

# ***Association of Charismatic Reformed Churches***

## ***Statement of Faith***

As an association of churches, we are very much concerned with the issue of "doctrinal correctness." It is our belief that bad doctrine and a flippant attitude towards theology are at the heart of most of what troubles today's church. We believe that there are certain areas of doctrine that are essential, and cannot be compromised. We would therefore insist on unity in these with any church or minister who would want to join with the association. In this section we hope to set down what these essentials are.

We also recognize however, that there are many areas of Scripture about which we can not be quite as dogmatic. This is seen throughout the history of the Reformation. Not all of the Reformers agreed on every point, and there are things that we believe people can differ on, yet still maintain the integrity of the central truths of the Gospel. We will attempt first to outline what we believe to be essential, and then move to non-essentials.

### ***Essential Doctrine of the ACRC...***

#### **The Scriptures**

We believe that the Bible is the infallible, authoritative, and inerrant Word of God. We believe that it reveals all things that are necessary to salvation, life and godliness, and that it is a final and closed revelation, consisting of the sixty-six books of Holy Scripture. (*1Thess 2:13; 2Tim 3:14-17; 2Peter 2:2-4*)

#### **God**

We believe that there is only one true and living God, eternally existing in a Trinity of persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

We believe that these three persons are one in substance, power, and eternity; each possessing the fullness of the divine essence and yet this essence is undivided. (*Col 2:8-10; Acts 5:1-4, Deut 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-11; 45:21-23*)

We believe that God is infinite in being and perfection. We believe that He is all powerful, all knowing, and present in all places at all times. We believe that He is absolutely sovereign over all His works, and that He orders all things according to the counsel of His own wise, immutable, and righteous will for His own glory. This sovereignty extends not only to inanimate creation, but to all living things as well, and is the ultimate determiner of each creature's destiny. (*Eph 1:3-11; Rom 9:6-23*)

We believe that God is self-existent and self-sufficient. That is, He needs nothing from His creation to exist or to continue to exist. On the contrary, He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things both seen and unseen. (*Ex 3:13-14; Col 1:15-17*)

He is loving, gracious, merciful and longsuffering, forgiving sin and transgression. Yet He is also infinitely just and holy, and will by no means clear the guilty. (*Ex 34:5-8*)

In His sight all things are open and manifest. His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent of the creature; so that nothing to Him is contingent or uncertain. He is holy in all His counsels, works, and commands. To Him is due, from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience He is pleased to require of them. (*Isaiah 46:9-11, Rev 4:8-11*)

#### **Jesus Christ**

We believe in both the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ, that He was truly God manifest in human flesh. (*John 1:1, 14; Phil 2:5-11; Col 2:8-10*)

We believe:

- In His virgin birth
- In His sinless life
- In His vicarious and atoning death for the sins of His Elect
- In His burial and resurrection
- In His ascension to the right hand of the Father
- In His personal, physical, and future return to earth to rule in righteousness and to inaugurate the New Heavens and New Earth. (*Luke 1:26-38; Heb 7:26; Rom 3:25; Matt 28:5-7; Acts 1:9-11, Rev 19-22*)

## **The Holy Spirit**

We believe that the Holy Spirit is both a person and that He is fully God, being the third member of the blessed Trinity. (*Acts 5:1-4; Matt 28:19; John 14:15-21*)

We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, to convict men of sin, to regenerate sinners, baptize them into Christ, and to seal them until the day of redemption. We believe that He is our Guide, our Comforter, and our Instructor in the things of God. (*John 16:7-15; Titus 3:5; 1Cor 12:13; Eph 1:13-14; John 14:15-20*)

We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every true believer. We believe that this indwelling at once unites us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and results in the imputation of Christ's righteousness, as well as the experience of the new birth. (*Eph 1:12-14; 1Cor 6:17, 12:13; Rom 6:4-5; 1Peter 1:3*)

## **The Doctrines of Grace**

### **Man's Radical Depravity**

We believe in the doctrine of Man's Total Depravity. We believe that the first man, Adam, stood as the representative and federal head of the entire human race. We believe that in his fall, the entire human race fell with him, resulting in the total corruption and condemnation of mankind before God. This does not mean that every man is as wicked as he could be, but that sin has corrupted us at every level of our being. Because of this corruption, we are unable, apart from grace, of either understanding or desiring spiritual truth, and we are by nature God's enemies and the objects of His wrath. (*Rom 5:12-19; Rom 8:6-8; 1Cor 2:14; John 6:37, 44, 63-65; Eph 2:1-3*)

### **Election of Grace**

We believe that God has unconditionally chosen a company of people, His Elect, out from the fallen sons of Adam. These Elect were given in covenant to the Son, by the Father, before the foundation of the world was laid. God has done everything necessary to bring these Elect to faith in Christ and to secure them eternally unto Himself. This election to salvation is attributed solely to the sovereign Grace of God and not to any merit, good works, or faith on our part, faith itself being the gift of God. (*Rom 9:1-24; Eph 1:3-14; 2Tim 1:9; John 6:37; Ps 89:1-5, 15-36; Rom 8:28-39; Eph 2:1-10*)

### **Definite Redemption**

We believe that this salvation was purchased for the Elect by the precious Blood of Christ. The blood was shed as propitiation to the Father, for the sins of His Elect, and results in their justification before God. Literally, we were the ones that deserved to be crucified and to drink of God's wrath, but our blessed Savior instead drank it for us! Concerning the merit and value of the blood, it is enough to have purchased and cleansed every person ever born. Yet, as concerning the intention of God as to whom it would be effective for, it was limited to the Elect alone. Else would God have failed in His purpose, a thing that Scripture makes clear as being impossible. (*1Peter 1:18-21; Rom 3:25-26; John 3:16; 10:11, 15, 25-30; Matt 1:21; Heb 9:12-15; Isa 46:9-11; Eph 1:11*)

## **Justification**

We believe in justification by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ and His work alone. Our view of justification is the traditional protestant and reformed view of being a judicial act by God, in which He declares sinners to be righteous in His sight. This declaration of righteousness is based solely on the merit of Christ's obedience and satisfaction, which God imputes to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. (*Eph 2:8-9, Ro.3:19-28, Ro.4:5-8, Ro.5:9,18-19, Ro.4:22-25*)

## **Repentance and Faith (Conversion)**

We believe that the only means of being cleansed from sin and corruption is through repentance and faith in the precious Blood of Christ as a sacrifice for our sin. We believe that both repentance and faith are the graciously and sovereignly bestowed gifts of God. We believe that these are generated in the human heart by the precious Holy Spirit as He works through the Word of God to effectually and infallibly call elect sinners to Christ. (*Luke 5:32; 24:37; Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2Tim 2:25; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; Rom 10:17; 1Thess 2:13-14*)

## **Sanctification – New Life in Christ**

We believe that this new birth will produce sanctification and holiness in the life of a believer. Sanctification is not to be confused with justification which is a legal standing before God, but it is rather to be understood as the fruit of true justification and regeneration. Sanctification is effected through the diligent study of the Word of God, the daily mortification and resisting of sin and the daily yielding to and filling of the Holy Spirit. Progress in sanctification will vary in each individual child of God, but it will nonetheless be present in all, seeing that it, too, is the sovereign work of God in our hearts. (*Ezek 36:26-27; Jer 32:38-40; Titus 3:5; John 15:3, 17:17; Eph 5:18, 26; 1Peter 2:2; Phil 2:12-13*)

We believe that walking in the Holy Spirit is the responsibility of all believers and that it is a necessary part of enabling one to overcome sin and to be a vibrant witness for Christ. (*Eph.5:16, Gal.5:16, Ro.8:13, Acts 1:8*)

## **Preservation and Perseverance of True Believers**

We believe that all who are called by God's grace, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and justified by Christ's blood, will persevere in faith and holiness, and will never fall away from Christ. They are kept by the power of God and no man is able to pluck them from the Father's hand. (*John 10:27-30; Rom 8:28-39; Phil 1:6; Heb 7:22-25; 12:1-2*)

## **Baptism**

We believe that water baptism is essential, not to regeneration, but as a sign and seal of the righteousness we possess by faith. (*Matt 28:19-20; Rom 6:1-6; Col 2:12*)

## **Spiritual Gifts (Charismata)**

We believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are still valid for today, being sovereignly distributed to every member of Christ's Church, as He, the Spirit, wills, for the purpose of edifying the entire body. (*1Cor 12:1-11; Rom 12:3-8; 1Peter 4:10*)

## **Eschatology (Last Things)**

We believe in the personal, physical, and future return of Jesus Christ to the earth, to rule in righteousness and to inaugurate the New Heavens and New Earth. (*Zech 14:1-9; Matt 24:30-31; 25:31-46; Acts 1:9-11; 2Thess 1:7-10; Rev 1:7; 19:11-21; Ch 20-21*)

We believe in the physical resurrection of the body, the eternal blessedness of the saved, and the eternal damnation and misery of the lost. (*1Thess 4:13-18; Dan 12:2; Rev 20*)

## **Corporate Worship**

We believe in the assembling together of the saints to worship Him, to hear the teaching and preaching of the Word of God, to share in breaking the bread of Holy Communion, and to give as God has prospered them into the treasury of God's house. (*Heb 10:25; Acts 20:7; 1Cor 16:1-2*)

## ***Areas of Importance but in which we can Differ...***

**The Mode of Baptism:** At the inception of the ACRC in February 2005 the churches and individuals who formed the association were "Baptistic" in their understanding of water baptism, i.e., we believe in baptism by full immersion. We believe that it symbolizes our union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. We also believe in "Believer's Baptism". We do not baptize infants, as we understand the requirements for baptism to be repentance and faith in Christ. These are things we do not believe it is possible for infants to possess. That said, however, we do recognize that there are differing views on these things, and we extend an open invitation to join with us in fellowship regardless of one's views in this area.

**Frequency of Partaking of the Lord's Supper:** We recognize that there are different opinions on this question, and we respect those who differ, but, we don't see it as being essential to fellowship.

**Eschatological Details:** We believe the important thing here is the essential truth that Christ will return one day, physically, to rule the earth in righteousness. The exact details of all of this are where we believe we can differ. Whether one is Amillennial, Premillennial, Pre-Trib, Post-Trib, Mid-Trib, etc., is indeed important. In the ACRC we all have our opinions and enjoy dialog concerning them, but again, these are not areas that we believe should separate us as reformed brethren.

**Church Government:** The churches involved with the ACRC all have what they believe to be a well-defined and Scriptural understanding of church government. We do, however, understand that there is more than one view on this subject, and do not see it as a criteria for fellowship, nor would we try to impose our views on others with whom we would fellowship.

**Details of the Charismatic Experience:** Many believe in what is commonly called, in Charismatic circles, "the Baptism in the Holy Spirit" and see it as being a distinct, second work of God in the life of the believer. Others believe that the term is a description of the saving work of Christ in Regeneration/Salvation. There has been much controversy over the years regarding this issue, and we believe much of the problem has been semantic in nature. Even our Cessationist brethren, it would seem, believe in a two-fold work of the Holy Spirit. Most agree there is a difference between being indwelt by the Spirit and being daily filled with His power and presence. There has also been much controversy in Charismatic circles on the question of tongues as a sign of this filling. Some take the view that tongues are always a part of the initial filling of the Spirit, and are available to every believer as a language of praise and prayer. Many Charismatics, however, take exception to this view and believe that it does not always follow that someone filled with the Spirit will inevitably speak in tongues. Also, many of our Cessationist brethren are undeniably empowered by the Holy Spirit. It follows then, that the details of this issue should not, in our understanding, be an essential requirement to fellowship. We do embrace the Charismatic experience (Hence the reason for the ACRC!), but we welcome fellowship with all Reformed brethren regardless of their view on the details of this issue.