

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

### **We hold that:**

- Jesus Christ alone is head of the church.
- The church is the community called into being by God. In both its universal and local expressions, it consists of persons who have personally and knowingly accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and have pledged themselves to worship, follow and serve him as a priestly community.
- By his high-priestly ministry, Jesus Christ has opened the way for every believer to approach God the Father directly through him.
- Jesus Christ is the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct in the life of both churches and individuals.
- He has given to all churches and to every individual the right and responsibility to understand and to do God's will. Therefore, being accountable to God, Christians are not to despise their fellow believers but to accept one another as Christ's servants, allowing each other freedom of conscience. God has given to human governments the right and responsibility to promote what is just and good but not to coerce belief or practice contrary to conscience.

### **In common with many other Christians, we also hold that:**

- There is only one God. He is infinitely good and great, and has revealed himself to be personal and triune in essential being, eternally existing as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- God speaks to us through the Bible, the sixty-six Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Being God-breathed they are fully trustworthy and supremely authoritative in all matters of faith and conduct.
- God created the heavens and the earth and all that exists in them. He continues to care for and govern his creation, working out his purposes for all he has made.
- God created humans in his image, male and female, intending that we live in fellowship with him. However, tempted by Satan, God's adversary, the first man and woman disobeyed God. As a result, we all sin, falling short in our responsibilities to love God and neighbour and to care for the world.
- Despite our sin, which alienates us from God and rightly deserves his judgment, God, because of his grace and great love for all people, sent his Son into the world to save us.
- The incarnate Son, Jesus of Nazareth, was conceived by the virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit. Fully human and fully divine, he lived on earth a sinless life of perfect obedience. He died on the cross as a sacrifice on our behalf and in our place, redeeming us from the penalty and power of sin and triumphing over Satan. He was raised bodily from the dead and ascended to his Father's presence where he lives forever as our great High Priest and reigns as Lord of all.
- The Gospel, the good news concerning Jesus Christ and his reconciling work, is God's powerful way of bringing salvation. All who respond in repentance and faith, God sets right with himself, forgiving and cleansing them from sin, giving them his Holy Spirit and eternal life, and incorporating them into his church.
- The Holy Spirit gives new life to all believers and resides in them permanently. He makes them holy, and enables them to grow into the likeness of Christ. Through his Spirit God

empowers all his people for life and witness, granting them various gifts for the well-being, functioning and mission of the church.

- While all believers belong to the universal church, God gathers them into local churches which exist to worship and serve him. Jesus Christ, the head of the church, has established both baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- Baptism is the immersion of believers on their profession of faith, an act of identification with the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It involves commitment to a life of discipleship in fellowship with his people.
- In the Lord's Supper, believers remember Christ's sacrificial death, share in fellowship with their risen Lord and with one another, and look forward to his return.
- All Christians are commanded to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, and their neighbours as themselves. We discover what love means in practice through searching the Scriptures, which reveal God's character and will. Such love includes the responsibility of every Christian to participate in the proclamation of the Good News throughout the world.
- Jesus Christ will return visibly and victoriously from his Father's presence to gather his people to himself and to complete his conquest of sin and evil.
- All people, both believers and unbelievers, will be raised bodily and be judged by God. Believers will enjoy eternal blessedness in God's presence, while unbelievers will suffer the eternal punishment of exclusion from his presence. The whole creation will be so transformed that righteousness will characterise the new heavens and the new earth forever.

**Concerning congregational life, we hold that:**

- The will of Christ for each church is to be found as the Holy Spirit brings direction and conviction to that congregation gathered to seek his will in the light of the Scriptures. On this basis the Members Meeting is the final authority under Christ for a congregation. Finding Christ's will through the Members Meeting involves mutual counsel through the exercise of the members' gifts and learning from the experience of other congregations.
- Christ gives leaders to his church. It is the duty of the local church through the Members Meeting to recognise and affirm Christ's call to such leaders, and to set them aside to serve, thereby charging them with the responsibility to lead and delegating prescribed authority to lead. Mutual accountability is to operate between leaders and church.
- While not in any way diminishing the autonomy of the local church, it is appropriate for Baptist churches to cooperate in a Union of churches in which it is essential for all member churches to practise mutual care, support, and accountability.