

Doctrinal Statement

The Church

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All who put their faith in the work of Jesus are fully indwelt with and empowered by His Spirit form one body, the universal Church, with Christ as the head (1 Cor. 12:12-14, Col. 1:18). Though it has multitudes of diverse expressions, it consists of a family of people from all cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and social classes who embody His life, thought, and action in the world (Gal. 3:26-29; 1 John 2:6). The universal Church is a manifestation of God's kingdom and is meant to bring the good news of Jesus to the world by make disciples of all nations, teaching others to obey all that He taught until His return (Matt. 16:18-19; 28:18-20). Imperative to the mission of the universal church is to love God through worship, abiding obedience, and relationship with Jesus, as well as to equip and build up the saints (Matt. 22:36-40; 1 Cor. 14:12; Eph. 4:11-13). The universal Church originated at Pentecost with the outpouring of Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4). With Pentecost and the outpouring of Holy Spirit came the restoration of Israel and their incorporation into the universal church (Rom. 2:28-29; 9:7-8; Acts 1:1-8; Acts 2).

The local church is the visible representation of the universal church and is comprised of people who have put their hope and trust in Jesus, repented, baptized, and indwelt with Holy Spirit and have formed a community committed to meeting regularly under leadership; share the good news of King Jesus to the lost; baptize, equip, and train disciples; worship through love and adoration for God, as well as serve others; give of their time, talents, and resources; and break bread together through the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 2:36-47). The local church shares the same mission as the universal church, as well as support and defend sound doctrine (Rom. 16:17); seek holiness and oneness with Jesus (John 17:2-22); lovingly admonish those inside the church who have been overcome by unrepentant sin (Matt. 18:15-20); seek unity within the body of believers (John 17:23); encourage and equip others through spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:11-13); and evangelism (Acts 1:8).

The local church is committed to the regular partaking of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 22:7-22;). These sacraments may be administered by any believer as member of the royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9; Matt. 28:18-20). Baptism is the symbolic expression of the union with Christ one has by putting their faith in Jesus (Rom. 6:1-11). Just as Jesus submitted himself to the Father, died for our sins, and was raised to life by God's Spirit, we too die to our old self, symbolized by submerging under water, and come up out of the water, symbolizing new, transformed life through the indwelling of Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:3-8). Baptism is best represented by full immersion in water, although it is not rescripted in Scripture (Matt. 3:13-17; Acts 8:26-40). The Lord's Supper invites us to remember a particular moment in time not only when God saved His people from slavery and oppression in Egypt, but when Jesus became our very own Passover lamb (Ex. 12; John 1:29; Matt. 26:17-29). We share a meal with others, taking the bread and the cup, just as Jesus and his disciples did, as means of spiritual expression and performative memory that shapes our identity as covenant members and unites us with the sacrificed life and body of Jesus (1 Cor. 11:23-25).

Every local church is under the headship and authority of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:20-23). While every believer is a priest before God and gifted for service (1 Pet. 2:9, 4:10; Eph. 4:11), God has gifted certain individuals, including women, to serve as leaders, shepherds, overseers, and deacons within a community (1 Tim. 3:1-13, 5:17; Tit. 1:5-9). All congregants in that community are called to voluntarily submit themselves to those leaders, as well as partake in the selection and correction of the leaders (Heb. 13:17; Acts 6:1-5). Though the local church has no external authority other than Jesus, as a manifestation of the universal church it should strive for unity of faith and cooperation of ministry with other local churches (Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23; Acts 15; 2 Cor. 11:9).