

HOWARDSVILLE GOSPEL CHAPEL FULL STATEMENT OF FAITH

2024-01

A. The Scriptural beliefs of this church and its members.

1. **The Holy Scriptures.** We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the verbally and plenary-inspired Word of God. The Scriptures are inerrant, infallible and God-breathed and, therefore, are the final authority for faith and life. The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament are the complete and divine revelation of God to Man. The Scriptures shall be interpreted according to their normal grammatical-historical meaning, and the Official Board shall determine all issues of interpretation and meaning. The New American Standard version of the Bible shall be the official translation used for any Biblical disputes (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21)
2. **Dispensationalism.** We believe that the Scriptures interpreted in their natural, literal sense reveal divinely determined dispensations or rules of life that define man's responsibilities in successive ages. These dispensations are not ways of salvation but rather are divinely ordered stewardships by which God directs man according to His purpose. Three of these dispensations—the law, the church, and the kingdom—are the subjects of detailed revelation in Scripture (Gen. 1:28; 2 Cor. 3:9-18; Gal. 3:13-25; Eph. 1:10; 3:2-10; Col. 1:24-25, 27; Rev. 20:2-6).
3. **The Godhead.** We believe in one triune God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, coequal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Peter 1:1-2; John 14:10, 26).
4. **God the Father**
 - a. The Head of the Trinity is God the Father, the one who is holy. He is the Lord, great and almighty—in essence, far above humankind and human thought. He is spirit, pure and right--having no taint of sin; and full of lovingkindness. He is unchanging. Merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and forgiving are his revealed character. But He also can pour forth wrath in His anger. He will judge the sinner and has prepared a place called Hell for the Devil and his angels, and the unrepentant. (1 Cor. 14; Isa. 6; John 4; James 1:13; Exodus 34:6-7; Matt. 25:41; Revelation 20).
 - b. God the Father set forth the end of time from the beginning which includes His work in creation, judgment, the future, and the works in salvation. His works in salvation include election/calling, predestination, drawing, sending His Son as an atoning sacrifice, foreordaining the crucifixion, providing grace and faith, forgiving the repentant sinner, justifying the sinner, adopting the believer, persevering the sinner until death, resurrecting Christ and resurrecting the human body in a glorified form. (Isaiah 46:9-10; Gen 1:1; Psalm 1:5; Book of Revelation, Book of Daniel; Eph. 1:4; Deut. 10:15; Rom 8:29-30; John 6:44; 1 John 4:14; Acts 3:18; Eph 2:8-9; 1 John 1; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Gal. 4:5; Romans 8:35-39; Romans 1; 1 Cor 15).
 - c. The Father's throne room is heaven and angels do His bidding. The Bible is His word to us to know Him so we can rightly worship Him alone. (Matt. 5:34; 23:22; Matthew 24:31; 26:53; Deut. 6:13-15)
5. **The Person and Work of Christ.**
 - a. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful men (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-2, 14; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Gal. 4:4-5; Phil. 2:5-8).
 - b. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His shed blood and death on the cross as a representative, vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice; and, that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead (Acts 2:18-36; Rom. 3:24-25; 1 Pet. 2:24; Eph. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

- c. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate. (Acts 1:9-10; Heb. 9:24; 7:25; Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2).
- 6. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit.**
- a. We believe that the Holy Spirit is a person who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and, that He is the Supernatural Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, indwelling and sealing them unto the day of redemption (John 16:8-11; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 1:13-14).
- b. We believe that He is the divine Teacher who assists believers to understand and appropriate the Scriptures and that it is the privilege and duty of all the saved to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 1:17-18; 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27).
- c. We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowal of spiritual gifts to every believer. God uniquely uses evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip believers in the assembly in order that they can do the work of the ministry. (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28; Eph. 4:7-12)
- d. We believe that the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and the gift of healing, were temporary. Speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of the baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit, and that ultimate deliverance of the body from sickness or death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection, though God frequently chooses to answer the prayers of believers for physical healing (1 Cor. 1:22; 13:8; 14:21-22).
- 7. Man.** We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God; but that in Adam's sin the human race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God. Man is totally depraved and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition (Gen. 1:26-27; Rom. 3:22-23; 5:12; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17-19).
- 8. Salvation.**
- a. Provision: We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Whose precious blood was shed on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins for all who would believe (John 3; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10).
- b. Process: We believe that God initiates the work of salvation in a man by first bringing the Gospel message to the hearer, opening the hearer's heart to receive the message, and offering faith to the hearer to put personal trust in the atoning work and person of Jesus Christ. The believing hearer repents of sin and believes the Gospel message, confessing Jesus Christ as Lord (Romans 10:9-10; Hebrews 12:2; Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 8:30).
- c. We believe that the process of salvation whereby saving graces are offered to man through an institution or priesthood of man is heresy. Each believer is recognized as a priest and a saint at the moment of salvation. We reject the process of salvation whereby a man believes he can merit salvation through any other means than repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:9; Romans 1:7; Romans 4; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1-2; Ephesians 2:8).
- 9. Perseverance or Eternal Security**
- a. We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1; 38-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; 1 Peter 1:4-5).
- b. We believe that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, fruits of true repentance, and evidences of the Christian life (Matthew 7:13-23; Luke 3:8; Matthew 23; 1 John; Galatians 5; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Titus 2:11-15).
- 10. Heaven and Hell**
- a. We believe in a place called heaven which is the dwelling of God, and eternal dwelling place of believers.
- b. We believe that the souls of unbelievers remain, after death, in conscious punishment and torment until the second resurrection, when with soul and body reunited, they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment and torment (Matt. 25:41-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-26; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Rev. 20:11-15).

11. **The Church**

- a. We believe that the local church, which is the body and the espoused bride of Christ, is solely made up of born-again persons (1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-27).
- b. We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:27; 20:17, 28-32; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11).
- c. We believe in the autonomy of the local church free of any external authority or control (Acts 13:1-4; 15:19-31; 20:28; Rom. 16:1, 4; 1 Cor. 3:9, 16; 5:4-7, 13; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

12. **Baptism.** We recognize Believer's Baptism as an outward indication of the inward change and identification with Christ that has been effected in those who have made a conscious decision to repent of sin and receive Jesus as Lord. This is in obedience to Christ's command in Matthew 28. We reject the position that any kind of saving grace is conveyed to the recipient of baptism. We also reject the perception of baptism as a sign and seal of the Covenant community. Baptism should be performed in water, by full-body immersion, or in extreme cases such as physical disability, by pouring (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; 18:18).

13. **The Lord's Supper.** We recognize the Lord's Supper as a continuing ordinance of the church. The bread represents the body of Christ that was sacrificed on the cross. The cup represents the blood of Christ that was shed on the cross. The two together represent His death. We observe the Lord's Supper in remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ for our sins. We reject the idea that the Lord's Supper conveys saving grace to the participant. We affirm that continued, obedient observance of the ordinance conveys spiritual benefits to the Christian (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

14. **The End of the Age.**

- a. We believe in the personal, imminent return of Jesus Christ who will Rapture His church in the clouds to begin the seven-year Tribulation period.
- b. We believe in a seven-year Tribulation period in which God judges the unbelieving world.
- c. Jesus Christ personally returns to the earth at the end of the Tribulation.
- d. We believe in a literal 1000-year (Millennial Kingdom) reign of Jesus Christ following the 7-year Tribulation period.
- e. We believe that at the end of 1000 years, all unbelievers of every era will appear before the Great White Throne judgment. Satan and death will be cast into the Lake of Fire. There will also be a new Heaven and a new Earth.
- f. Scripture: Ps. 89:3-4; Dan. 2:31-45; 9:24-27; Zech. 14:4-11; Matthew 24-25; I Thess. 1:10; 4:13-18; Titus 2:13; Rev. 3:10; 19:11-16; 20:1-6.

15. **Satan.** We believe that Satan leads the fallen angels, who are also known as demons, in his work against God. Satan is an angel, the author of sin and the cause of the Fall of Man; and he is the open and declared enemy of God and man; and that he shall be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire (Genesis 3; Job 1:6-7; Isa. 14:12-17; Matt. 4:2-11; 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

16. **Creation.** We believe that God created the universe in six literal, 24-hour periods. We reject evolution, the Gap Theory, the Day-Age Theory, and Theistic Evolution as unscriptural theories of origin (Gen. 1-2; Ex. 20:11).

17. **Holiness.** God's Word clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to the flesh. We believe that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord. God commands His people to separate from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices, and associations (Rom. 12:1-2; 14:13; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Galatians 2:19; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11; Lev. 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:19-20).

18. **Governments.** We believe that God has ordained and created all authority consisting of three basic institutions: 1) the home, 2) the church, and 3) the state. Every person is subject to these authorities, but all (including the authorities themselves) are answerable to God and governed by His Word. God has given each institution specific Biblical responsibilities and balanced those responsibilities with the understanding that no institution has the right to infringe upon the other. The home, the church, and the state are sovereign in their respective Biblically assigned spheres of responsibility under God (Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 5:22-24; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 2:13-14).

19. Human Sexuality.

- a. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of male or female homosexuality, bisexuality, transgenderism, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, prostitution, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 19:5, 13; Gen. 26:7-11; Lev. 18:8-18, 20; 19:29; 20:13, 16; Rom. 1:26-32; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:8-11; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4).

20. Marriage and Family Relationships

- a. We believe that marriage is the joining of one man and one woman. We believe that God has ordained husband and wife as the foundational institution of human society. The relationship is described as a covenant of companionship (Gen. 2:18, 24; Prov. 2:16-17; Mal. 2:14; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10-11; Eph. 5:22-33).
- b. We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home. The husband is to understand, provide leadership, and love his wife as Christ loves the church. The wife is to submit herself to the Scriptural leadership of her husband as the church submits to the headship of Christ. She is to love and respect her husband (Gen. 1:26-28; Ex. 20:14, 17; Prov. 2:16-17; Mk. 10:6-12; 1 Cor. 7:1-35; Eph. 5:21-33; Gal. 3:26-29; Col. 3:18-19; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 3:1-7; Titus 2:4-5).
- c. Children are a heritage from the Lord. Children should honor and obey their parents. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values and leading them, through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline, including Scriptural corporal correction (Exodus 20:12; Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 127:3-5; Prov. 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; Mk. 10:13-14; Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20-21).

21. Divorce and Remarriage.

- a. Divorce:
 - i. What God has put together, let no man separate. It is His desire to see the marriage bond maintained. His attitude toward divorce is summed up in hatred and disdain, and in calling "adulterers" those who divorce under sinful terms (Mat. 5:31-32; 19:6; Mal. 2:16; Mar 10:2-12; 1 Cor. 7:10-11, 27).
 - ii. Jesus affirms that divorce is allowed because of the hardness of man's heart, and only for the case of unchastity. Unchastity, in the scriptures, is sexual sin in general and can include fornication, incest, bestiality, homosexuality, and adultery (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-9).
 - iii. A believer is commanded to remain married with their unbelieving spouse, even though this represents a spiritually mixed marriage. However, if the unbelieving spouse wants to leave the marriage, the believing spouse is not in bondage to that marriage covenant any longer (1 Cor. 7:12-16).
- b. Remarriage:
 - i. Remarriage is allowed, and in some cases encouraged, but not commanded for widows (1 Tim. 5:14; Rom 7:2-3).
 - ii. In some cases, remarriage for Christians is discouraged but not forbidden, but must be with another Christian (1 Corinthians 7:7-9, 32-35, 39-40).
- c. Remarriage would be allowed for the two following situations and receive the blessing of the church after full details of the cause of divorce and marital status of the former spouse have been confirmed so that the possibility for reconciliation can be addressed:
 - i. Unchastity/immorality was the cause of the divorce (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9).
 - ii. A spouse is divorced because the unbelieving spouse left them and has remarried (1 Corinthians 7:15). In some rare cases, the spiritual state of a professing believer after church discipline may bring into question whether they are a believer or not.

22. **Abortion.** We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life.

Abortion is murder. We reject any teaching that abortions of pregnancies due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the mental well-being of the mother are acceptable (Job 3:16; Ps. 51:5; 139:13-16; Isa. 44:24; 49:1, 5; Jer. 1:5; 20:15-18; Luke 1:44).

23. **Love.** God is love, and we love because He first loved us. His love was shown by the sending of Jesus for our salvation. We are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We believe that we should demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow believers but also toward both those who are not believers and those who oppose us. We are to deal with those who oppose us graciously, gently, patiently, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, malicious gossip, the taking of revenge, or the threat or the use of violence as a means of resolving personal conflict or obtaining personal justice. Although God commands us to abhor sinful actions, we are to love and pray for any person who engages in such sinful actions (Lev. 19:18; Mat. 5:44-48; 22:37-38; Luke 6:31; John 3:16; 13:34-35; Rom. 12:9-10; 17-21; 13:8-10; 1 Cor. 13:1-8; Phil. 2:2-4; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Titus 3:2; 1 John 3:17-18, 4:7-8, 11, 19; Jude 21).
 24. **Missions and Evangelism.** We believe that Jesus Christ commanded the believers to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that Christ commanded. Christians are ambassadors of Christ to be ministers of reconciliation to the lost both locally and in foreign lands (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:18-20).
 25. **Giving (Stewardship).** We believe that every Christian has been given many stewardships: Time, Talent, and Money, to name a few. As a steward of that portion of God's time entrusted to him, a Christian should serve for the discipleship of other believers. As a steward of that portion of talent entrusted to him, a Christian should serve in a way so capacitated. As a portion of God's wealth entrusted to him, a Christian is obligated to support his local church financially. We believe that free will giving should be proportionate, generous, sacrificial, and from the heart (Gen. 14:20; Prov. 3:9-10; Acts 4:32-37; Acts 20:35; Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 John 3:17).
- B. Authority of the Statement of Faith
1. The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe, however, that the foregoing Statement of Faith accurately represents the teaching of the Bible and, therefore, is an accurate statement of our members' faith. Those seeking membership will be asked to agree to and uphold the Statement of Faith. All literature and teaching used in the church shall be in complete agreement with the Statement of Faith.