

Statement of Faith and Constitution

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STATEMENT OF FAITH

1. We believe in the verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; their authority and sufficiency as not only containing but as being in themselves the Word of God written. The reliability of the Scripture's witness to itself as the only, the complete and the infallible Word of God, the New Testament witnessing to the reliability and divine character of the Old Testament; the necessity also for a reverent faith in the Word, and the teaching of the Holy Spirit, for a true understanding of the whole.
2. The Unity of the Godhead and the divine coequality of the persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit eternally; the sovereignty of God in creation, providence and redemption.
3. The total depravity of the human nature in consequence of the Fall of man from the original righteousness and communion with God in which he was created, by which fall all mankind is in a state of condemnation by a holy God, and can only be delivered by the divine work of regeneration and redemption.
4. The true and proper deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; His virgin birth; His real and perfect manhood; the authority of His teaching and the infallibility of all His utterances; His substitutionary sufferings and death on the cross as being the only sufficient and satisfactory atonement for sins; His bodily resurrection and his ascension into Heaven; His present priestly intercession for His people; His personal return in glory.
5. The justification of the sinner solely by grace through faith in Christ and His atoning merits.
6. The sovereign grace of God, by which we mean His free and unmerited favour; and that by His sole choice the elect have been predestinated to salvation.
7. The work of regeneration, conversion, sanctification and faith as being not an act of man's free will and power, but of the mighty, efficacious and irresistible grace of God, through the Holy Spirit.
8. All those who are chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son and sanctified by the Spirit, shall certainly and finally persevere, so that not one of them shall ever perish but shall have everlasting life.
9. The resurrection of the body; the judgement of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, with the eternal blessedness of the redeemed, and the eternal punishment in hell of those who reject Christ as Saviour.
10. The observance of the divine institution of the baptism of believers, in loving obedience and as an act of witness, but not as conveying any regenerating grace. The observance of the divine institution of the Lord's Supper as a commemoration of our Lord's death, but not as being a sacrifice for sin nor involving any change in the substance of the bread and wine.

11. The sole authority and prerogative of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, speaking in His word, for the government of the Church.

This statement of faith will also determine the nature of biblical ministry of the church and the nature of inter church fellowship and co-operation.

A fuller version of the doctrines of grace can be found in the 1689 Baptist confession of faith.

CONSTITUTION

1. PURPOSE OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Church, which shall be known as the Coedpoeth Evangelical Church, acknowledges the Holy Scriptures /the Word of God as authoritative and regulative in all matters of faith and practise. This Constitution has been adopted to guide the Church in its practical affairs by outlining a system of Church government which is consistent with New Testament teaching and practise. In all these matters the Church seeks to function and grow according to the rule of faith and manner of life expressed by the Word of God.

2. CHURCH GOVERNMENT

2.1: The Form:

The Church and its government belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ who is its Head, He edifies and rules it through officers whom He appoints and equips. Each local church, being a visible expression and representation of the whole Church of Christ, is an autonomous body to which belongs all the functions, Prerogatives and privileges of the whole Church.

2.2: The Officers:

The New Testament sanctions the offices of Elders and Deacons of whom high spiritual standards are expected (cf. 1 Timothy 3¹⁻¹³). They are recognised by reason of gifts which qualify them for appointment. They are to be held in honour as Christ's officers, men of spiritual maturity.

2.3: Elders:

Elders are appointed to rule the Church, and to watch over the spiritual life of the Church and its members. The Minister of the Church is an Elder specially devoted to the ministry of the Word. The Elders are answerable to Christ for the doctrine taught in and by the Church. In the event of the Church being without Elders, the Deacons shall assume their responsibilities. Where the Church is without Elders and Deacons the Church may appoint one or more from among its number, men of spiritual maturity to guide the Church.

2.4: Deacons:

Deacons are appointed to take charge of the temporal affairs of the Church and to relieve the Elders of responsibilities other than spiritual rule and ministry. Their duties may include the organisation of those good works performed by the Church for example visitation of the sick, the secretarial and financial responsibilities in connection with the life of the Church and the maintenance of its property. Their service complements that of the Elders and should always be seen to serve the spiritual interest of the Church.

3. MEMBERSHIP

3.1: Membership is open to all those who intend to worship regularly with the Church and at the Lord's Table when able to do so. Applicants must satisfy the Elders of the Church that they have repented of their sins before God and are trusting in the merits and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation, before being recommended by the Elders to the Church meeting for admission.

3.2: Applicants for membership approved by the Elders of the Church shall be named at the Lord's Supper preceding the Church meeting, and any member objecting to the application must communicate with the Elders.

3.3: All members will be expected to live in a manner glorifying to God in accordance with His Word. They are to be known as members of the Church of Christ by the fruits of the indwelling Holy Spirit seen in their lives.

3.4: Responsibilities: Members will be encouraged by God's enabling grace, to seek to fulfil the following responsibilities to the Lord and His people.

1. To adhere to the statement of faith.
2. To be present in the main services on the Lord's Day.
3. To be at the Lord's table.
4. To join with brothers and sisters at the main prayer meeting.
5. To seek the spiritual prosperity of other members and to care and support them in appropriate ways.
6. To contribute regularly and sacrificially to the Lord's work at home and overseas through the funds of the Church.

3.5: Any member failing to worship with the Church, or at the Lord's Table, over a period of six months, without adequate reason, shall be considered to have separated himself from the fellowship of the Church, and at the discretion of the Elders his name shall formally be removed from the Church roll.

4. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

4.1 GROUNDS

The New Testament requires churches to withdraw their fellowship from erring members in certain circumstances. In general this may be said to be necessary where there has been a clear and persistent breach of the statement of faith and the responsibilities of Church membership. In particular the New Testament indicates four main categories of offence requiring church discipline.

a. Breaches of Christian Love that is, a sin or offence committed by one member against another which is not followed by apology and restitution Mt. 18¹⁵⁻²²

b. Breaches of Church Unity that is, causing a faction or party to arise in the church over any matter, thus dividing it. Rom 16¹⁷.

c. Breaches of God's Law that is, persistent conduct that is clearly against the scriptural standards required of Christians Ex. 20 & 1 Cor. 5. In this is included 1. continual failure to attend the obligatory services and meetings of the church without good cause Heb 10²⁵. 2. a member marrying one not known to be a Christian 2 Cor 6¹⁴.

d. Breaches of Biblical Truth that is, holding beliefs about Christian doctrine which are contrary to the plain teaching of the Bible, especially the statement of faith. 1 Tim. 1¹⁹⁻²⁰, 6³⁻⁵, Titus 3¹⁰, 2 John v⁷⁻¹⁰.

4.2 PROCEDURE

a. Charges against a member on any of the above grounds should be submitted to the Elders or Minister, who must first investigate them until satisfied of their accuracy. At least two witnesses are necessary.

b. The Elders or Minister along with any others whom they deem suitable should attempt as far as possible to bring the offender to repentance.

c. The offender who persists in his or her offence should be brought before the Church meeting. If agreed as to his or her guilt, they should issue a reproof and require repentance.

d. If the offender refuses to obey the voice of the church he or she should be excluded from all rights and privileges of membership.

e. If he or she subsequently repents, the offender should be forgiven and received back into membership.

5. THE ORDINANCES

5.1: The Lord's Supper shall normally be observed each month on the Lord's Day. Only those who rely upon the merits and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for Salvation and who love their brethren shall be invited to partake.

5.2: The Baptism of Believers shall be the only baptism practised by the Church, and the usual mode shall be immersion. Applicants for baptism shall also be regarded as applicants for membership.

6. APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS

6.1: The Minister

6.1.1: The Minister shall be a man whose character, gifts and way of life accord with the requirements of 1 Timothy 3:1-7. He shall be a proved expositor of the Word, with no doctrinal eccentricities, and with obvious preaching ability, whose ministry has been commended by other Churches. He must be a man of wisdom, patience and understanding in his dealings with others. He shall be in full agreement with the Statement of faith, shall have submitted to believer's baptism and shall continue to uphold it as a New Testament ordinance.

6.1.2: The calling of a Minister shall be considered initially by the Elders in consultation with the Deacons. A Minister shall be nominated by at least two-thirds of the Elders. Members shall vote by ballot at a Special Church Meeting, and no invitation shall be sent unless a two-thirds majority of those present and entitled to vote is obtained.

6.1.3: The Minister shall be entitled to act as Chairman at all meetings and activities of the Church at which he is present, except for those points of Church-business at which his stipend is discussed.

6.1.4: Termination of the ministry shall be either by the Minister giving three months' notice in writing to the Church, or by the Church giving three months' notice in writing (or three months' stipend in lieu) as a result of a resolution passed at a Special Church Meeting. This rule may be varied by mutual consent of the Minister and the Elders.

6.2: The Elders (This section applies to Elders other than the Minister)

6.2.1: A man is eligible for the office of an Elder whose character, gifts, and way of life accord with the requirements of 1 Timothy 3:1-7. His appointment follows a general recognition by the Church that he has spiritual gifts and insight into biblical teaching which equip him to edify the Church in such a way that he is acknowledged by the Church as a spiritual counsellor and wise guide. Not until the gifts of Eldership are evident, and in some measure have been exercised, shall a man formally be set apart by the Church as an Elder. He shall be in full agreement with the Statement of Faith and shall continue to uphold believers' baptism as a New Testament ordinance.

6.2.2: The nomination of an Elder shall be by the recommendation of the existing Elders. The recommendation shall be put to a Special Church Meeting when members shall vote by ballot and at least two-thirds of the members present and entitled to vote shall be in favour for the nominee to be set apart as an Elder.

6.2.3: Every five years after his appointment an Elder shall be confirmed in office by ballot at the Annual Church Meeting. In the event of two-thirds or more of those present and entitled to vote failing to vote for him, he shall relinquish his office as an Elder of the Church. An Elder may also be asked to relinquish his office as a result of a resolution passed at a Special Church Meeting.

6.3: The Deacons

6.3.1: A man is eligible for the office of Deacon who satisfies the requirements of 1 Timothy 3:8-13. He shall be a man of godly desires, in full agreement with the Statement of Faith, whose general abilities shall equip him to administer the temporal affairs of the Church and to make responsible decisions on its behalf.

6.3.2: Nomination to the diaconate shall be by recommendation of the Elders in consultation with the deacons. The recommendation shall be considered first by the Deacons who shall vote by ballot and if at least two-thirds of those voting are in agreement the nomination shall go forward to the Annual Church Meeting. Election shall be by ballot and in order to be elected the nominee must have at least two-thirds of the votes of those present and entitled to vote.

6.3.3: Deacons shall serve for five years and may be eligible for re-election.

7. CHURCH MEETINGS

7.1: Ordinary Church Meetings shall be held not less than twice a year to hear a financial report, and to consider applications for membership and any other matters which the officers may wish to bring before the Church. All matters for decision shall require the recommendation of the Elders, and no new business shall be introduced without their prior consent.

7.2: Fellowship Church Meetings called at the discretion of the Elders shall be for members of the Church, when matters of concern and interest to the life of the Church may be discussed without the formality and the restrictions of the Ordinary Church Meeting. No minutes shall be kept unless desired by the Elders, and no resolutions shall be put at these meetings.

7.3: The Annual Church Meeting shall require a quorum of one half of the membership. The following shall be included on the agenda:

1. Confirmation of Elders when required.
2. Election of Deacons when required.
3. Presentation of the accounts, duly audited, for the preceding financial year.
4. Appointment of auditor for the current year.

7.4: Special Church Meetings are convened for the sole purpose of considering a Special Resolution, which shall require the approval of two-thirds of those members present and entitled to vote. The voting shall be by ballot. A Special Church Meeting may be called by the Elders or on receipt of a written request of one-third of the Church members, stating the purpose of the meeting. Notice of the meeting, which shall require a quorum of one-half of the membership, shall be given at both services on the two preceding Lord's Days.

7.5: Voting: Members must be of at least six months' standing and of 18 years or over to vote at any Church Meeting.

8. ALTERATION TO THIS CONSTITUTION

No human Constitution is without its weaknesses and in the light of experience and a deeper understanding of Scripture amendments and additions to this Constitution may be found advisable. No Alterations or additions shall be made except at a Special Church Meeting convened for the purpose. Doctrinal amendments shall be by the unanimous recommendation of the Elders. In the event of there being no Elders no doctrinal amendments shall be made. Purely procedural amendments shall be by recommendation of at least two-thirds of the Elders.

BOOKLISTS

Whilst we are a people of one book, it is also acknowledged that there are books that help us in the understanding of the Word of God. To be a help we have compiled two lists of books that have proved to be an especial blessing to Christians down through the years. The first list would be for those starting out in the Christian life; the second for those a little more advanced. These lists are not exhaustive.

Beginning

Pilgrim's Progress - J. Bunyan

Bible Doctrines (simply explained) - B.A. Ramsbottom

Banner of Truth Booklets -

 Reading the Bible - G. Thomas

 The Five Points of Calvinism - W.J. Seaton

 The Invitation System

 and other booklets

Profiting from the Word - A.W. Pink

The Lord's my Shepherd - D. McMillan

Holiness - J.C. Ryle

Practical Religion - J.C. Ryle

Expository Thoughts on the Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John - J.C. Ryle

Today's Gospel - Authentic or Synthetic - W.J. Chantry

Call the Sabbath a Delight - W.J. Chantry

Christian Fellowship - J.A. James

Letters of Samuel Rutherford - S. Rutherford

A Godly Man's Picture - T. Watson

More than Notion - J.H. Alexander

Life of Charles H. Spurgeon - A. Dallimore

Life of R.M. M^cCheyne - A. Bonar

1689 Baptist Confession of Faith

Valley of Vision - Puritan Prayers - A. Bennett

Warnings to the Churches - J.C. Ryle

The Divine Inspiraton of the Bible - A.W. Pink

The Shadow of the Cross - W.J. Chantry (Studies in Self-Denial)

Advanced

The Ten Commandments - T. Watson
Body of Divinity - T. Watson

Attributes of God - A.W. Pink
Sovereignty of God - A.W. Pink

Five English Reformers - J.C. Ryle
All Things for Good - T. Watson

The Final Word - O.P. Robertson
Spiritual Counsels - T. Charles
Fourfold State - T. Boston

The Christian in Complete Armour - W. Gurnall

Redemption Accomplished and Applied - J. Murray

Life of Edward Irving - A. Dallimore
The Shadow of Calvary - H. Martin
Life of Dr M.L. Jones - 2 volumes - I. Murray
Sketches from Church History - Houghton

Thoughts on Religious Experience - A. Alexander

The History of Christian Doctrine - L. Berkof
George Whitefield - A. Dallimore

The Journals of George Whitefield - G. Whitefield

Gateway to the Old Testament - N. Weeks

Welsh Calvinistic Methodism - W. Williams

Signs of the Apostles - W.J. Chantry

The Institutes of Christian Religion - J. Calvin

Evangelical Theology - A.A. Hodge

The Banner of Truth Trust have also done us the service of publishing many puritan works including:

Owen, Brooks, Flavel, Sibbes, Manton, Clarkson, Charnock, Edwards, Goodwin and many others