ARTICLES OF FAITH

of

Salem Community Baptist Church

Updated October 7th, 2020

1. **The Scriptures**
   We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is a perfect measure of heavenly instruction. We believe that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth for its subject. We believe that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is and will remain to the end of the world the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried.

2. **God**
   There is one and only one living and true God. Our God is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal being. He is the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe; He is infinite in holiness and in all other perfections. We owe to Him the highest love, reverence, and obedience. He is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being.

3. **The Fall of Man**
   Man was created by God. He was created in a state of holiness under the law of his Maker, but, through the temptation of Satan, he fell from his original holiness and righteousness. Because of this fall, man's descendants inherit a corrupted nature in bondage to sin. Even babies are born already under condemnation, due to this corrupted nature. As soon as they are capable of moral action, they become actual transgressors, and are accountable to God for both their inherited and actual sin.

4. **The Way of Salvation**
   The salvation of sinners is an act of grace, accomplished through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and took upon Himself human nature, yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience and made atonement for our sins by His death. On the third day He rose from the dead and is now enthroned in Heaven. Uniting in Himself the human and the divine, He is in every way qualified to be a compassionate and all-sufficient Savior.

5. **Justification**
   Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of all sinners who have placed their faith in Christ and in His righteousness. This blessing is bestowed, not in consideration of our own righteousness, but through the redemption that we find in and through Jesus Christ. It brings us into a state of peace and favor with God.

6. **Freeness of Salvation**
   The gift of salvation is made free to all by the gospel. It is the duty of all to accept this gift by penitent and obedient faith. Nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner except his own voluntary refusal to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Teacher, Savior, and Lord.

7. **Regeneration**
   Regeneration is a change of heart begun by and born of the Holy Spirit. In scripture regeneration is described as a new or second birth. By the work of the Holy Spirit we are born again into the divine nature and a holy disposition is imparted to us, leading us to and maturing us in the love and practice of righteousness. Regeneration is a work of God's free grace, conditioned upon our faith in Christ, and is manifested by the fruit which we bear to the glory of God.

8. **Repentance and Faith**
   We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties and inseparable graces. Repentance and faith are brought about in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God, by whom we are convinced both of our own guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ. In repentance we turn to God with honest contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time in faith we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our only and all-sufficient Teacher, Savior, and Lord.

9. **God's Purpose of Grace**
   Election is the gracious purpose of God, by which He regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners. Election is a mystery understood completely only by God. Election does not deny the free will of man but emphasizes the sovereignty of God. It is a glorious display of God's sovereign goodness and grace, and His infinite wisdom, holiness, and unchangeable nature. Election excludes boasting, promotes humility, and encourages evangelism.

10. **Sanctification**
    Sanctification is the process by which the regenerate gradually attain to moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts. The process of sanctification continues throughout the remainder of our earthly lives, and is accomplished by the provided means of grace, particularly by prayer and the Word of God.

11. **Perseverance**
    All true believers endure to the end. Their perseverance in faith and well-doing is the mark which distinguishes them from those who merely profess Christ for a season. These true believers are cared for and kept by the power of God through faith.

12. **A Gospel Church**
    A church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, bound by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. In keeping with the scriptures, the church observes the ordinances of Christ, is governed by His law, and exercises the gifts, rights, and privileges He has invested in them by His Word. Above all else, the church seeks to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. The scriptural officers of the church are pastors and deacons.

13. **Baptism and the Lord's Supper**
    Christian baptism is a sacred act undertaken by believers as a symbol of our faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior. The believer is baptized with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. While baptism does not save, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

Likewise, the Lord's Supper is the sacred act of commemorating the life and death of Christ and of celebrating the communion we have with the Father through the sacrifice of the Son. The Lord's Supper is observed by the members of the church in the sharing of bread and wine.

14. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The regular observance of the Lord's Day is a Christian institution. In keeping with the scriptural command to honor the sabbath, the Lord's Day has traditionally been reserved for worship, spiritual devotion, and rest.

15. The Righteous and the Wicked

There is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and wicked. Only those who are justified through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit are truly righteous in God's sight. Those who continue in sin and unbelief are wicked and under condemnation in God's sight. This distinction between the righteous and the wicked remains until and even after death. The righteous and the wicked will be made known on the final judgment day when all receive their just rewards.

16. The Resurrection

The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus rose from the dead. His grave was emptied of its contents. He appeared to the disciples after His resurrection many times. He now exists in His glorified body at God's right hand. There will be a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. On that day, the bodies of the righteous will conform to the glorious spiritual body of Jesus.

17. The Return of the Lord

The New Testament teaches in many places the visible and personal return of Jesus to this earth. The time of His coming is not revealed. It is the duty of all believers to live in readiness for His coming and, by their diligence in evangelism and good works, to make known to all men the reality and power of their hope in Christ.

18. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience. He has left our consciences free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to or not contained in His Word. Church and state should be separate. The state owes the church protection and full freedom in pursuit of its purpose. In providing for such freedom, no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government has been ordained by God, and it is the duty of Christians to rend loyal obedience to their government, unless and until the orders of that government contradict the revealed will of God. The church should not expect the government to carry on its work. The Gospel of Christ commands and commends spiritual means for the pursuit of spiritual ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right to form and dispense opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by any civil power.

19. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ, Christians should do all that is within their power to put an end to all war. The true remedy for the spirit of war is the pure gospel of our Lord. The greatest need of the nations is the teaching and practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace and should oppose those who would provoke war.

20. Education

Christianity is the religion of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All truth, then, is a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth creates a thirst for knowledge and understanding. An adequate system of education and discipleship is necessary for the spiritual maturation of Christ's people. The cause of discipleship in the Kingdom of Christ goes hand in hand with the causes of missions and ministry and should receive the equal and enthusiastic support of the church.

21. Social Service

Every believer has an obligation to seek the will of Christ, and to follow that will in his own life and in human society. In Christ, the Christian is commanded to oppose every form of greed and selfishness, and to provide for the orphaned, the elderly, the helpless, and the sick. Furthermore, the Christian is called to seek righteousness, truth, and love in their industry, government, and society. Christians should be willing to work with anyone of like mind in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love, without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth. All means and methods used in social service for the improvement of society and establishment of righteousness must finally depend on the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus.

22. Cooperation

Christ's people should organize associations and conventions in order to best facilitate cooperation for the Kingdom of God. In Baptist tradition, such organizations have no authority over each other or over the church. They are voluntary advisory bodies designed to coordinate and direct the energies of God's people in the most effective manner. Individual members of New Testament churches should cooperate with each other in carrying forward the mission and calling of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for the common call of Christ, pursued by various Christian denominations. Christian unity should be strongly pursued, unless such cooperation involves some violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word, as revealed in the New Testament.

23. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty of every Christian and of every church to seek to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the true birth of love for others. Our missionary efforts rest upon the spiritual necessity of the regenerate life. It is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. Every believer is called and commanded by God to seek the lost, by personal effort and by all methods sanctified by the Gospel.

24. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings; all that we have and all that we are, we owe to Him. We have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world and a holy stewardship of the Gospel and our possessions. We are obligated to serve God with our time, talents, and material possessions, and we recognize all these as entrusted to us to use for the glory of God and to help others. Christians should cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and generously contribute of their means to advance the cause of Christ on earth.

25. Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is a real, present, and coming kingdom, not of this world, but of the world to come. Glimpses of the Kingdom may be seen even now in the hearts and lives of believers, in their relationships, and in their activity within society. The Kingdom of God comes to earth in this age primarily through preaching, teaching, and applying the Gospel. The Kingdom will be manifested completely on the last day, when every thought and will of man shall be brought into captivity to the will of Christ. It is the duty of all Christ's people to pray and labor continually, that His Kingdom might come and His will might be done here on earth as it is in heaven.