

## **Grace Community Church of Seal Beach**

### **POSITION STATEMENTS**

The Statements of Belief in our church's Constitution set forth the minimum understandings of biblical teaching necessary for membership and ministry in this church. We recognize that there are Bible-believing, godly Christians who, though they agree on the basics, differ in non-essentials and over disputed matters of biblical interpretation. The following "Position Statements" set forth the teachings which a member or visitor should expect to hear taught at this church and reflected in our practical life.

#### **1. Charismatic Gifts and the Present Ministry of the Holy Spirit**

We understand the Scriptures to teach that every believer is indwelt, baptized and sealed by the Holy Spirit at conversion. We do not understand the New Testament to teach that these are "second blessing" experiences of any sort. We believe every Christian has one or more spiritual gifts and, therefore, is "Charismatic" by biblical definition. We recognize great varieties of spiritual gifts and ministries and do not take any one of these to be a special sign of the Spirit's presence. We oppose any classification of Christians into two groups based on Charismatic manifestations. We believe every Christian should be filled with the Spirit for effective service and worship, and that this filling is evidenced by a walk of obedience and submission to one another in love, not by any necessary special signs.

#### **2. Ordinances or Sacraments**

We do not believe that these signs of our faith either benefit a person automatically irrespective of his faith, or that they are mere optional symbols. We believe they ought to be observed because they are commanded by Christ and because they refresh and enrich our faith as reminders of God's saving work in our behalf.

#### **3. Baptism**

We believe that Scripture teaches "Believer Baptism" and that the mode known as "Trine Immersion" fulfills biblical teaching and is strongly supported in church history. While we do not dispute the genuineness of someone's baptism if done by some other mode, we have elected as

a church to practice Trine Immersion. Exceptions to this policy for reason of physical limitations can be discussed with the Elders.

#### **4. Communion**

We regularly observe that form of Christian Communion known as the "Threefold Communion Service" consisting of (a) the Love Feast, (b) the Washing of the Saints' Feet and (c) the Communion of the Bread and Cup (the Eucharist). We also consider it within our liberty to practice any of these portions separately from the others. We regard the Eucharist to be the central focus of Communion.

#### **5. Christian Freedom**

We believe that Christ has freed us from the curse of the Law and from all attempts to be saved by the works of the Law. This means that we do not look to our own efforts at law-keeping for either our salvation or our spiritual growth, but rather we look to the work and the power of Christ in our behalf.

We also teach that a Christian is free from all laws and rules which someone might try to impose on him as marks of true faith, standards of spirituality or signs of growth. A Christian is free to live his own life of faith before God in areas where God has given no commandment, and is not answerable to the judgment of any other Christian in these areas. At all times, a Christian is to walk in wisdom and love, not using his freedom so as to harm another Christian whose own level of maturity does not permit the degree of freedom another Christian might enjoy.

#### **6. The Sanctity of Human Life**

We believe in the sacredness and protection of human life at all stages of development regardless of physical or mental handicap, social usefulness or wantedness.

We, therefore, teach that today's abortion climate does not reflect the high regard Scripture places on unborn life. We oppose ending human life after it is born for reasons of handicap or social usefulness, and we oppose the denial of reasonable measures to prolong human life. We also oppose the current move toward accepting "doctor-assisted suicide" (or similar "euthanasia" trends).

## **7. Social Action**

We believe it is the right and duty of the church and the individual Christian to participate in modern society as an instrument of good and healing. We see no conflict between the duty to evangelize and the duty to influence society for good. The political process especially needs the influence of the church for the promotion of good and the discouragement of evil. The church must not hesitate to declare its values when there is conflict between clear biblical teaching and social practice, even as it must avoid dogmatism when the Bible is silent or the application of its principles not as clear.

## **8. Bible Prophecy and Millennialism**

We recognize that various interpretations on Bible prophecy have prevailed in the history of Christ's church and that Scripture explicitly warns against undue speculation as to the future. Therefore, we do not engage in such speculation or make the fine points of Bible prophecy a test of orthodoxy or of fellowship.

While we recognize the strengths and contributions of those systems of prophetic interpretation known as "postmillennialism" and "amillennialism," we teach the framework known as "premillennialism." Specifically, Christ will come the second time to raise the bodies of believers and establish his Kingdom rule, which is followed by the resurrection of unbelievers, the last judgment and the eternal state.

## **9. Demonology and Spiritual Warfare**

We believe in the reality of the "spirit realm," including the Bible's teaching on Satan and demonic powers. However, we believe that an unhealthy preoccupation with the subject can deter Christians from the ordinary issues of the Christian walk and the common ways we can be tempted by the Devil.

## **10. The "Will of God"**

We teach that the Scriptures are sufficient for determining both the general will of God for all believers and the specific will of God for individual believers. In matters of church or individual decision-making, whatever is not specified in Scripture, whether explicit, implicit or inferred, is within the realm of Christian freedom. If and when God

chooses to direct people in specific life circumstances, the will of God is always consistent with Scripture.

## **11. Church Government**

With regard to our relationship with other religious bodies, this church is strictly congregational and autonomous. With regard to our own operation, this church is presbyterian.

## **12. Same-Sex Marriage**

We believe marriage is an institution ordained by God and intended as a lifelong union of one man and one woman (Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15-25). In marriage, the man and woman, and only a man and a woman, are "suitable" for each other, complementing each other as equals. Jesus reaffirmed the teachings of Genesis 1 and 2 when he quoted from the passages and taught that a man and a woman become "one flesh" in marriage. Our church believes we are to teach and practice heterosexual marriage, and we are not free to depart from biblical authority on this matter. Our convictions are reflected in our wedding policy. [A complete "Position Statement and Policies on Same-Sex Marriage" is available through the church office.]

## **13. The Image of God**

Of all creation, humans alone are made in the image of God. Every person is an image bearer (regardless of skin color, ethnicity, gender, age, physical or mental ability, or any other difference) and worthy of immeasurable respect, honor, and love by their very nature as a reflection of God.

As persons created by God in his image, we are made to rely on God while also possessing free will. In using our free will to choose sin we have marred the image of God in us but have not completely destroyed it. The image of God is an essential part of being human. All people still bear God's image, even if our sinful choices make that image dim.

We have the opportunity to reflect the image of God in how we relate to God, our neighbor, and God's created world. As Christians, we are in the process individually and collectively, through the Holy Spirit, of being transformed into the image of Christ, who is himself the perfect image of God.

Because of the doctrine of the image of God:

We treat all people with compassion and respect, understanding them to be image-bearers of God.

We seek to evangelize people in all places since all people are made in God's image.

We expect to learn about God from people who are different from us. The image of God is shown in diverse ways by men and women, in different cultures, and throughout the ages.

We see our sanctification journey as including the process of learning to better put into action the image of God in our lives by following Christ himself, until we see God face to face.

(Position Statements 1-11 reaffirmed by the Board of Elders and Position Statement 12 approved on March 13, 2010).

(Position Statements 9 and 10 edits by the Board of Elders in July 2014)

(Position Statement 13 approved by the Board of Elders in November 2021)