

April 2022

## **Hanoverdale Church of the Brethren Statement of Faith of Essential Doctrinal Beliefs, Core Distinctives and Brethren Practices**

Hanoverdale Church Statement of Faith of Core Doctrinal Beliefs and Distinctives is consistent with both the Word of God and with the Brethren understanding that the “New Testament is our creed”. This document is intended to help us search the scriptures for God’s Truth, to help us understand what we believe, how to grow as Christians, and how to be true to Him until the end.

### **Essential Doctrine**

#### **1. God**

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

#### **2. The Bible**

We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

#### **3. The Human Condition**

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God’s saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

#### **4. Jesus Christ**

We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel’s promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

#### **5. The Work of Christ**

We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

#### **6. The Holy Spirit**

We believe that the Holy Spirit is God, and in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

## **7. The Church**

We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated ordinances, baptism, Love Feast, including the Lord's Supper, laying on of hands, anointing and feet washing, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer. The Church is to live to love, serve and worship God, as well as bless one another and those outside the walls of the church through the study of the Word, prayer, breaking of bread, fellowship and sacrificial service.

## **8. Christian Living**

We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

## **9. Christ's Return**

We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

## **10. Response and Eternal Destiny**

We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

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## Core Distinctives

Of no less importance, but not required for salvation, our Core Distinctions help guide us in our daily living for the Lord. As Christians we are to be disciples of Jesus Christ. These Core Distinctives are Christian lifestyle patterns, for the individual and church, that are useful in training for godliness (I Corinthians 9:24-27, I Timothy 4:7-8).

### INDIVIDUAL DISCIPLINES:

Individually we are to be examples of Christian living to the world, as demonstrated by Jesus' life, and as He gave command to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," and to "love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-40).

- I will seek to be led by the Holy Spirit of God (Romans 8:13-16).
- I will seek to persist in the faith, striving always to imitate Christ (Hebrews 3:14; I Peter 1:13-15).
- I will seek to develop the fruit of the Holy Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).
- I will seek, acknowledge, and develop the spiritual gift(s) God has given me (I Corinthians 12).
- I will seek to discover my personal purpose, given by God to bring glory to Him, by constantly seeking His will in my life (Ephesians 2:10; Romans 12:2).
- I will seek to live at peace with everyone (Matthew 5:9, 38-48; 26:52; Mark 9:50; Romans 12:14-21, 14:19).
- I commit to sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ as the Spirit gives opportunity, seeking to save the lost (Matthew 28:18-20; I Peter 3:15; Luke 19:10).
- I commit to forgiving others as God has forgiven me (Matthew 5:21-24, 6:12, 14-15; Luke 17:3-4; Colossians 3:12-17; James 4:20).
- I commit to regular church attendance (Hebrews 10:25).
- I commit to honoring Christ with the time, talents and resources with which He has blessed me, recognizing the tithe as a minimum (Malachi 3:8-12).
- I commit to being temperate and self-controlled in all things (I Corinthians 6:12; 9:25-27; 10:23).
- I commit to a deepening relationship with God through regular reading of the Bible and daily prayer (Matthew 6:11, 33-34, Psalm 119:11, 105; II Timothy 2:15).
- I commit to living the simple life- that is being content with having my needs filled by God and not yearning for wants that may be outside His will for me (Matthew 6:24-34, I Tim. 6:5b-10, Phil. 4:10-13).
- I commit to seeking the highest good for all in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16; John 13:1-17; Galatians 6:2).

### CORPORATE DISCIPLINES:

#### PROCLAMATION:

Together we are to be Jesus Christ's constant witness in the world (Micah 6:8; Colossians 3:12-17), preaching the Good News of salvation to the world (Matthew 28:18-20), and leading all people into a

redeemed, reconciled relationship with God through Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; II Corinthians 5:17-21).

#### **DISCIPLESHIP:**

- Together we will seek to be led by the Holy Spirit of God (I Corinthians 12:3).
- Together we will seek to persist in the faith, striving always to imitate Christ (Hebrews 3:14; I Peter 1:13-15).
- Together we will seek to develop the fruit of the Holy Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).
- Together we will seek, acknowledge, and develop the spiritual gifts God has given us (I Corinthians 12).
- Together we will seek to discover each person’s purpose, given by God to bring glory to Him, by constantly seeking His will in our lives (Ephesians 2:10; Romans 12:2).
- Together we will seek to forgive others as God has forgiven us (Matthew 5:21-24; Colossians 3:12-17; Matthew 6:12, 14-15).
- Together we will seek to provide a fellowship which fosters Christian growth and development; to help people realize their fullest and highest spiritual potential (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- Together we will seek to minister to the individual and corporate needs of the Body of Christ (Acts 6:1-6).
- Together we will seek to provide a meaningful experience in worship (I Corinthians 14:26-33; I Chronicles 15:1 – 16:43).
- Together we will respect and appreciate the diversity of personalities, gifts, and purposes that God has placed in our midst for His service (I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-16).
- Together we will respect and work through elements of the diversity to accomplish God’s will for unity, maturity, and completeness in Christ for all (I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-16). Together we will equip each person to engage their purpose and gift into mission, whether local or global, in whatever role it should take (I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-16).
- Together we will train and equip families and their spiritual leaders as to God’s design for the home (Ephesians 5:21-6:4; Proverbs 22:6).
- Together we will lovingly, with fear and trembling, hold each other accountable for God’s Biblical direction through the giving and receiving of counsel (Galatians 6:2).
- Together we will confess our sins to one another (caring and spiritually mature persons) that we may be made well and whole (James 5:13-16).

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## **BRETHREN PRACTICES**

Brethren practice and belief are diverse. The following Brethren practices are meant to be descriptive, not prescriptive. The reader is encouraged to read the scriptures and allow the Holy Spirit to guide their practices.

### **Believer's Baptism.**

Baptism is the symbol of the believer's faith in the crucified, entombed, and risen Savior, and the believer's rebirth to a new way of life in Christ (Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:9; Acts 2:41). The Brethren method of baptism is triune immersion (kneeling, baptized three times forward) in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:9; Acts 2:41).

### **Love Feast and Communion.**

The Love Feast, which includes a service of examination and reconciliation through anointing, footwashing, agape meal, and the serving of the bread and cup, is a symbol commemorating the Last Supper, the death of Christ, and anticipation of His second coming (John 13:1-35; I Corinthians 11:23-26; Acts 2:42-47). Persons who have accepted Christ may participate in the Love Feast and/or Communion (I Corinthians 11:27-32).

### **Anointing Service**

Anointing with oil is an act of faith and obedience. Anointing is for physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing. Confession of sin is important both for the one being anointed and for the one(s) who are praying and anointing (James 5:14-16).

### **Marriage and Family**

Neither marriage nor singleness is to be preferred; both have a special place in the family of God (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). Recognizing that God is the Creator of mankind (Gen 1:27-28) it is understood that a person's gender is defined by the genetic code given to them by God at birth (Psalm 139:13-16). Marriage is a lifelong commitment of love between one man and one woman (Matthew 19:5-6, I Corinthians 7:10-11). The marriage relationship is so sacred it is compared to Christ's love for the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Sexuality is a gift from God for the purpose of expressing love and for procreation; sexual relations are to be expressed exclusively within marriage (Matthew 5:27-28). Families are a foundational unit in Christian nurture. Therefore families should read scripture and pray together daily. Parents are to demonstrate Christ's love to one another and their children (Ephesians 5:25-33, 6:1-4). (For more, see our policy on Marriage and Sexuality)

### **Simple Life**

Jesus taught, ". . . where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21). Because Christ is our greatest treasure, we strive to live simple lives that honor Jesus as Lord of our life.

We try to maintain simplicity in lifestyle, so that spiritual devotion is a priority, not something we attempt to fit into a busy life (Psalm 63:1). We try to maintain simplicity in possessions and money, avoiding consumerism and debt, so that money does not control our lives (Proverbs 22:7; Matthew 6:24; 16:26). We practice first fruits giving, which recognizes that all we have – salvation, life and possessions are gifts from God. So we joyfully honor Him by sharing our lives and gifts in service to others, as well as giving of our finances (tithe) as a testimony of all He has given us (Exodus 23:19).

### **Servanthood**

Jesus taught, the one who wants to be great in God's Kingdom will be the servant (Mark 10:44). In saying this He established an order different than the self-serving attitude of the world around us. Jesus demonstrated servanthood in His life. In His death, He demonstrated the ultimate self-sacrificial love. Serving others is a tangible expression of Jesus' command to love one another (John 15:12,13; James 2:16). Servanthood is an extension of the simple life. Serving others is an investment that has lasting value (Matthew 6:20; Matthew 25:31-46). Brethren have historically expressed servanthood through Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS), Brethren Disaster Service, and other service projects.

### **Peace (Shalom) /Peacemaking (Non-Resistance)**

Jesus taught, "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44), and "blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9). Along with loving our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:38, 39), The Church of the Brethren have historically understood military service to be inconsistent with Jesus' call to love our enemies (Matthew 5:38-48; Romans 12:17- 21). Our highest allegiance is to Jesus Christ and His Kingdom, so we work for Kingdom principles of love, justice and mercy (Micah 6:8; 1 Peter 2:9-11). Christians should resolve conflicts peacefully. If they need assistance in resolving conflict they should use the resources of the church. Christians should not use court litigation against one another (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Biblical peace is a related but a separate category from non-resistance. Shalom peace is being complete, inwardly whole, and at rest in your soul. Only as we have shalom can we also love our enemies.

### **No Force in Religion**

Neither we, nor God will ever force a person to believe and follow Christ. God has expressed His love for us in all Christ said and did: through Christ fulfilling Old Testament prophecies, through His miracles, His sinless life, His death on the cross, and by God raising Him from the dead. While we will encourage people to put their faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-10) it is up to the individual before God as to whether they believe the above tenets and follow the way of life as taught and exemplified by Jesus in Scripture.