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## Maple Valley Presbyterian Church

### STATEMENT OF ESSENTIAL BELIEFS

The following material was initially developed by the San Diego Presbytery to describe some of the essentials of the reformed faith. The Session of MVPC has adopted the following as a faithful description of what we believe. Updated 08/11/2011.

#### ESSENTIAL TENETS

##### AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

**The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are God's uniquely revealed and written Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and are the church's first and final authority in all areas of faith and life including, but not limited to, theological doctrine, mission, church order, character, and ethical behavior.**

**The Bible speaks to us with the authority of God himself. We seek to understand, love, follow, obey, surrender, and submit to God's Word—both Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, and the Scriptures, the written Word of God, which bear true and faithful witness to Jesus Christ.**

##### *Scripture*

Matthew 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

##### *Confessions*

Second Helvetic Confession 5.001, 5.003, 5.010

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.006, 6.009

Larger Catechism 7.113-114

##### *What is Not Affirmed*

Any doctrine—

- that seeks to invalidate or subvert scriptural teaching concerning what is to be believed or how we are to live;
- that attempts to subordinate biblical authority to any human authority, cultural norm, or ideology— whether religious, ecclesiastical, governmental, political, economic, psychological, sociological, scientific, historical, philosophical, or other—as though the church should listen primarily to another voice than the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ as expressed in scripture;
- that seeks or asserts a revelation from the Spirit of God which contradicts the Bible as Word of God, or that attempts to separate the Spirit from the Spirit inspired words of

Scripture, or that elevates the authority or modernity of the Spirit's revelation above the revelation of Scripture;

- that rejects as historical fact the witness of Scripture to the incarnation, birth, ministry, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ (as, for example, summarized in 1Corinthians 15:3-7 and Acts 10:38);
- that seeks to follow a "Jesus Christ" apart from the Person, Work, and Will of Jesus Christ revealed in scripture.
- that regards Scripture as subjectively, but not objectively, God's written Word, or that maintains the Scriptures *contain* the Word of God, but are not in themselves the Word of God.

Orthodox reformed faith does not include any notion of a Church "reformed and reforming" that moves outside the boundaries of the authority of Christ and confession of his Lordship which are clearly revealed in Scripture. Or any ecclesiology or morality that attempts to subvert the headship of Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture in the interests of an "inclusive" and overbroad institutional concern for "unity, peace, and purity."

Jesus Christ is Lord of the church, and he rules the church through the written word of scripture, illumined by the Holy Spirit.

## **JESUS CHRIST – INCARNATION OF THE ETERNAL WORD**

**Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human. In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal Son of God uniquely entered human history and became a real human being. He is truly the Word of God (John 1:1-3)—that is, the perfect and culminating expression of God's mind and heart, of God's will and character—present in the intimate fellowship of the Holy Trinity from eternity and fully engaged with the Father in the work of creation and redemption.**

**Becoming human, Jesus was "all of God in a human body" (Colossians 1:19) and "God with us" (Matthew 1:23)—a living tabernacle of God's holy presence, "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14-18). His divine-human identity is corroborated by the true witness of scripture—in his divine conception and virgin birth, in God's own testimony concerning Jesus, in Jesus' supernatural works of healing and deliverance, in his obedience to the point of sacrificial death, and in his bodily resurrection from the dead, ascension, and exaltation. He is now Lord over everything in creation.**

**The early church in the creeds of Nicea and Chalcedon accurately interpreted and expressed the apostolic testimony concerning Jesus—fully God and fully human. The significance of this is: in Christ we are dealing with God himself; in Christ we have a human being who truly represents us.**

**Jesus Christ is God's only Mediator between God and humankind and God's unique agent for the salvation of the world. He is also the perfect expression of what humanity was designed to be. In his complete obedience, he became the representative Human Being, a second**

**Adam, modeling for us human life and offering to God on our behalf human life that is rightly in God's image—reflecting God's glory in a wholly submitted life of steadfast love and righteousness.**

**This same Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, as attested in scripture, is to be the center of the Christian Church's proclamation, worship, discipleship, and mission. As we eagerly and prayerfully anticipate that "he will come again to judge the living and the dead" and to establish God's righteous kingdom in fullness and perfection, we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20)**

### ***Scripture***

Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:31-35; John 1:1-3, 14-18; Romans 5:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 1:1-3; 1 John 4:2-4

### ***Confessions***

Nicene Creed 1.1-1.2

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.044

Confession of 1967 9.07-9.08

Brief Statement of Faith 10.2

### ***What Is Not Affirmed***

Any doctrine—

- that affirms the deity but not the full humanity of Christ, or the humanity but not Christ's full deity (as, for example, the Jehovah's Witnesses do);
- that asserts that Jesus was an inspired or extraordinary or holy man, but was merely human in nature and not the incarnation in history of the eternal Son of God;
- that attempts to supplement the authoritative revelation of the Old and New Testament scriptures concerning Jesus Christ and proposes a corrected or revised revelation of Jesus (as, for example, the Book of Mormon and Mormon teaching do);
- that discounts or discredits as untrue or as myth all or portions of the New Testament record concerning Jesus;
- that does not affirm as biblical and true the death of Christ as the central saving act of our Christian faith, or
- that asserts that Jesus is merely one example, however noteworthy, of a divinely approved or divinely enlightened life;
- that asserts that Jesus is one Mediator between God and humankind among other religious options or among other spiritual or enlightened teachers or mediators;
- that contends that the Jesus Christ attested by scripture is essentially and significantly different from the historic Jesus of Nazareth;
- that misrepresents Jesus' mission in terms compatible with pantheism or as a message of human self-fulfillment and divine self-realization, that God is one being with the world or that human beings are essentially divine, and that all religious truth is harmonious and convergent.
- that detracts from Jesus' supreme authority over every human authority, over the church, and over our individual moral lives.

## **JESUS CHRIST – HIS ATONING WORK**

**Jesus' death on the Cross was the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. In this act of obedience to God's will and love for humankind, Jesus acted as the divine agent for the salvation of the world. In his death he perfectly fulfilled the office of High Priest and was also the perfect sacrifice for sins—"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (Jn 1:29) The Cross became an altar on which his life was sacrificed as a substitute for ours, and satisfaction and expiation for sins were completely accomplished. On the sole basis of the finished work of Christ on the Cross, sinners may now be reconciled to a holy God and set free from their bondage to sin and death to live for God in holiness and joy.**

**Exalted to the place of honor beside God the Father, Jesus Christ the eternal Son, now Lord of heaven and earth, continues his saving work, advocating and interceding on behalf of the church and functioning as our eternal prophet (God's living and revealed Word), priest (ever making intercession and mediation for us), and king (ruling his church by Word and Spirit and with sovereign love and power).**

### ***Scripture***

Matthew 1:21; Romans 3:25; 1 Corinthians 1:23-25; 2:2; 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21; Galatians 3:13; 6:14; Ephesians 1:19-23; Hebrews 9:11-12; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:2

### ***Confessions***

Scots Confession 3.09  
Heidelberg Catechism 4.031, 4.037  
Confession of 1967 9.09

### ***What Is Not Affirmed***

Any theology—

- that does not affirm as biblical and true the death of Christ as the central saving act of our Christian faith, or
- that rejects these teachings—atonement, substitutionary sacrifice, expiation for sins on the basis of Christ's death—as obsolete, unworthy, unessential, or irrelevant, or
- that seeks to substitute some other basis or to promote some "more culturally relevant paradigm" for our salvation, justification, and reconciliation with God than Christ's death on the Cross for us.

We also do not affirm the notion that Christ's atoning work is universally applied to all or most of the human race, so that all or most are saved, regardless of their religion or nonreligion and apart from hearing the gospel and believing in Christ.

## **SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH**

**Salvation is God's gracious work through Jesus Christ to reclaim humankind and all creation from sin and its consequences. Salvation is a gift of God's grace received by faith.**

**Christ's righteousness and atonement are the sole basis for human salvation. Faith in Christ is the only instrument by which this righteousness is received by individual believers, resulting in their justification.**

**Justification is the righteousness of Christ imputed to a sinful woman or man *through faith alone* in Christ. Their faith appropriates Christ's atonement, resulting in their sins atoned for and forgiven and God reckoning them to be righteous.**

**Scripture also describes salvation as a ransom or redemption from slavery (Mark 10:45); a sacrificial substitution (Christ's death for our death); reconciliation of sinners with a holy God; our sins being sacrificially expiated, satisfied, covered over, forgiven, and removed. All of these ways describe how God has given us "the forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation out of sheer grace solely for the sake of Christ's saving work." (Heidelberg, 4.021)**

**Faith is (1) accepting the message of salvation as true and (2) trusting God to apply this salvation to us. Faith is "certain knowledge" and "wholehearted trust," that is created in us by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. In faith we accept, receive, and rest "upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace." (Westminster, 6.080)**

### ***Scripture***

Mark 10:45; John 3:16; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:22-26; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9

### ***Confessions***

Second Helvetic Confession 5.107-109, 5.112-113

Heidelberg Catechism 4.021, 4.060

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.080

Brief Statement of Faith 10.4

### ***What is Not Affirmed***

Any doctrine—

- that asserts that salvation can be obtained through other religions or that other religions have equally valid solutions to the human problem, or that there is salvation in some other name besides Jesus Christ
- that denies the radical sinfulness of human beings, their condemnation before a holy God, that denies that human beings are lost apart from Christ, or denies their need for a Savior
- that teaches that God saves or will save everybody (or nearly everybody) regardless of their faith in Jesus Christ or whether they hear the gospel or not or whether they put their faith explicitly in Jesus Christ or not.