

The Covenant and Statement of Faith

Of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches

Section One. Covenant. The sovereign congregations which are members of this corporation are united in accepting the Holy Scriptures as the sole guide and authority in all matters of faith, doctrine and practice.

Section Two. Statement of Faith. The Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches has a corporate commitment to a basic body of beliefs founded on God's revealed truth. The Statement of Faith is the expression of a never ending effort to clarify an understanding of the primary doctrines we accept.

It is the understanding of this Fellowship that, although individual Grace Brethren Churches remain distinct, autonomous legal entities, congregational church government relates alone to the incidental affairs of the local congregation and not to doctrinal practices or tenets which must be general or universal the same in all congregations. The basic doctrines of one congregation shall be the same as the basic doctrines in every other.

Accordingly, the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, Inc., believing the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible to be the infallible rule of faith and of practice and feeling the responsibility to make known the divine message of the Bible, presents the following articles as a statement of those basic truths taught in the Bible which are common to our Christian faith and practice.

1. THE BIBLE. The Word of God, the sixty six Books of the Old and New Testaments, verbally inspired in all parts, and therefore wholly without error as originally given of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).
2. THE ONE TRUE GOD. Existing eternally as three persons the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22; Matthew 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).
3. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. His preexistence and deity (John 1:1-3), incarnation by virgin birth (John 1:14; Matthew 1:18-23), sinless life (Heb. 4:15), substitutionary death (2 Cor. 5:21), bodily resurrection (Luke 24:36-43), ascension into heaven and present ministry (Heb. 4:14-16), and coming again (Acts 1:11).
4. THE HOLY SPIRIT. His personality (John 16:7-15), and deity (Acts 5:3-4), and His work in each believer: baptism and in dwelling at the moment of regeneration (1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 8:9), and filling (Eph. 5:18) to empower for Christian life and service (Eph. 3:16; Acts 1:8; Gal. 5:22-23).
5. MAN. His direct creation in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28), his subsequent fall into sin resulting in spiritual death (Gen. 3:1-24; Rom. 5:12), and the necessity of the new birth for his salvation (John 3:3-5).

6. SALVATION. A complete and eternal salvation by God's grace alone received as the gift of God through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 1:18-19).
7. THE CHURCH. One true church, the body and the bride of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-32), composed of all true believers of the present age (1 Cor. 12:12-13); and the organization of its members in local churches for worship, for edification of believers, and for world wide gospel witness, each local church being autonomous but cooperating in fellowship and work (Eph. 4:11-16).
8. CHRISTIAN LIFE. A life of righteousness, good works and separation unto God from the evil ways of the world (Rom. 12:1-2), manifested by speaking the truth (James 5:12), maintaining the sanctity of the home (Eph. 5:22-6:4), settling differences between Christians in accordance with the Word of God (1 Cor. 6:1-8), not engaging in carnal strife but showing a Christ like attitude toward all men (Rom. 12:17-21), exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), and maintaining a life of prayer (Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6), including the privilege, when sick, of calling for the elders of the church to pray and to anoint with oil in the name of the Lord (James 5:13-18).
9. ORDINANCES. The Christians should observe the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ which are (1)baptism of believers by triune immersion (Matt. 28:19) and (2)the threefold communion service, consisting of the washing of the saints' feet (John 13:1-17), the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20-22, 33-34; Jude 12), and the communion of the bread and the cup (1 Cor. 11:23-26).
10. SATAN. His existence and personality as the great adversary of God and His people (Rev. 12:1-10), his judgment (John 12:31), and final doom (Rev. 20:10).
11. SECOND COMING. The personal, visible, and imminent return of Christ to remove His church from the earth (1 Thess. 4:16-17) before the tribulation (1 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 3:10), and afterward to descend with the Church to establish His millennial kingdom upon the earth (Rev. 19:11-20:6).
12. FUTURE LIFE. The conscious existence of the dead (Phil. 1:21-23; Luke 16:19-31), the resurrection of the body (John 5:28-29), the judgment and reward of believers (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10), the judgment and condemnation of unbelievers (Rev. 20:11-15), the eternal life of the saved (John 3:16), and the eternal punishment of the lost (Matt. 25:46; Rev. 20:15).

An Introduction to the Charis Commitment to Common Identity

History

The Charis Movement, comprised of leaders and churches commonly known as Grace Brethren, traces its family roots back to Germany, where in 1708 a small group of sincere Christ-followers committed to form a church that would be faithful to the teachings of the New Testament. Yet we recognize that our spiritual foundations are built upon the broader work of godly men and women throughout history who have faithfully labored to interpret and apply God's truth. While different expressions of our beliefs have been drafted throughout our history, we have consistently affirmed our unwavering loyalty to Jesus Christ, the Living Word, and to Holy Scripture, the Written Word, as our final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

Throughout the centuries, our movement has known glorious times of progress and sad times of distraction over secondary issues. By the grace of God, today we are a global family of churches that shares a common commitment to understanding the Word of God (Biblical truth), to living as the People of God (Biblical relationships), and, to fulfilling the Purposes of God (Biblical mission). This threefold commitment is shared throughout the geographically and culturally diverse congregations that identify with us.

Format

The Charis Commitment to Common Identity is a summary of our biblical convictions, mutual commitments, and common practices. It is not intended to be a complete expression of what we believe and practice, nor is it intended to be the final expression of those beliefs and practices. Rather, it is a current expression of our ongoing quest to apply the unchanging truth of God's Word to the constantly changing realities and needs of our world. It is formatted around three "clusters" as follows:

1. **The Center** affirms our eternal loyalty to Jesus Christ, through whom we live and move and have our being;
2. **The Evangelical Core** outlines the convictions we share with those in the stream of historic orthodoxy and global evangelical communities that possess a high view of God and the Scriptures;
3. **The Charis Identity** summarizes the perspectives and practices shared among Grace Brethren churches and leaders around the world.

Uses

We encourage our leaders and churches to use this document in the following ways:

1. **To encourage** the next generation to understand, identify and engage together with us;
2. **To train** new disciples to grow and serve among us;
3. **To orient** those disciples who may wish to join us;
4. **To strengthen** the understanding and convictions of our leaders and members;
5. **To help** us relate appropriately to those with whom we form partnerships;
6. **To discern** which churches or groups of churches should form a part of our global movement.

We believe that any written document is a creation of man, and must be subject to continual discussion and improvement as we grow in our understanding of the Bible, which alone is the unchanging Word of God, as we seek to apply the Bible to our changing cultural context.

At the annual meeting in 2016 of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, Inc, delegates unanimously accepted an invitation to become a charter member of the Charis Alliance. They also decided that the Charis Commitment to Common Identity be endorsed as the identity statement of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches and that it be used by our member churches, the Association of Grace Brethren Ministers, our national and cooperating organizations, and districts to train leaders and to communicate and explain our movement.

Our Commitment to Common Identity

1. The Center

We declare that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God ¹ as revealed in the Bible, the written Word of God,² is the only Savior and Lord.³ He is the center of our shared experience of true biblical unity.

2. The Evangelical Core

We affirm our commitment to the following core truths of the Bible which we share with other genuine believers in Jesus Christ:

1. **The One True God** - There is one, and only one, true God,⁴ the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁵ He is the Creator and Lord of all,⁶ existing eternally in three persons, never less and never more - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁷

The Lord Jesus Christ - Jesus Christ is fully God, existing eternally.⁸ Everything was created by Him and for Him.⁹ His incarnation took place in the womb of a virgin.¹⁰ He became man,¹¹ but never sinned.¹² He died a substitutionary death to atone for sin,¹³ resurrected bodily,¹⁴ and ascended into heaven where He remains fully God and fully man,¹⁵ and is presently ministering¹⁶ until He comes again.¹⁷

2. **The Holy Spirit** - The Holy Spirit is fully God, existing eternally.¹⁸ He is a person,¹⁹ and was involved in Creation²⁰ and the inspiration of Scripture.²¹ His works of convicting²² and regenerating²³ are essential to the believer's salvation. Believers are entitled to the benefit and joy of being filled²⁴ and walking in the Spirit²⁵ for empowerment in Christian life, service, and mission.²⁶
3. **The Bible** - The sixty-six books, and only these, known as the Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God.²⁷ God's inspiration and superintendence of the writing of every word of the Bible²⁸ guarantees that what was written is His Word and therefore authoritative, true, and without error in the original manuscripts.²⁹ God preserves His Word,³⁰ which is powerful and effective to accomplish His purpose of salvation among all nations.³¹ God's Spirit illumines the minds of believers in every culture to understand and apply the unchanging truth of Scripture in fresh and relevant ways for the benefit of the whole Body of Christ.³²
4. **Humanity** - God created man and woman in His image.³³ As a result, all people are bearers of that image.³⁴ However, Adam's subsequent sin resulted in a condition of spiritual death³⁵ which all people since Adam have experienced,³⁶ marring the beauty of God's image in them in every facet of life. This condition of spiritual death³⁷ has rendered all people unable to save themselves,³⁸ and leads to physical death.³⁹ Therefore, new birth is necessary for salvation.⁴⁰
5. **Salvation** - The salvation brought by God is a complete and eternal salvation by His grace alone, received as the free gift of God through personal faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work, as He declares believers righteous in Him.⁴¹
6. **Church** - There exists one true Church, which is called the Household of God,⁴² the Body of Christ,⁴³ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴ It is comprised of all true disciples of Jesus Christ and is created by the action of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ Tangible expressions of this true Church are found in local churches.⁴⁶
7. **Christian Life** - The believer is saved by faith alone.⁴⁷ The faith that saves is expected to produce obedience⁴⁸ and good works,⁴⁹ which are the products of the indwelling Holy Spirit.⁵⁰ The dimensions of biblical ethics are both individual and social, and extend to every facet of life.⁵¹ God faithfully continues to finish the work of sanctification, which He initiated in the life of each believer⁵² with the goal of Christlikeness.⁵³
8. **Angels, Satan, Demons** - God created a multitude of spiritual beings called "angels".⁵⁴ Righteous angels continue to serve God and work both in the heavenly sphere and on earth.⁵⁵ By his disobedience, Satan, a fallen angel, became the adversary of God and God's people,⁵⁶ carrying with him a procession of demons.⁵⁷ Jesus Christ has overcome Satan⁵⁸ so that the final judgment and doom of Satan and his demons are certain.⁵⁹
9. **Future Life** - The dead will have a conscious existence in eternity⁶⁰ and their bodies will be resurrected.⁶¹ Unbelievers, already under condemnation, will be sentenced to suffer eternal separation from God.⁶² Believers, already having been granted eternal life,⁶³ will be judged and rewarded according to their works,⁶⁴ and will experience a glorified, eternal existence in the presence of the Lord.⁶⁵

3. Our Charis Identity: The Shared Commitments of our Global Movement

A Summary of Additional Commitments to Biblical Truth

1. We seek to understand the intent of each biblical writer by using grammatical, historical, and contextual principles of interpretation,⁶⁶ focused on Christ, led by the Holy Spirit,⁶⁷ and oriented by grace. We accept the absolute authority of the Bible rather than that of creeds, traditions, or leaders.⁶⁸
2. We commit to an ongoing study, understanding and application of God's unchanging truth in our constantly changing world, whether personal, social or cultural.⁶⁹
3. We affirm that true believers put their trust in Jesus Christ and are kept forever in the saving grace of God through His promises and His power.⁷⁰ Every believer has been eternally justified,⁷¹ blessed with all spiritual blessings,⁷² and set free from all condemnation.⁷³
4. We affirm that the Holy Spirit's works of baptizing,⁷⁴ sealing⁷⁵ and indwelling⁷⁶ occur simultaneously with regeneration and are the possession of every true believer. The Holy Spirit gives each believer a unique combination of spiritual gifts for the purpose of serving God and people.⁷⁷
5. We affirm that Jesus Christ gave ordinances to the church:
 - Baptism testifies to the reality of our salvation and identifies us as disciples of the Triune God. We therefore encourage the practice of triune immersion.⁷⁸
 - Communion testifies to our justification, sanctification and glorification, which are accomplished through Jesus Christ. We therefore encourage the practice of these symbols: the bread and cup, the washing of feet and the sharing of a meal.⁷⁹
 - We encourage the practice of additional biblical symbolic actions, such as anointing with oil and prayer for the sick,⁸⁰ laying on of hands for ministry,⁸¹ etc.
6. We affirm that the Church began on a particular day of Pentecost when our ascended Lord sent His Spirit to the waiting disciples.⁸² The present Church age will come to an end when our Lord comes in the air to remove His Church from the earth⁸³ and fulfill His promises to Israel.⁸⁴ The second coming of Christ is the personal, physical, and visible return from heaven of Christ to earth⁸⁵ with His Church,⁸⁶ to establish His thousand-year reign⁸⁷ before instituting His eternal kingdom.⁸⁸

A Summary of our Commitments to Biblical Relationships

1. We affirm that the Triune God serves as the perfect and ultimate model for human relationships.⁸⁹ As a result, each person has equal value yet different roles, which are expressed in loving unity.⁹⁰
2. We affirm that differences in gifts and ministries are a manifestation of the multifaceted grace of God.⁹¹ As a result, we encourage all believers to use their gifts in ways that promote the unity, growth and ministry of the local church.⁹²

3. We affirm our obligation to love and respect one another, and to practice the ‘one another’ exhortations. As a result, we commit to work together and to resolve our differences, for the good of individuals, churches and communities.⁹³
4. We affirm the responsibility of local churches to govern their own affairs⁹⁴ while urging those churches to live and serve in community and interdependency with other churches.⁹⁵
5. We affirm that the mandate and urgency to fulfill the Great Commission leads us to seek ways to cooperate with one another, and with likeminded Christians on the local, regional and global levels.⁹⁶

A Summary of our Commitments to Biblical Mission

1. We affirm that God’s plan for this age is best summarized in Jesus’ command to make disciples of all nations.⁹⁷ This includes the evangelistic call to reconciliation with God by means of the completed work of Christ and the lifelong pursuit of obedience to God by means of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁸
2. We affirm that God’s plan for this age includes the recognition, training and releasing of spiritually qualified and appropriately trained leaders.⁹⁹ While the specific gifts, abilities and responsibilities of leaders may vary, all leaders must serve as servants of God,¹⁰⁰ shepherds of God’s people¹⁰¹ and stewards of God’s resources.¹⁰²
3. We affirm that God’s plan for this age is most fully expressed through establishing healthy churches. Although practices may vary between cultures, healthy local churches are comprised of believers in Christ who assume a mutual commitment to worship, learning, service, prayer and witness.¹⁰³
4. We affirm that God’s plan for this age includes our responsibility to express the compassion of Christ through proclaiming the Gospel in words while loving in deeds.¹⁰⁴ We are committed to finding creative and practical ways to address the physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of a fallen humanity.¹⁰⁵

Footnotes

- 1 - John 1:1.14
- 2 - Matthew 5:17.18; 2Timothy 3:16; 2Peter 1:20.21; Psalm 19:7-11
- 3 - John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1Corinthians 12:3; Romans 10:9; Philippians 2:9-11
- 4 - Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10; 1Corinthians 8:4-6; 1Timothy 2:5
- 5 - Matthew 22:32; Acts 3:13
- 6 - Genesis 1:1; Psalm 146:6; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16.17
- 7 - Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22; 2Corinthians 13.14
- 8 - John 1:1-3; John 8:58; Titus 2:13
- 9 - Romans 11:36; Colossians 1:16
- 10 - John 1:14; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:29-35
- 11 - Luke 2:52; John 19:28; Philippians 2:6-8
- 12 - Hebrews 4:15; 1Peter 2:22
- 13 - Romans 5:8; 2Corinthians 5:21; 1Peter 2:24.25

- 14 - Luke 24:36-43; Romans 1:4; 1Corinthians 15:3-8
- 15 - Acts 1:9; Hebrews 4:14
- 16 - Ephesians 1:19-23; Hebrews 4:15.16
- 17 - Acts 1:11
- 18 - Acts 5:3.4
- 19 - John 16:7-15
- 20 - Genesis 1:2
- 21 - 2Peter 1:21
- 22 - John 16:8-11
- 23 - Titus 3:5
- 24 - Ephesians 5:18
- 25 - Galatians 5:16
- 26 - Galatians 5:22.23; Ephesians 3:16-21; Acts 1:8
- 27 - Luke 24:25-27; 1Peter 1:23-25
- 28 - 2Timothy 3:16; 2Peter 1:20.21
- 29 - Psalm 19:7-11
- 30 - Psalm 119:89; Psalm 119:160
- 31 - Romans 1:16; Romans 10:8-17; Romans 16:25-27
- 32 - 1Corinthians 2:9-16; Ephesians 1:17-23
- 33 - Genesis 1:26-28
- 34 - James 3:9
- 35 - Genesis 3:1-24
- 36 - Romans 5:12.19
- 37 - Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-3
- 38 - Romans 8:6-8
- 39 - Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12
- 40 - John 1:12; John 3:3-5
- 41 - Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:4-9; Titus 3:5-7; 1Peter 1:18-21; Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 10:14
- 42 - 1Peter 4:17; Ephesians 2:19.20; 1Timothy 3:14.15
- 43 - 1Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22.23
- 44 - 1Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 1:21.22
- 45 - 1Corinthians 12:13
- 46 - Hebrews 10:25; Galatians 1:2; Romans 16:4.5; Revelation 2:1.8.12.18; Revelation 3:1.7.14
- 47 - Romans 4:5
- 48 - Romans 1:5
- 49 - James 2:14-17; Titus 3:8
- 50 - Galatians 5:22.23
- 51 - Matthew 22:37-40; Colossians 3:17
- 52 - Philippians 1:6; Philippians 2:12-13
- 53 - Romans 8:29; 2Corinthians 3:18
- 54 - Daniel 7:10; Hebrews 12:22
- 55 - Hebrews 1:14; Ephesians 1:21; Ephesians 3:10
- 56 - 1Peter 5:8.9; Revelation 12:1-10

- 57 - Ephesians 6:12
- 58 - 1John 3:8
- 59 - John 12:31; Romans 16:20; Revelation 2:10
- 60 - Philippians 1:21-23; Luke 16:19-31
- 61 - John 5:28.29
- 62 - Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:15
- 63 - John 3:16; John 6:47
- 64 - Romans 14:10-12; 1Corinthians 3:10-15; 2Corinthians 5:10
- 65 - 1Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 21:3-5; Psalm 16:11
- 66 - Matthew 5:18; Luke 24:25-27
- 67 - 1Corinthians 2:14
- 68 - 1Corinthians 4:6
- 69 - Acts 17:11; 2Timothy 2:15; 1Chronicles 12:32
- 70 - John 10:28.29; 1Peter 1:3-5
- 71 - Romans 3:24; Romans 4:25
- 72 - Ephesians 1:3
- 73 - Romans 8:1
- 74 - 1Corinthians 12:13
- 75 - Ephesians 1:13
- 76 - Romans 8:11
- 77 - Romans 12:6; 1Corinthians 12:7.11
- 78 - Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:36-38; Acts 10:47
- 79 - 1Corinthians 11:20.23-26; Luke 22:14-20; John 13:14; Jude 12
- 80 - James 5:13-16
- 81 - 1Timothy 4:14
- 82 - Acts 2:1; Acts 2:37-47
- 83 - 1Thessalonians 4:16.17; John 14:3
- 84 - Zechariah 12; Romans 11:26-29
- 85 - Acts 1:11; Zechariah 14:4
- 86 - Revelation 19:11-16 ; Colossians 3:4
- 87 - Revelation 20:4
- 88 - 1Corinthians 15:24.25
- 89 - John 17:20.21
- 90 - Ephesians 4:1-6
- 91 - 1Peter 4:10
- 92 - Romans 12:3-8; 1Corinthians 12:12-27
- 93 - The New Testament has over twenty 'one another' references. Compare James 5:16; Galatians 5:13 et al.
- 94 - 1Cor 5:12.13
- 95 - 1Corinthians 11:16
- 96 - Compare Acts 18:24-28; Romans 15:24-29
- 97 - Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 1:5
- 98 - Romans 10:13-17; 1Corinthians 15:3-4; 2Corinthians 5:18-20; Galatians 5:16

- 99 - Acts 13:2-3
- 100 - 1Timothy 4:6
- 101 - Acts 20:28; 1Peter 5:2
- 102 - 1Corinthians 4:1
- 103 - Acts 2:41-47; Acts 14:21-28
- 104 - 1John 3:16-18
- 105 - Acts 10:38; Titus 3:8; James 2:1-9