is not just personal—the whole of the creation (or, cosmos) eagerly awaits the full redemption of Christ being outworked in the world (Romans 8:19–25; Colossians 1:16–20; Revelation 20).

## 8. THE ATONEMENT

We believe that salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone who—by His suffering, shed blood, death on the cross, and resurrection—has made full atonement for the sins of all people. We receive salvation by grace through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

The Bible declares that God has provided for our salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. John 3:16–17 says: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” Salvation is God’s loving response to humanity’s tragic and broken condition. 1 John 2:2 says: “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” While salvation is a work of God centred around the second person of the Trinity, like all works of God it is an act of the one Triune God. The study of the atonement attempts to understand the mystery of how God has reconciled and restored us to be ‘at-one-ment’ with Him.

In order to atone for our sins and reconcile us to God, Scripture tells us that Jesus had to embrace our sinful human condition, yet Himself was without sin (Hebrews 2:17). Jesus became fully human in the incarnation (John 1:1; 1 John 4:10). By His suffering on the cross, He took our place and paid the price for our sins (Romans 6:23). Jesus gave His own life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:6; 1 Peter 1:18). By His death, Jesus satisfies God’s holy integrity, placates the just wrath of God against sin and cancels the debt of sin by nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14). By His shed blood, we have redemption and forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28; Romans 5:9; Colossians 1:20; 1 Peter 1:18–19) as “the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). We have been reconciled by Christ’s physical body through death to be presented holy and right with God (Colossians 1:21–23; Hebrews 9:11–28). By His resurrection, we have been raised and made alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:1–10). We have been rescued from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son (Colossians 1:13–14). We have been redeemed and set free from sin, death and the devil to live for God as faithful and ultimately victorious witnesses (Hebrews 9:11–28; Revelation 5:9, 12:11). Christ’s victory not only defeats sin and death but is cosmic in nature: He has defeated all principalities and powers that oppose God. As Paul writes, “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Colossians 2:15).

This salvation is only by grace through faith in Christ. It is not of our own works or merits (Ephesians 2:8–9). It is a gift from God and flows from God’s great love for this world. As 1 John 4:10 says: “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” We understand this gift as a beautiful exchange; in Jesus we receive forgiveness instead of condemnation, pardon instead of punishment, mercy instead of wrath, reconciliation instead of eternal separation, victory instead of enslavement to the forces of evil, slaves to righteousness instead of sin, new creation instead of a corrupt nature, and adoption as children of God instead of being enemies of God. This salvation is God’s free gift, received through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 3:25).

## 9. THE CHURCH

We believe that the Church, the body of Christ, is the community of people who confess faith in Jesus Christ. While universal, the Church is local in expression and witness. It exists for worship, fellowship, evangelism, discipleship, and mission. Gifts of ministry are given by Christ to strengthen and mature the Church.

The Church is the community of believers who share in fellowship with God and one another. Its mission is to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit in the light of Jesus' imminent return. Scripture offers various metaphors to help us understand the nature and function of the Church, including Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22–23), Spirit's Temple (Ephesians 2:19–22), God's nation (1 Peter 2:9), and Christ's bride (Revelation 21:2).

As the body of Christ, the Church is a unity of diverse members (1 Corinthians 12:1–31). Each member is a part of the one body and called to function as part of the body, using their gifts to serve the whole (Ephesians 4:4). Of this body, God has made Christ "the head over all things for the Church" (Ephesians 1:22–23; also 5:23). As the body of Christ, we are to honour one another and be devoted to one another in love (Romans 12:10; 1 Corinthians 12:21–26). As the body of Christ, the Church continues the ministry of Christ, including healings, and is His physical presence in the world.

The Church is both universal and local. The Church universal (or 'catholic') includes all who are born again. It transcends any one location and any one time (Romans 10:9; Hebrews 12:1, 22–23; Revelation 7:9–10). The Church local is the fellowship of believers in a specific location and time; it is the visible expression of the Church universal. Jesus promised "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20). Jesus also prayed for the Church "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:21).

The Church is served by ministry gifts given by Christ; people are equipped by God to achieve His purposes in the Church and on the earth. The purpose of these ministry gifts is to build the community of believers, ready them for service as a part of the Church, and to develop them into the image of Jesus (Ephesians 4:11–16; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Corinthians 14:12).

The Church exists for worship, fellowship, evangelism, discipleship and mission. The Church exists for worship: to both individually and corporately be a living sacrifice in praise and worship to God (Romans 12:1; Acts 2:47; Hebrews 10:25). The Church exists for fellowship: to gather together with each other, and share in the goodness and ministry of God (Acts 2:42–47; 1 John 1:3; Revelation 21:3). The Church exists for evangelism: to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, sharing the Gospel so that every person will have the opportunity to confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and saviour (Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16; Acts 1:8, 10:2; Romans 10:14–15). This includes taking the responsibility to carry out this mission to all the world, even when distance, language and cultural barriers make this difficult. The Church exists for discipleship: to make disciples includes both teaching and modelling the way to live as a result of confessing Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19–20; Matthew 4:19–20; Revelation 3:9; Acts 8:12; Titus 2:3, 12; 2 Timothy 2:2). Finally, the Church exists for Mission: to serve as the body of Christ in its own community and beyond by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8). His mission to serve is our mission to serve (Luke 4:18–19).

## 10. WATER BAPTISM

We believe in water baptism by single immersion in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is a public declaration of a person's faith in, and identification with, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Bible records the last instructions of Jesus to His disciples: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). The Church practises water baptism in obedience to this command to baptise new believers as a sign of their commitment to Jesus Christ. Jesus underwent baptism Himself, setting an example of obedience for believers (Matthew 3:13–17). In this way, the practice of water baptism is an ordinance of the Church (along with celebrating the Lord's Supper). Water baptism is not an act that leads to salvation, but one that stems from salvation. However, it can be understood sacramentally as a visible, outward symbol of an invisible, inward reality.

Water baptism is a tangible act that signifies and publicly declares a believer's commitment to Jesus Christ. Following their confession of Jesus as Lord, all believers should be baptised in water by full immersion, signifying their union with Christ. Since baptism follows confession of faith it excludes those not old enough to understand and profess faith in Christ for themselves. Throughout the Book of Acts, Luke records how new believers were urged to be baptised following repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38, 41, 8:12, 10:47).

The command by Christ to His disciples emphasises the baptismal formula: "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Jesus' own baptism emphasises the involvement of all three persons of the Triune God (Matt 3:16–17). While Peter's sermon invites spectators on the Day of Pentecost to be baptised "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38a), as his speech continues, he witnesses to the trinitarian involvement in the event: "And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:38b–39). Therefore, baptismal practice witnesses to the Triune God.

The term baptism originates from 'baptizo', meaning 'to immerse'. Water baptism is an initiatory practice that symbolises our death, burial, and resurrection in Jesus Christ. The believer is immersed in the water indicating death in relation to their old life and then raised from the water indicating their new life in Christ. Therefore, we practise water baptism by full, single immersion. As Paul says in Romans 6:4: "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (also 1 Peter 3:19–22). Water baptism orientates our hopes towards Christ's return and anticipates the future resurrection of our bodies raised imperishable by His Spirit and in the likeness of Christ's immortal body (John 20:26; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:42, 51). Water baptism symbolises the believer's death to their former way of life and embracing of their new life in Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:12). Their new allegiance is to Christ as Lord; they are part of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13) and responsible for the mandate of Christ to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

## 1.1 THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe in the Lord's Supper, which is in symbolic remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ until He returns.

Luke 22:19–20 records the last supper of Jesus Christ before His crucifixion:

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (also, Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25).

The Lord's Supper (or "Communion," or the "Breaking of Bread") is an ordinance instituted by Christ and an essential practice in the life and worship of the Church (1 Corinthians 11:20; Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7). It is based on 'eucharistia', the Greek word for giving thanks (1 Corinthians 11:24).

The Lord's Supper involves ceremonial partaking of the bread and the drink that are symbols of the broken body and shed blood of Christ sacrificed to make atonement for the sins of the world. As the Passover in the Old Testament commemorated Israel's miraculous deliverance from the slavery of Egypt (Exodus 12:1–11), so the Lord's Supper commemorates the miraculous deliverance of believers from the slavery of sin through Jesus Christ and celebrates Christ as our Passover Lamb (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Revelation 13:8). It should be distinguished from the informal sharing of a meal (Acts 2:46; 1 Corinthians 11:20–21) but is instead a meaningful re-enactment of our Lord's Last Supper (Acts 2:42). While water baptism is an initiatory practice, the Lord's Supper is to be observed again and again, as the message of Christ crucified is remembered and re-told by each generation of the body of Christ (the Church).

The meaningfulness of the Lord's Supper is seen in its past, present and future significance. In partaking of the Lord's Supper, we remember Christ's sacrificial death and substitutionary atonement (1 Corinthians 11:26). We recall the provision of Christ's broken body and shed blood, by which He has established a new covenant of salvation with His redeemed people. In the Lord's Supper, the past event becomes present. First, it provides an occasion for self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28–29). Second, every time we take the bread and cup it signifies that Christ is truly present in it by the Holy Spirit, and we partake of it as part of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16–17; Ephesians 4:4–6). The act of eating and drinking is a tangible experience in which we celebrate that Christ came (God Incarnate) for *us* and can marvel at the sacrificial love of Christ for *us*. It is not just a historical event, but we enter the story of Christ and His sufferings as we partake of the elements. In this way, it can be understood sacramentally as a visible, outward symbol of an invisible, inward reality. Third, the Lord's Supper symbolises our sharing in the divine nature of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4). Finally, it is an act of proclamation, pointing to its future significance. Paul said, "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death *until He comes*" (1 Corinthians 11:26, emphasis added). The Lord's Supper anticipates the marriage supper of the Lamb as we wait expectantly for the return of Christ (Revelation 19:9). Therefore, the Lord's Supper is not some irrelevant ritual to be treated lightly, but rather it is a sacred ordinance of the Church that is still significant for every believer to participate in with an expectation of experiencing the presence of Christ resulting from such participation.

## 12. SANCTIFICATION

We believe in the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, who convicts people of their sin and inspires repentance and faith. The Holy Spirit transforms believers into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of Christ” (Romans 8:9; Philippians 1:19) who testifies about and glorifies Jesus (John 16:13–15). The Holy Spirit brings conviction to people of their sin and their need for repentance (John 16:8), and it is by the Holy Spirit that we can confess that Jesus is Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3). In this new life of faith, Paul reminds us that, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1–2). God’s work does not end in forgiving us our sins and declaring us righteous through Christ but continues in the work of sanctification (Romans 6:22).

The Holy Spirit is active to sanctify believers, making them holy, and transforming them to become like Jesus (Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:3,7; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:21; Hebrews 12:14). We are not saved because we are holy, but once saved the Holy Spirit works to make us holy. As 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” The Spirit also sanctifies the body of Christ (the Church), making it holy through a gradual process of transforming faith communities to be Christ-like and loving (Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2). This ongoing process of maturing into the likeness of Christ will be completed with the return of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 John 3:2).

To be sanctified occurs both instantaneously and progressively. Sanctification occurs at the moment of salvation (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; Hebrews 10:10, 29; 13:12). That is, believers are declared holy and sanctified at conversion (1 Peter 1:15, 22). Paul affirms the sanctified position of the believers when he calls them holy (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:2; 13:12; Colossians 1:2; Philemon 5). The Spirit regenerates the person who is born again in the Spirit (John 3:3; Titus 3:5). However, sanctification is also an ongoing process (Hebrews 2:11; 10:14). This transformation involves confessing and putting to death daily the sinful nature (1 Corinthians 15:31; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9). The Spirit enables us to resist evil through the spiritual armour of God, including the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17–18a). Walking in the Spirit opposes the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16–17). The fruit of the Spirit is evidence of the maturing, transforming work of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23; Ephesians 5:15–21). Sanctification outworked as love is how the world knows that believers are Jesus’ disciples (John 13:35).

The Church is God’s holy people, set apart from the world for worship and action (1 Corinthians 1:2). As 1 Peter 2:9 declares, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

### 13. THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is a transformative experience, distinct from and subsequent to salvation. It is available to all believers and accompanied by the initial evidence of speaking in tongues. It results in empowerment for effective witness to the world.

The experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the resulting doctrine, is held by Pentecostal churches around the world and is a central distinctive of Pentecostal spirituality. The doctrine helps to frame our identity as a movement of Christian churches that share an emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist proclaimed that Jesus would baptise “with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” This baptism was also promised by Jesus in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4–8 and connected to the empowerment of the disciples to witness to the risen Christ: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 2:1–13 and subsequent accounts of baptism in the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts bear witness to the Pentecostal experience. Along with the Pentecost event, this includes the case of the Samaritans in Acts 8:4–19, the story of Saul in Acts 9:1–19, Cornelius and his household in Acts 10:44–48 (see also 11:14–17), and the Ephesians in Acts 19:1–7. These accounts provide the basis for the Pentecostal understanding of baptism in the Holy Spirit, which upholds that the experience described in these texts is also available today.

When explained in detail, the doctrine has three distinct features. It describes the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an experience that is:

- (1) distinct from and subsequent to salvation or the new birth (Luke 3:16; Acts 2:1–13, 8:4–19, 9:1–19, 10:44–48, 19:1–7);
- (2) accompanied by and evidenced by the manifestation of speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4, 10:46, 19:6);
- (3) for the purpose of empowerment for witness and ministry (Acts 1:8).

Speaking in tongues is considered the distinct and characteristic sign of confirmation of a person’s reception of baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is noted that of the five accounts of people being filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts, only three of them record speaking in tongues as initial evidence they had received the Spirit (Acts 2:4, 10:46, 19:6). This is most likely due to the way Luke has constructed the historical narrative by establishing Acts 2:1–13 as the paradigm or pattern for baptism in the Spirit accompanied by speaking in tongues. Luke does not repeat the description of the established paradigm except when there is a significant shift. Therefore, it is not surprising that the case of the Samaritans in Acts 8:4–19 and the story of Saul (later called Paul) in Acts 9:1–19 do not highlight the initial manifestation of tongues, though clearly Paul did speak in tongues (see 1 Corinthians 14:18) and there was a physical manifestation accompanying the Spirit baptism evident among the Samaritans (see Acts 8:18–25). However, a significant shift occurs in Acts 10 where the Spirit is received by uncircumcised Gentiles. This shift in the expansion of the gospel arguably necessitates Luke to repeat the model established in Acts 2 to emphasise, with demonstrative proof of speaking in tongues, that both Gentiles and believers outside the geographic locality of Judea and Samaria are now included as full members of the people of God (Acts 10:44–48, 19:1–7). This is reinforced in Peter’s speech that “the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning” (Acts 11:15) and then states that “God gave them the same gift as he gave us” (Acts 11:17). The Spirit was truly empowering the Church community to witness to Christ beyond Jerusalem



“to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8) and continues this mission today. Speaking in tongues is also a spiritual gift for the benefit of the church (1 Corinthians 12–14).

Pentecostal Christians worldwide can testify to this experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit as a powerful and transformative encounter with the Holy Spirit that is received by faith and is available to all believers. However, Pentecostals also recognise that baptism in the Holy Spirit is not a substitute for the process of discipleship, nor a shortcut to spiritual maturity. The baptism of the Holy Spirit importantly encourages the ministry of every believer (Acts 1:8), regardless of age, gender, or social status (Acts 2:17–18). While each believer individually receives Spirit baptism, their empowerment is not for personal advantage (for example, Acts 8:18–25) or spiritual elitism but for the corporate purpose of loving service to the church and world. God’s love is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5), so in Spirit baptism we can be united together in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13) to continue the ministry of Jesus (Luke 4:16–21) in the light of His imminent return. It is an experience that should be sought after and encouraged.

## 14. GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts to believers for ministry to one another, the Church and the world.

The Holy Spirit is described in the Bible as a “gift” to the believing community (Acts 2:38, 8:20, 10:45, 11:17)—that is, the Holy Spirit can be understood as a gift who is “given” by God (Luke 11:13; Acts 5:32, 8:18, 15:8) and “received” by believers (Acts 1:8, 2:33, 8:15–19, 10:47, 19:2).

In the Old Testament, the Spirit descended upon select humans in a temporal fashion; the Spirit as gift in the New Testament is a permanent endowment for believers regardless of age, gender, or social status (Acts 2:17–18, 38–39). In the New Testament, the same Spirit distributes different kinds of gifts and empowers different types of service for the glory of God and the common good of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:4–7). Paul describes the giving of the Spirit as the outpouring of “divine love” into our hearts (Romans 5:5), which manifests in the various lists of gifts mentioned in the New Testament (Romans 12:6–8, 1 Corinthians 12:7–11, Ephesians 4:11–12, 1 Peter 4:8–11). Paul encourages believers to “eagerly desire spiritual gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:31), along with the appeal to “pursue love” (1 Corinthians 14:1a).

In 1 Corinthians 12:7–11, Paul describes the gifts of the Holy Spirit: “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.” The manifestations and operation of these gifts of the Spirit demonstrate God’s active and transforming power in this broken world. These manifestations also function as a signpost, pointing to the inbreaking of the kingdom of God (Matt 11:4–6), which will be fully revealed when we see Christ face-to-face (1 Corinthians 13:8–12).

The New Testament describes how the Spirit empowers and guides the outward mission of the Church. As Christian believers submit themselves to God, the Spirit supernaturally enables them to minister beyond their natural abilities. The Spirit empowers witnessing, preaching, proclaiming, performing healing and miracles, and teaching, enabling believers to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah (Acts 4:33). The Holy Spirit also inspires other gifts and activities that are less demonstrative, such as those described in the early Church in their provision for the needy (Acts 2:44–45, 4:34–35), their joyful meal-sharing (Acts 2:46), and their unity (Acts 4:32). The Spirit is then the “bond of love” between believers, empowering and edifying every aspect and action of the Church (1 Peter 4:8) in their service to one another and the world. The gifts (‘charismata’) that flow from the Spirit, given for the edification of the Church and for the outward mission of the church, are available and essential for all believers today.

## 15. DIVINE HEALING

We believe that God heals today through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. By praying in faith for healing and miracles we witness to and continue the ministry of Jesus Christ.

God's nature as Healer and His healing promises are found in both the Old and New Testament. For example, God reveals Himself as "the LORD who heals you" (Exodus 15:26) and David confessed that God "forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases" (Psalm 103:3). In a significant prophecy, Isaiah speaks of God's servant who "took up our pain and bore our suffering" and "by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4–5). As Matthew notes, this prophecy was fulfilled by Jesus in His healing ministry (Matthew 8:16–17, see also 10:1); Peter also refers to it in the context of Jesus' suffering on the cross and its effect in delivering us from sin (1 Peter 2:24). Both Testaments are full of testimonies to miraculous healings by God through the ministry of prophets, Jesus, apostles and other believers.

The healing ministry of Jesus (Matthew 11:4; Luke 4:14–20), grounded in His atoning work and victorious resurrection (Rom 8:11), is an important part of the Great Commission (Mark 16:15–18; John 14:12) that the Church continues today by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:30–31, 9:34; Galatians 3:5). Healing the sick was one of the "signs and wonders" that accompanied the proclamation of the gospel in the Book of Acts, drawing many unbelievers to faith and bringing glory to Christ (Acts 3:1–10, 5:12–16, 8:4–8, 9:32–43, 14:8–10, 19:11–2, 20:7–12, 28:8–9). Paul identifies the gifts of healing as a spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12:9). James tells us that prayer for healing of the sick must be offered by faith and can be expressed in the laying on of hands (Mark 16:18) as well as anointing with oil by church leaders (James 5:14–16).

Like Jesus, believers are to pray actively and faithfully for God's healing of the sick. Like Jesus, believers are to express compassion for the unwell (Matthew 9:35–36; Mark 1:41) and avoid assuming anyone not healed is spiritually deficient. God does not always heal immediately (Galatians 4:13–14; Philippians 2:27; 2 Timothy 4:20), and sometimes God does not heal in this lifetime (1 Timothy 5:23). Such situations can build perseverance in believers (James 5:10–11). Believers are to examine their own lives to ensure there is no internal obstacle to their healing (1 Corinthians 11:27–30; James 5:13–16). God also brings healing and wholeness through practical wisdom (1 Timothy 5:23), healthy lifestyle, and through the work of the medical profession (Col 4:14). As such, healing may be physical, spiritual (1 Peter 2:24), or emotional (Isaiah 61:1–3), and may occur immediately or over time.

Universal and permanent healing is part of the eschatological resurrection of the body (Philippians 3:21) and the transformation of the entire cosmos (1 Corinthians 15: 42–54; Revelation 21:4, 22:2), but found in a measure even now in this present age as a result of Christ's death on the cross and victorious resurrection (Romans 8:20–23; Colossians 2:13–15; Hebrews 2:4; Revelation 5:9). In this way, healing also functions as a signpost that points to the inbreaking of God's kingdom into the present, providing a foretaste of the glorious age to come. Healing in the present is a powerful reminder of the holistic nature of God's redemptive purposes. In this present age, between Christ's first and second coming, all believers are called to respond to sickness with faithful, faith-filled, prayer, asking and believing that God will grant healing to His children (Romans 8:15–17).

## 16. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

We believe in, and look forward to, the imminent and personal return of Jesus Christ to gather His people to Himself, and to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end.

Before His death, Jesus promised His disciples that He will return to take them to a place that He has prepared for them (John 14:1–3). This promise is the basis of the “blessed hope” that all Christians hold. Jesus, who died, rose again, and ascended to be seated at the right hand of the Father, will return to gather His followers to himself for eternity (Matt 24:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17). At this time, God’s dwelling will be among His followers, who will receive an inheritance of eternal life in a kingdom without sorrow or suffering (Revelation 21:3–4).

We believe in this blessed hope and look forward to the personal return of our Lord Jesus Christ, also called the ‘Parousia’. We believe that His return is imminent, physical, and could occur at any time. While Matthew’s Gospel notes a connection between the completion of the task of evangelisation of the world and the Parousia (Matthew 24:14), we recognise that the appointed time has not been made known to anyone but God. As Jesus said in Mark 13:32 “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (also Matthew 24:36–44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2).

Christ is the departed bridegroom for whom the Church-bride longs (Matthew 25:1–13; Luke 5:34–35; Ephesians 5:22–33; Revelation 19:7–8, 21:2,9, 22:17). Christian hope is not merely about ‘life after death’, but everlasting life with the Lord. This everlasting life with Christ involves participation in the coming reign of God (Luke 22:29–30; 1 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 5:10). Christ is also the soon-coming King (Acts 1:11; Revelation 19:11–16), whose kingdom has already begun “now” (inaugurated by His birth, life, death, and resurrection), but whose eternal kingdom is “not yet” as the full consummation of the Kingdom of God awaits His return. As the “one seated on the throne” (Revelation 5:13), Christ as King will ensure justice, judging the living and the dead (Romans 2:16; Rev 20:11–15). His kingdom will have no end (Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:33). Some of the last words of the Bible belong to Christ: “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done” (Revelation 22:12).

There has been much debate throughout church history over the order of events or timeline of the end times (‘eschatology’), mostly regarding the relationship between the Parousia and the millennium (Revelation 20:6). While Pentecostals have generally held to a premillennial position (that is, expecting the return of Christ before the millennium), there remains a diversity of views. However, any approach must affirm that Christ will return imminently, yet in God’s good time, that Christ will judge the living and the dead, and that Christ’s kingdom will have no end.

In the meantime, we are called to purify ourselves and live godly lives as we wait expectantly for His coming. As Titus 2:11–14 urges us “to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ” (v12b–13; also 1 Thessalonians 5:6–10; James 5:7–8; 1 John 3:2–3).

## 17. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED

We believe in the resurrection of the body. All who believe in Jesus Christ will have everlasting life in the presence of God; those who reject Him will have eternal separation from God. It is the call of all believers to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ until He returns.

We believe in the future hope of the resurrection of the body, and that all believers will experience eternal life and fellowship with God. The triumphant bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is described in 1 Corinthians 15:20 as “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Believers who have already passed “from death to life” to be with the Lord (John 5:24) await the resurrection when Christ returns (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). This points to the eschatological tension between the “already” victorious resurrection of Christ (John 11:25; 1 Cor 15) and the “not yet” fullness of God’s eternal kingdom, which includes the future bodily resurrection of believers. The Bible describes a final resurrection that will involve all who have ever lived: “those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28–29; see also Daniel 12:2; Romans 6:8; Revelation 19:20, 20:10–15).

While death, suffering and decay are part of our current earthly existence due to the Fall in the Garden of Eden (Romans 8:20–22), these realities will be no more in God’s eternal realm (1 Corinthians 15: 54–57; Revelation 21:4). In this paradise, “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:4; also, Luke 23:43). At the resurrection of believers, our perishable, mortal bodies will be transformed into the likeness of Christ’s immortal body (John 20:26; 1 Corinthians 15:51). The promise and hope of resurrection also points to the redemption of creation from the catastrophic effects of sin. The cosmos will be transformed into the glorious new creation and habitation for the eternal community (Revelation 21:1–5, 10; also Romans 8:18–28, 1 Peter 3).

The Bible clearly indicates that those who do not respond to God’s grace in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit face eternal judgement or ‘hell’ (John 3:16; Philippians 3:19; 2 Peter 3:7). As Paul writes, the unrighteous “will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). This is a difficult but inescapable reality. As Romans 6:23 says “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This eternal judgement includes the ultimate destiny and defeat of Satan and demons (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10). Yet, common to all these passages is the principle that God is just. God will judge justly and rightly in determining which names are included in the Book of Life (Luke 10:20; Revelation 3:5, 20:15). We each have freedom to choose our own ultimate future; persistence on the path of sinful rebellion leads away from, rather than to, union with God (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12–13).

To be a Christian, then, is to live in constant expectation of the return of Jesus Christ and the renewal of all creation. Our posture is one of hope (Romans 15:13). Christian faith commits believers to be continually transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit toward citizenship in the heavenly realm, whilst recognising that our own earthly reality remains flawed until we see the return of Christ. As we wait for His coming, we continue our mandate as stewards of the earth and witnesses to our blessed assurance in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit as we go into all the world and make disciples (Matthew 28:16–20; Acts 1:8). We look forward expectantly to His return.