

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY HANDBOOK

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Approved by the Deacon Board September 14, 2010

INTRODUCTION

Immanuel Baptist Church exists to “know Christ and to make Him known”. Glorifying God is our highest priority and greatest joy. The people of IBC are committed to sharing the gospel and teaching those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation.

Sin is what separates us from God. Every person born into the world is a sinner, and each is born into a world suffering the effects of sin. This handbook is a necessity for IBC as we minister in a fallen and sinful world. Consideration of the depraved reality that this handbook addresses is absolutely heartbreaking.

We must not be naive to the sinfulness of mankind to violate the innocence of children, take advantage of the weak and serve his own interests. Therefore we have developed our current Child Protection Policy to include some new standards and clarify existing procedures. This handbook should be studied and kept as a reference, so we can protect the children, elderly and individuals with disabilities whom God has called us to watch over.

The bulk of this handbook is focused on protecting children from birth to 18 by informing you of the policies we follow at IBC, alerting you to warning signs of child abuse and describing what to do if you suspect or know about child abuse. We must also be aware that the elderly and individuals with disabilities can be victims of crime and may not be able to defend themselves. Contact information is provided in the handbook if you suspect a person is at risk of abuse.

Thank you for reading this policy! We know this will help you personally be more effective as a leader, and it will help us keep our kids safe. This is the policy under which we will operate as a church, and all leaders are expected to follow it.

Thank you for serving! I know you do not serve the Lord for the praise of men, but I am deeply grateful to the hundreds of people who are serving at IBC each week, working hard to see God’s Word proclaimed to all people.

Your Leadership Team
September 2024

ADULTS AT RISK

Any adult ages 18-59 who has a physical or mental condition that substantially impairs his or her ability to care for his or her needs and who has experienced, is currently experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation would be considered an adult at risk.

If you suspect abuse of adults 18-59 years old please call the **Wisconsin Adults-at-Risk Helpline:**

Phone: 715.261.7500

Abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual, treatment without consent, financial exploitation or excessive restraint. More information is available on helping adults at risk at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov.

ELDER ADULT AT RISK

Any person age 60 or older who has experienced, is currently experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation would be considered an adult at risk.

If you suspect abuse please call the **Adult Protective Services Helpline:**

24 Hour Phone: 715.841.5160

Abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual, treatment without consent, financial exploitation or excessive restraint. More information is available on helping adults at risk at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov.

FROM THE WORD

Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

2 Timothy 2:22-26

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in My name welcomes Me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell."

Matthew 18:1-9

GENERAL POLICY

Immanuel Baptist Church will do its best to defend and protect the spiritual, physical and emotional well-being of the people entrusted to our care. Furthermore, we have a moral and legal obligation to the vulnerable members of our church family. Children from birth to 18 and adults at risk will be cared for according to Biblical principles and federal and state laws.

The Deacon Board of Immanuel Baptist Church has approved the following policies and procedures for all workers in children's ministries.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the policy is to glorify God by diligently caring for the needs of the vulnerable members of our church and showing proper respect for the laws that govern our nation.

It is essential that all paid and volunteer staff at IBC understand and apply the information in this handbook.

This handbook helps...

- To enable ministries to carry out their mission, while safeguarding the vulnerable against emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse.
- To fulfill the God-given mandate to protect the innocence of children (Matthew 18:6-7).
- To ensure that the character of potential and current workers meets Scriptural qualifications (James 3:1; 1 Timothy 5:22; 1 Corinthians 5:12).
- To protect the church, staff and volunteers from liability arising from the neglect of the aforementioned purposes.

APPLICATION

It is our intention to protect the youth to whom we minister; therefore, we request submission of an application by all youth workers. The information contained in the application will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and respect. Our Deacon Board has mandated strict criteria for the treatment and storage of confidential documents. These instruments will be stored in a locked file cabinet located in a locked office. A small group of church leaders will view and have access to these documents. The Pastor or the Ministry Leader may contact you for a personal interview if they have further questions regarding any of your answers.

- Any person (of any age) who has contact with children (0-18) or disabled adults in an official capacity must submit the completed “*Confidential Child Protection Form*”.
- Approved children/youth workers must attest in writing each year to any changes in their original application.
- Applicants may be subject to a yearly background check.
- The cost will be assumed by IBC.
- A copy of this handbook will be given and explained to each approved youth worker, with communication of expectations regarding acceptable interaction with the vulnerable.
- Applicants should be church members of IBC who have attended IBC regularly for at least 6 months. Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The goal is to personally know the character and conduct of each individual serving at IBC.
- We do not suspect any individual personally of misconduct; for this program to work, we must have 100% participation.
- Thank you for loving those who need our protection!

YOU ARE A LEADER

We work very hard to keep our children safe from abuse of any kind, as well as physical injury. We do this to fulfill the calling that God has placed on IBC—to glorify God by sharing the Gospel with everyone and discipling those in the church. How can you be most effective in your role? Remember these important principles.

- You are not a volunteer. You are a leader called by God to serve Him in this important, eternal work.
- Pray - This is spiritual work and you can't do it on your own. Always look to God and give Him the credit for what is accomplished through you.
- Read the Bible - You will struggle to have a spiritual ministry if you are not feeding your soul.
- Be Assertive - Say what needs to be said, even if you think the person to whom you are speaking may not like it. Say it with love for that person's good!
- Take Initiative - If you see a need, take action to make a difference in that situation.
- Be Responsible - Be on time and ready for your scheduled service. This will help us and those with whom we serve to minister more effectively and with less stress. If you know you will not be there, make sure you have found a substitute.
- Don't be a "LIFE GUARD" sitting off to the side with your arms folded, ready to intervene in an emergency, but spending most of your time at a distance.
- Be a "SWIMMING INSTRUCTOR" - Get in the pool with the kids, spread out, and teach them about God's Word and how it relates to our lives.

FROM THE WORD

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Matthew 20:25-28

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:7-11

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Galatians 6:7-10

YOUTH WORKER SAFETY EXPECTATIONS

Our goal in all children's activities and programs is to provide a safe environment for children. We need to remind ourselves that the children with whom we come in contact through IBC programs are entrusted to us by their parents. We need to be accountable for how we relate to each child and how we carry out our responsibilities. Matthew 18:6-10 is applicable, as we will be eternally accountable for how we interact with all children. With this in mind, we are to behave in such a way as to remain above reproach in our behavior with and toward children. For the protection of all parties, IBC has the following expectations of children and youth workers.

- Do not be alone with a child. Leaders will never be alone with a child other than their own. All classroom and office doors will have a window or visibility from a hallway or remain open while occupied. Windows will be kept free from adornment at all times. Being alone in a room with a closed door and no window is never allowed. One-on-one conversations can happen in a room with other leaders present. Reasonable effort must be made to have two unrelated adults supervising at all times.
- Never use corporal punishment. Physical punishment is inappropriate in church youth ministries.
- Be cautious of the appropriate use of physical affection. Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child or youth. Touching should be initiated by the child or youth. It should be a response to the child's need for comforting, encouragement or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need. Ideally, touching and affection should only be given when in the presence of other children's ministry or youth workers. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adult workers are present and the touching is open to observation. This is especially important when diapering a baby or helping a young child change clothes or use the restroom. Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As ministry workers our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach. A child's preference not to be touched should be respected. Do not force affection upon a reluctant child. Church workers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others.

- Use Physical Action Carefully. Physical action should only be taken when a person is causing harm to others. Carefully restrain the person with the help of other adults. This must be reported to the parents and the ministry leader.
- Report Injuries. If a person is injured while in the building or at an IBC off site event, an accident report must be filed with the church office.
- If you suspect child abuse/neglect, report it immediately. You do not need to have proof of child abuse, only reasonable suspicion. Don't act alarmed. Relax, observe, remember and report. Do not talk about the incident with people not directly involved in it. Follow the process detailed in this handbook on page 18.
- When taking overnight or out of the area trips, a written permission slip with an emergency medical authorization from parents/guardians is needed. This is to provide for emergency medical treatment if ever needed and to give authority to have children other than your own in your care.
- Open Door Policy. At any time a parent or guardian of a child is free to join their child in whatever church function is occurring. No advance notice is needed.
- Never criticize a child with harsh words. A good rule is: If what you say doesn't build a child up, then it probably tears them down. Be direct and clear with your instruction and direction without being harsh.
- Individual Counseling. One-on-one interactions are sometimes necessary and appropriate, but care must be taken that they be conducted in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. If at all possible, another adult is to have knowledge of your whereabouts and with whom you are meeting. Children and youth receiving individual counseling should never be promised absolute confidentiality by the adult. We are required to report abuse and ongoing criminal activities.
- Common sense and direction are the greatest prevention tools. Always discuss situations about which you are unsure with the Pastor, Assistant Pastor(s) or authority under whom you are working.

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child maltreatment is divided into four basic types: 1) physical neglect; 2) physical abuse; 3) sexual abuse; and 4) emotional abuse.

PHYSICAL NEGLECT is defined as “failure, refusal, or inability on the part of a parent, guardian, legal custodian or other person exercising temporary or permanent control over a child, for reasons other than poverty, to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care or shelter so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child.” [Ref.s.48.981 (1)(d), Stats.]

PHYSICAL ABUSE is defined as “physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means.” [Ref.s.48.02 (1)(a), Stats.] This includes non-accidental injury inflicted by any other person. “Physical injury includes, but is not limited to lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries, severe or frequent bruising or great bodily harm, as defined in s.939 (14).” [Ref.s.48.02 (14g), Stats.]

SEXUAL ABUSE is defined as the following: any person having sexual intercourse or sexual contact with a child 17 years of age or less; any person inducing a child to engage in sexually explicit conduct in order to videotape, photograph, etc. that child; or videotaping, photographing, etc. a child for such purposes; or producing, distributing, selling or otherwise profiting from such a videotape, photograph, etc.; a person responsible for a child’s welfare encouraging or permitting the child to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of videotaping, photographing, etc.; any person causing a child to view or listen to sexual activity; any person exposing genitals to a child; and/or any person permitting or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE is defined as “emotional damage for which the child’s parent, guardian or legal custodian has neglected, refused or been unable for reasons other than poverty to obtain the necessary treatment or to take steps to ameliorate the symptoms.”

The definitions of child neglect and emotional abuse involve failure on the part of parents or other persons responsible for a child to provide necessary care for a child. In most cases, the parties involved are family members, and solutions involve interventions with the family. In some of these cases, court intervention is required to assure safety and order services for the family.

The definitions of physical abuse and sexual abuse include harm to a child by any other person. Therefore, physical or sexual abuse of a child by a parent is included, as are assaults by strangers, persons unrelated to a child's family and peers. In cases where the child is harmed by someone outside of the family, interventions with the family do not provide all of the solutions. In many of these cases, law enforcement involvement through the criminal system is necessary to intervene with the person who harmed the child.

RECOGNIZING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Following are the major signs of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. One of these, or even several in combination, may not indicate that abuse has occurred. They may indicate accidents or that other medical conditions, emotional illness or problems exist. It is important to realize that you do not have to make that determination. If you have any reason to suspect child abuse or neglect, it is best to report it to the appropriate agency, so that they can provide whatever assistance is needed by the child and family.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Bruises or welts on face, neck, chest, back; injuries in the shape of an object - belt, cord, iron; unexplained burns on palms, soles, back; fractures that do not fit story of injury
- Delay in seeking medical help
- Extremes in child's behavior - very aggressive or withdrawn and shy (unlike the child's typical behavior)
- Afraid to go home, frightened of parents/caregivers
- Fearful of other adults

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF PHYSICAL ABUSE IF THE CHILD:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes.
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after being absent from school.
- Seems frightened of parents, afraid to go home.
- Shrinks at the approach of adults, reports injury by a parent or other adult caregiver.

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF PHYSICAL ABUSE IF THE PARENT:

- Has conflicting, unconvincing or no explanation for the child's injury.
- Describes the child in a negative way.
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child.
- Has a history of abuse as a child.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- Low self-esteem
- Self-denigration
- Severe depression
- Aggression
- Withdrawal
- Severe anxiety
- Failure to learn

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE IF THE CHILD:

- Shows extremes in behavior, either overly compliant or demanding, extreme passivity or aggression; acts either inappropriately like an adult or inappropriately like a baby/younger child.
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development.
- Has attempted suicide.
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent.

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE IF THE PARENT OR CAREGIVER:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child.
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's school problems.
- Overtly rejects the child.

SEXUAL ABUSE

SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE:

- Pain, swelling, or itching in genital area
- Bruises, bleeding, discharge in genital area
- Difficulty walking or sitting, frequent urination
- Stained or bloody underclothing
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Refusal to take part in gym or other exercises
- Poor peer relationships
- Unusual interest in sex for age, unusual knowledge of sex terminology
- Drastic change in school achievement
- Runaway or delinquent
- Regressive or childlike behavior

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF SEXUAL ABUSE IF THE CHILD:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting.
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities.
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a sexually transmitted infection.
- Runs away.
- Reports sexual abuse.

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF SEXUAL ABUSE IF THE PARENT OR CAREGIVER:

- Is overly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex.
- Is secretive and isolated.
- Describes marital difficulties involving family power struggles or sexual relations.
- Behaves in a sexual manner toward the child.

NEGLECT

SIGNS OF NEGLECT:

- Poor hygiene, body odor
- Inappropriately dressed for weather
- Needs medical or dental care
- Left alone, unsupervised, for long periods of time (depending on child's age)
- Failure to thrive, malnutrition
- Constant hunger, begs or steals food
- Extreme willingness to please
- Frequent absence from school
- Arrives early and stays late at school or play areas or other people's homes

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGLECT IF THE CHILD:

- Is frequently absent from school.
- Begs or steals food or money from classmates.
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations or glasses.
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor.
- Lacks appropriate clothing for weather.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.
- States there is no one at home to take care of them.

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGLECT IF THE PARENT OR CAREGIVER:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child.
- Seems apathetic or depressed.
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner.
- Abuses alcohol or drugs.

REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Wisconsin statutes require that reports of alleged child abuse and neglect and threatened child abuse and neglect be made to county social/human services departments or to law enforcement agencies. Any report received by a law enforcement office must subsequently be referred to the local agency. Reports of sexual abuse or threatened sexual abuse received by the local agency must subsequently be referred to law enforcement officials.

Individuals whose employment or volunteer service brings them into contact with children are required by law to report any suspected abuse or neglect or threatened abuse or neglect to a child seen in the course of their professional duties. Anyone who suspects a child is being maltreated may make such a referral. Persons making reports in good faith are immune from criminal or civil liability. Reports are made to the county in which the child or the child's family resides.

Upon receiving a report, the agency must first determine if the information constitutes an allegation of child maltreatment or threatened harm as defined by the statutes. If the report is screened in as an appropriate concern of child maltreatment, the Child Protective Services (CPS) worker in the agency must initiate an investigation assessment within 24 hours after the receipt of the report and complete it within 60 days. Reports that suggest a child is in current or imminent danger receive an immediate response.

The focus of the CPS assessment is not to establish legal culpability (cases are referred to law enforcement and then possibly to court for that purpose), but to assure the child's safety and to determine whether the child and family are in need of any services. The investigation assessment must be conducted in accordance with standards established by the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. Established in September 1994, the Child Protective Services Investigation Standards recognize that the CPS role must differ in cases of familial and no familial maltreatment.

IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE

- Be aware of both physical and behavioral signs.
- Be approachable - Let the child know that you are available to talk; build a relationship with the child that will allow him/her to feel comfortable sharing such difficult information with you.
- Evaluate the situation - Contact local law enforcement if you think there is immediate danger to the child, or get medical help immediately if you think the child has been injured.
- Make a report - Remember, you only need to have “reasonable cause to believe” that a child is being abused or neglected for you to make a report. You can report suspected abuse even if the child doesn’t tell you about it.
- Your first report should be made to a pastoral staff member, or your immediate supervisor; they will work with you to report the situation to the proper authorities and assist the families involved.

Where to Report:

IBC Pastoral Staff (within 24 hours)

Pastor - Rob Love - 715.937.0043

Pastor - Will Zalizniak - 715.897.4680

Pastor - Josh Sturm - 715.803.0527

Office Number - 715.359.2422

Marathon County Department of Social Services

1000 Lakeview Dr—Suite 400

Wausau WI 54403

Office Hours: 715.261.7500

After Hours: 715.261.1200

Wausau Police Department

Emergency Situation - 911

Office Number - 715.261.7800

**phone numbers and contacts are correct as of August 2024*

IF A CHILD TELLS YOU ABOUT ABUSE OR NEGLECT

- Listen to and believe the child; show through your words and actions that you are listening to the child and that you believe what the child is telling you. Encourage the child to talk, but don't push him/her to do so. Use open-ended questions such as, "What happened?" rather than leading questions such as, "When did she hit you?"
- Don't overreact; try to stay calm. This will help keep the child from becoming more frightened and may encourage him/her to tell you more. Do not talk negatively about the suspected abuser in front of the child; simply reassure the child that it is not the child's fault.
- Write down what the child says, using as much of the child's actual words as possible, so that you can share those words with the appropriate person. Describe in writing any signs of abuse or neglect you observe.
- Anyone can make a report. While some people are legally mandated to report, you can report suspected abuse regardless of your profession or relationship to the child.
- Don't delay; never assume that somebody else will make a report. Don't put off reporting because you're not sure if you should. You are doing this for the good of the child.

Information needed in your report:

- Child's name, or if unknown, a description of the child.
- The name or description of the suspected abuser, including the relationship to the child if known.
- What you observed.
- What the child said.
- Your relationship to the child (friend, teacher, neighbor, stranger).
- Keep the report factual.

Don't delay making a report just because you don't have all of the information; it is important to make the report as soon as possible.

ACCIDENTS & INJURIES AT IBC

Any physical injury in the building or on IBC sponsored trips must be reported to the church office. This is not a criminal report as a report of abuse is.

Who do I tell?

1. Ministry supervisor
2. Parent/Guardian - explain the situation the same day of the accident, preferably before the student leaves the building.
3. Church office - email or call the next business day.

cs@ibcwausau.org

715.359.2422 (Tues. - Fri. 9a-3p)

**phone numbers and contacts are correct as of August 2024*

This is the information we need:

Name(s) of person(s) involved in the accident

Date and time of accident

Names of two witnesses to the accident (preferably adults)

Brief description of the accident (room, type of injury...)

(example: "gym, broken arm")

Medical response that was given

This report will be kept on file in the office, and if needed, submitted to our insurance provider. The pastoral staff will be made aware of the accident and take action if needed.

The following pages contain our doctrinal statement. All those teaching, leading or serving need to agree to teach and support the doctrines that follow. We encourage you to study the various doctrines and see why IBC has held to these important truths for generations.

IBC

Statement of Faith

What We Believe

The Bible

We believe that the Bible, including the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, is the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God. The Bible is the only essential and infallible record of God's self-disclosure to mankind. It reveals man's fallen state and presents the only means of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are the authoritative and normative rule and guide for all of the Christian life, practice and doctrine. The Scriptures are totally sufficient and must not be added to, superseded, or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation, personal experience or worldly wisdom.

Isaiah 55:8-11; Mark 13:31; John 20:31; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Revelation 22:18-19

The Godhead

We believe there is one living and true God: infinite, eternal, almighty and perfect in holiness, truth and love. In His perfection, God is unchangeable in every aspect of His being. He is the Creator, Preserver and Ruler of the universe. In the unity of the Godhead, there are three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, co-existent, co-equal and co-eternal. In their divine perfection, they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.

Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 5:48; Matthew 28:19; Romans 1:19-20; Ephesians 4:5-6; 1 Timothy 1:17

The Father

We believe God the Father is the Creator of heaven and earth. By His Word and for His glory, He freely and supernaturally created the world from nothing. Through the same Word He daily sustains all His creation. He rules over all and is the only Sovereign. His plans and purposes cannot be changed or thwarted. He is faithful to every promise, works all things together for good to those who love Him, and in His super abounding grace gave His Son, Jesus Christ, for mankind's redemption.

Genesis 1:1; 1 Chronicles 29:10-11; Romans 5:15; Romans 8:28-30; Romans 11:36; 1 Peter 1:3-4

Jesus Christ

We believe that in the fullness of time Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, the eternal Word made flesh, was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin Mary. He was perfect in nature, teaching and obedience. He is fully God and fully man. Through Him all things came into being and were created. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, and in Him dwells the fullness of the godhead bodily. He is the only Savior for the sins of the world, having shed His blood and died a vicarious death on Calvary's cross. By His death in our place, He revealed the divine love and upheld the divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God. Having provided redemption for sin, the third day He rose bodily from the grave, victorious over death and the powers of darkness. He ascended into heaven where, at God's right hand, He intercedes for His people and rules as Lord over all. He is the head of His body, the Church, and should be adored, loved, served and obeyed by all.

John 1:1-2, 14; Romans 5:6-8; Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:1-3; 1 Timothy 3:16

The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, equal in all aspects with the Father and the Son. He is the active divine agent in convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. Through the proclamation of the Gospel, He persuades people to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord. The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth and dwells within the regenerate. The Holy Spirit glorifies the Son, who in turn glorifies the Father. He guides the Church into all truth and the application of that truth in living for Christ. He is to be respected, honored and worshipped as God, the Third Person of the Trinity.

Psalm 139:7-10; Matthew 28:19; John 16:8-11; Acts 5:30-32; Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:22-26

Man

We believe that man was created by an immediate act of God and not by a process of evolution, that man was created in the image and likeness of God, that man was endowed with power of rational and responsible choice between good and evil, and that the purpose of his creation was to glorify God. Man, tempted by Satan, rebelled against God and is now estranged from His maker, subject to divine wrath, inwardly depraved and, apart from a special work of grace, utterly lost and incapable of returning to God. This depravity is radical and pervasive, extending to the body, mind, will and affections. In consequence of this disobedience, the entire human race became involved in sin, so that every person has sinned and is under just condemnation. Fallen, sinful people, whatever their character or attainments, are lost and without hope apart from salvation in Christ. Genesis 1:27; Genesis 3:1-6; Acts 17:24-28; Romans 3:10-12; Romans 3:23; 1 Peter 3:18

The Gospel

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Gospel. The Gospel is the good news revealed in the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Christ's crucifixion is the heart of the Gospel, His resurrection is the power of the Gospel and His ascension is the glory of the Gospel. Christ's death is a substitutionary and propitiatory sacrifice to God for our sins. It alone satisfies the demand of God's holy justice and appeases His holy wrath. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other Name by which man must be saved. At the heart of all sound doctrine is the cross of Jesus Christ and the infinite privilege that redeemed sinners have of glorifying God because of what He has accomplished. John 14:6; Romans 1:16-17; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Ephesians 2:14-17; 1 Timothy 2:5-6

Salvation, Regeneration, Justification and Repentance

We believe that salvation, the free gift of God, is provided by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone. Anyone turning from sin in repentance and looking to Christ and His substitutionary death receives the gift of eternal life and is declared righteous by God as a free gift. The resulting regeneration makes the believer a new creature in Jesus Christ, being liberated from the law of sin and death into the freedom of God's Spirit. Justification is a judicial act of God whereby the believer is declared righteous on the basis of Christ's death on the cross. Biblical repentance is characterized by a changed life and saving faith is evidenced by kingdom service and works. While neither repentance nor works save, unless a person is willing to deny himself, pick up his cross and follow Christ, he cannot become His disciple.

Matthew 16:24-25; Acts 5:31; Acts 26:20; Romans 8:1-2;
Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 2:8-9

Sanctification

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the active agent in our sanctification and seeks to produce His fruit in us as we are set apart for God's purposes and are conformed to the image of Christ. Every believer at regeneration receives the Holy Spirit, is sealed by the Holy Spirit, is baptized by the Holy Spirit and is sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Though indwelling sin remains a reality, we are sanctified by the Spirit as we expose ourselves to the truth of His Word and grow in the knowledge of the Lord and in the desire to keep His commandments. While all genuine believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit at conversion, the New Testament indicates the importance of an ongoing filling of the Spirit subsequent to conversion as well. The importance of the filling of the Holy Spirit is behind the exhortations for believers not to grieve, quench or resist the work of the Holy Spirit.

John 17:17,19; Romans 6:11-14; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13;
1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:13

The Church

We believe that the Church is a living organism, known as the Body of Christ, of which Christ is its Head. It consists of all regenerated persons as members and exists as both a worldwide fellowship of the family of God, as well as in specific local congregations made up of followers of Christ who are committed to obedience to Him. The church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Believers in a local church are called by God to gather together to devote themselves to worship, prayer, the teaching of the Word of God, observance of baptism and communion as ordinances established by Jesus Christ and fellowship, and to minister to one another through the development and use of spiritual gifts and God-given talents. God has given the Church the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world and making disciples, beginning in their own community and extending to the ends of the earth.

Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 1:22-23;
Ephesians 2:19-22; Ephesians 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7,11-12

Ordinances

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has instituted two ordinances for obedient observance by the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Baptism does not constitute salvation, but is a public profession of faith that a person has already experienced salvation. The Scriptures teach that the elements of Communion, or the Lord's Supper, have no mystical or supernatural power, but are symbols of the sacrifice of His body and blood through His death on the cross for the remission of our sins and our continued dependence on Him for our spiritual sustenance. The Lord's Table is open to all believers who are living in right relationship with Jesus Christ, regardless of denomination.

Matthew 26:26-30; Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38-41; Romans 6:3-5;
1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Attitude Toward Civil Government

We believe that civil government is ordained of God for the punishment of those who do evil and for the promotion and protection of that which is good. We, therefore, consider it our duty to pray for those in authority and to be submissive and obedient to their authority, except in matters directly contrary to the Word of God.

Acts 4:18-19; Acts 5:27-29; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-14

Eternal Security

We believe that a person who has truly been born again by the Spirit of God through the imperishable seed is kept by God's power and is thus secure in Christ forever. The person is given everlasting life, is sealed for the day of redemption, possesses a life that is now hidden with Christ in God, has been given the knowledge and assurance of eternal life and has the assurance that there is no longer any condemnation or separation from God.

John 5:24; John 10:27-30; Romans 8:35-39; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Peter 1:5

Resurrection & Immortality

We believe that at the return of the Lord, the righteous dead will be raised, and living believers will be changed so that both will have literal, spiritual and immortal bodies like unto Christ's own glorious, resurrected body.

Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Christ's Second Coming

We believe in the personal, visible, pre-millennial and imminent return of Christ. This will be accomplished in two stages. The Rapture is Christ coming for His saints. Christ will descend to take away His waiting Bride, the Church, to be with Him in the place He has prepared for her. The Revelation is Christ descending to establish His kingdom and reign upon the earth for 1000 years. Between these two stages is the Great Tribulation, when God's righteous and holy judgments will come upon the earth, punishing those who have rejected Christ and the offer of God's salvation.

John 14:1-3; Acts 1:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; Revelation 6:1- 19:21; Revelation 20:1-6

Judgments

We believe that the believer's sins are judged in Christ on the cross and that the believer's works will be judged for rewards at the judgment seat of Christ at the time of His second coming. We believe that the unrepentant will appear before God for judgment at the Great White Throne after the millennium to be consigned to the Lake of Fire. There they will suffer eternal torment together with the devil and his angels. Ecclesiastes 12:14; 1 Corinthians 3:8-15; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 2 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:10-15

The Consummation

We believe that the Consummation of all things includes the visible, personal and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the translation of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust and the fulfillment of Christ's Kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the Consummation, Satan with his hosts and all those outside Christ are finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, enduring eternal punishment, but the righteous, in glorious bodies, shall live and reign with Him forever. As the Bride of Christ, all believers will be in the presence of God forever, serving Him and giving Him unending praise and glory. Then shall the eager expectation of creation be fulfilled and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God, Who makes all things new.

Isaiah 65:17; Isaiah 66:22; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-22:7

Sanctity of Human Life

We believe in the sanctity of human life traceable to the "breath of life" breathed into Adam in the Garden of Eden. We believe that life begins at conception and that abortion and euthanasia are the unscrupulous ending of human life forbidden by God in the Scriptures. We further believe there is a significant distinction to be made between the sacredness of human life created in the "image of God" and animal life instituted by God for man's welfare.

Job 1:21, 12:10, 27:3; Genesis 1:26-28, 2:7; Ruth 4:13; Proverbs 6:17b; 2 Kings 8:12

Sacredness of Marriage

We believe in the sacredness of marriage, which is the basic institution of God created as a picture of Christ and the Church for the welfare of mankind and the procreation of the human race. It is a permanent relationship between one man and one woman (as defined by one's gender at birth), equally yoked as believers, and intended to be severed only by death. Homosexuality is not an alternative lifestyle, nor an expression of Christian love.

Ephesians 5:32; Hebrews 13:4; Genesis 1:28, 2:18; Matthew 19:1-6; Romans 1:26-28; 2 Corinthians 6:14