

# STATEMENT OF ESSENTIAL TRUTHS AND POSITIONS AND PRACTICES

## Article 5 and Article 6 of the *General Constitution and By-Laws*

Amended by General Conference, May 2022

### ARTICLE 5 STATEMENT OF ESSENTIAL TRUTHS

#### PREAMBLE

This version of the Statement of Essential Truths represents the result of an extensive collaborative process to rephrase and refresh what is most essential to us. As before, we make no claim that this statement covers all biblical truth, nor that the human phraseology employed here is inspired. We recognize as we did at the outset of our movement that there is some diversity of theological thought among us, but we remain committed as a Pentecostal community to the historic creeds of the church, to evangelical convictions of faith, and to the Full Gospel that Christ is Saviour, Healer, Spirit-Baptizer, and Soon Coming King.

#### TRIUNE GOD

There is one God, the creator, who exists eternally in unity as three equal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> The triune God is loving, holy, infinite, just, and worthy of all worship.<sup>2</sup>

The Father accomplishes his plan of salvation through both redemption and judgement.<sup>3</sup> All things will be subject to him, and his kingdom will have no end.<sup>4</sup>

The Father sent the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary when she was a virgin.<sup>5</sup> Jesus became fully human while remaining fully God.<sup>6</sup> Anointed by the Spirit, Jesus revealed the Father and the kingdom of God by his sinless life, teaching, and miracles.<sup>7</sup> After he died for our sin, God raised him from the dead, and he is now at the right hand of the Father.<sup>8</sup>

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son and gives life throughout creation.<sup>9</sup> The Spirit draws people to repentance and new life in Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup> Through the Spirit's indwelling, the Father and the Son are present to all believers, making them children of God.<sup>11</sup>

#### BIBLE

The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the written revelation of God's character and saving purposes for humanity and for all creation.<sup>12</sup> As God's revelation, the entire Bible is true and trustworthy,

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1 Matt 28:19; 2Cor 13:14

2 Exod 34:6-7; Psa 99:4-5

3 Exod 6:6; Rom 1:16-18

4 Psa 103:19; Rev 11:15; Eph 1:10

5 Matt 1:18-25

6 John 1:1, 14; Col 1:19; Heb 2:17

7 John 1:32; 14:7-10; Luke 4:18-19

8 Acts 2:32-33; Rom 8:34

9 Psa 104:21-30; Acts 2:33

10 John 16:7-15

11 Rom 8:14-17; 1John 3:24

12 Psa 119; John 20:30-31; Rom 15:4

and is the final and absolute authority for belief and conduct.<sup>13</sup> The Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible enables its interpretation and application.<sup>14</sup>

## **CREATION**

God created and sustains the heavens and the earth,<sup>15</sup> which display God's glory. Formed in the image of God, both male and female, humankind is entrusted with the care of God's creation as faithful stewards.<sup>16</sup> As a result of human rebellion, sin and death entered the world, distorting the image of God and all of God's good creation.<sup>17</sup>

Angels were created as supernatural beings to worship and serve God.<sup>18</sup> Along with Satan, some angels chose to rebel and oppose the purposes of God.<sup>19</sup> Christ gives believers victory over Satan and these demons.<sup>20</sup>

## **SALVATION**

Salvation is available to all people by the loving, redemptive act of the triune God.<sup>21</sup> Through obedience to the Father,<sup>22</sup> Christ gave himself as a ransom.<sup>23</sup> Christ, who had no sin, became sin for us offering himself and shedding his blood on the cross so that in him we might become right with God.<sup>24</sup> The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ<sup>25</sup> provide the way of salvation for those who, by God's grace, repent from their sin and confess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.<sup>26</sup>

Salvation means to receive the Spirit, to be forgiven, reconciled with God and others, born again, and liberated from sin and darkness, transferring the believer into God's kingdom.<sup>27</sup> Our experience of liberation includes healing — whether spiritual, physical, emotional, or mental — as a foretaste of our future, complete restoration.<sup>28</sup> Those who remain in Christ and do not turn away are assured of salvation on judgement day by the indwelling Holy Spirit,<sup>29</sup> who sanctifies and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.<sup>30</sup>

## **SPIRIT BAPTISM**

On the Day of Pentecost, Jesus poured out the promised Holy Spirit on the church.<sup>31</sup> As his return draws near, Jesus continues to baptize in the Holy Spirit those who are believers.<sup>32</sup> This empowers them to continue his work of proclaiming with speech and action the good news of the arrival and coming of the

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13 2Tim 3:16-17; Heb 4:12

14 2Pet 1:20-21; John 16:13; 1Cor 2:12-13

15 Gen 1:1; Col 1:15-17

16 Gen 1:26-27

17 Rom 5:12; 8:20-22

18 Heb 1:14; Psa 103:20

19 Rev 12:7-9

20 Acts 10:38; Eph 6:10-13

21 John 3:16; Gal 4:4-7; Titus 2:11-14

22 John 8:28-29; Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8

23 Mark 10:45; 1Tim 2:6

24 2Cor 5:21; 1John 3:16

25 Rom 4:22-25; 5:19; 6:4-5; Heb 7:24-28

26 Rom 10:9; 1John 1:9; Acts 3:19; 4:12

27 Eph 2:13-16; Col 1:13-14, 19-20; 1Pet 1:3

28 Isa 53:4-5; 1Pet 2:24; Psa 147:3; Rom 8:23

29 Eph 1:13-14; 1John 4:13; Heb 6:5-6; Phil 3:12-14

30 1Thess 4:3-4; 1Cor 6:11; Rom 12:1-2; 1Pet 1:2

31 Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33

32 Acts 2:38-39; 8:14-17; 19:1-6

kingdom of God.<sup>33</sup> This experience is available for everyone, male and female, of every age, status,<sup>34</sup> and ethnicity.<sup>35</sup>

The sign of speaking in tongues indicates that believers have been baptized with the Holy Spirit<sup>36</sup> and signifies the nature of Spirit baptism as empowering our communication, to be his witnesses with speech and action as we continue to pray in the Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

## **THE CHURCH**

Jesus Christ is the head of the church.<sup>38</sup> All who are united with Christ are joined by the Spirit to his body.<sup>39</sup> Each local church is an expression of the universal church whose role is to participate in the mission of God to restore all things.<sup>40</sup>

Central to the church is the shared experience of the transforming presence of God.<sup>41</sup> The church responds with worship, prayer, proclamation, discipleship, and fellowship,<sup>42</sup> including the practices of water baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism by immersion symbolizes the believer's identification with Christ in his death and resurrection.<sup>43</sup> The Lord's Supper symbolizes Christ's body and blood, and our communion as believers. Shared together, it proclaims his death in anticipation of his return.<sup>44</sup>

The Spirit gives all gifts to the church to minister to others in love for the purpose of bearing witness to Christ and for the building up of the church.<sup>45</sup> The Spirit also empowers leaders, both female and male, to equip the church to fulfil its mission and purposes.<sup>46</sup>

## **RESTORATION**

Our great hope is for the imminent return of Christ in the air to receive his own, both the living who will be transformed, and the dead in Christ who will be resurrected bodily.<sup>47</sup> Christ will complete at his second coming the restoration begun when he initiated God's kingdom at his first coming.<sup>48</sup> Christ will liberate creation from the curse, fulfil God's covenant to Israel, and defeat all powers that oppose God.<sup>49</sup> Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.<sup>50</sup>

Ultimately, God will judge the living and the dead.<sup>51</sup> Such judgement is God's gracious answer to humanity's cry for justice to prevail throughout the earth and is consistent with God's character as loving, holy, and just.<sup>52</sup> The unredeemed will go away into eternal punishment, but the redeemed into eternal

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33 Luke 4:18-19, 43; Acts 1:8

34 Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18, 39

35 Acts 10:45-46

36 Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6

37 Acts 1:8; 2:11-43; 4:31; Rom 15:19; 1Cor 14:15

38 Col 1:18; Matt 16:18

39 1Cor 12:12-14

40 Acts 1:8; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 13:1-3; Rev 21:5

41 Acts 2:42-43; 1Cor 12:7; Matt 18:20; 2Cor 3:17-18

42 1Pet 2:9-10; Col 4:2-6; Acts 2:42

43 Rom 6:3-8; Matt 28:19

44 Matt 26:26-29; 1Cor 11:23-26

45 Acts 8:5-7; 1Cor 12:4-11; 14:12; Heb 2:3-4

46 Eph 4:11-16; Matt 20:25-28; Acts 2:17-18; 6:2-4; Rom 16:7

47 1Thess 4:14-17; 5:1-2

48 Matt 13:24-41; Rev 11:15-17; Acts 1:6-7; 3:20-21; Rom 11:25-27

49 Rom 8:19-21; 1Cor 15:20-26

50 Phil 2:10-11; Isa 45:23

51 Acts 10:42; 1Pet 4:5

52 Mal 2:17-3:1; Rev 6:9-11

life.<sup>53</sup> The redeemed will enjoy the presence of God where there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain.<sup>54</sup> Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!<sup>55</sup>

## ARTICLE 6 POSITIONS AND PRACTICES

### 6.1 MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Marriage is a provision of God wherein one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others enter into a lifelong relationship<sup>56</sup> through a marriage ceremony that is recognized by the church and legally sanctioned by the state.

Marriage establishes a "one-flesh" relationship<sup>57</sup> that goes beyond a physical union and is more than either a temporary relationship of convenience intended to provide personal pleasure or a contract that binds two people together in a legal partnership. Marriage establishes an emotional and spiritual oneness that enables both partners to respond to the spiritual, physical and social needs of the other.<sup>58</sup> It provides the biblical context for the procreation of children.

Marriage is to be an exclusive relationship that is maintained in purity.<sup>59</sup> It is intended by God to be a permanent relationship. It is a witness to the world of the relationship between Christ and His church.<sup>60</sup>

Marriage requires a commitment of love, perseverance and faith. Because of its sanctity and permanence, marriage should be treated with seriousness and entered into only after counsel and prayer for God's guidance. Christians should marry only those who are believers.<sup>61</sup> An individual who becomes a believer after marriage should remain with his/her partner in peace, and should give witness to the Gospel in the home.<sup>62</sup>

The Bible holds family life as a position of trust and responsibility. The home is a stabilizing force in society, a place of nurture, counsel, and safety for children.<sup>63</sup>

Marriage can only be broken by *porneia*, which is understood as marital unfaithfulness<sup>64</sup> involving adultery, homosexuality, or incest. While the Scriptures give evidence that the marriage vow and "one-flesh" union are broken by such acts and therefore recognize the breaking of the marriage relationship, the Scriptures do recommend that the most desirable option would be reconciliation.<sup>65</sup>

### 6.2 DIVORCE

We believe that divorce is not God's intention. It is God's concession to the "hardness of men's hearts." <sup>66</sup>

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53 Matt 25:46; Dan 12:1-2

54 Isa 25:8-12; Rev 21:3-4

55 Rev 22:20

56 Gen 2:24; Matt 19:6

57 Matt 19:5; Mal 2:15

58 Gen 2:18; 1Cor 7:2-5; Heb 13:4

59 Eph 5:3, 26-27

60 Eph 5:25, 31-32

61 2Cor 6:1, 14-15

62 1Cor 7:12-14, 16

63 Eph 6:4

64 Matt 5:32; 19:9

65 Eph 4:32

66 Matt 19:8

We, therefore, discourage divorce by all lawful means and teaching. Our objective is reconciliation and the healing of the marital union wherever possible. Marital unfaithfulness should not be considered so much an occasion or opportunity for divorce but rather an opportunity for Christian grace, forgiveness, and restoration. Divorce in our society is a termination of a marriage through a legal process authorized by the State. While the Church recognizes this legal process as an appropriate means to facilitate the permanent separation of spouses, the Church restricts the idea of divorce, in the sense of dissolution of marriage, to reasons specified in Scripture.

The weight of the biblical record is negative and the explicit statement is made, "God hates divorce."<sup>67</sup> Divorce is more than an action of the courts which breaks the legal contract between partners in a marriage. It is also the fracture of a unique human relationship between a male and a female. Divorce has profound consequences for the children. Divorce is evidence of the sinful nature expressed in human failure. Jesus gives one explicit cause for the dissolution of marriage: *porneia* or marital unfaithfulness. Where all attempts at reconciliation have failed and a divorce has been finalized, we extend Christ's love and compassion.

### **6.3 REMARRIAGE**

Remarriage is the union, legally sanctioned by the State, of one man and one woman, one or both of whom have been previously married. It is regarded as acceptable in Scripture in the event of the death of a former spouse. It is also regarded as acceptable if there has been sexual immorality on the part of the former partner or if the former partner has remarried.

### **6.4 GENDER**

We believe in the biblical teaching of God's original and ongoing design for humanity as two distinct sexes, male and female, determined by genetics. The basis and the intent for this is the conviction that the matter of human sexuality and gender is fundamental to biblical anthropology, not merely biblical morality. Due to human sin and brokenness, our experience of our sex and gender is not always that which God the Creator originally designed. In light of this foundational understanding of creation, fall, and redemption, we will avoid any behaviour or alignment with identity that contradicts the biblical teaching. We do not affirm the resolution of tension between one's biological sex and one's experience of gender by the adoption of an identity contradictory with one's birth sex.

### **6.5 TITHING**

Tithing was divinely instituted by God under the old covenant and was compulsory upon the people who worshiped God.<sup>68</sup> Under the new covenant we are not bound by arbitrary laws; but the principles of right and wrong, as expressed by the law, are fulfilled in the believer's life through grace. Grace should produce as much as or more than law

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<sup>67</sup> Mal 2:16

<sup>68</sup> Lev 27:30-32; Mal 3:10

demanded. Regular systematic giving is clearly taught in the New Testament. It is known as the grace of giving.<sup>69</sup> The gauge or rule of this systematic giving is defined in the Old Testament, known as the law of tithing. All Christians should conscientiously and systematically tithe their income to God.

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<sup>69</sup> 2Cor 9:6-15