

**Grace Brethren Beliefs and Practices, Part One:
The Statement of Faith of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Church
(and The Charis Commitment to Common Identity)**

The FGBC Statement of Faith

1. Introduction

- Although it is a great honor to teach this segment of the course, several factors have created limitations for the teacher:
 - The history of the Brethren Church is a story of theological change. While fundamental doctrines remain unchanged, over the years the Grace Brethren have shifted their emphasis on certain minor issues.
 - The teacher always brings his personal view to the classroom. It is possible that your teacher might handle certain doctrines in a different way than other Brethren would.
 - The teacher is limited by his experience and study. Though he has tried to gather information from many resources, he is able to teach only what he has learned.
- In spite of these difficulties, I am confident that this discussion will give you several benefits:
 - You will learn what the Brethren believe, and you will learn the reasons behind these beliefs.
 - You will know the Scriptures which form the foundation of Brethren beliefs and practices.
 - You will appreciate the unity and diversity that is part of the Brethren family.
 - You will be equipped to teach and train others these valuable biblical truths.

2. The Development of Doctrine in the Brethren Church

- Definition: “creed”: A creed is a doctrinal statement that serves as a standard of _____ and _____

- Famous creeds:
 - Augsburg Confession -- Lutheran
 - Heidelberg Catechism -- Reformed
 - Westminster Confession -- Calvinist
- In the Middle Ages, European civil governments ordered people to conform to the creed of the established church.
- The Brethren emerged from the _____ Movement, which rejected the concept of creedal statements. They had two reasons for this:
 - They said, “We have no creed but the Bible.” They believed that creeds failed to acknowledge the authority of the whole Bible. Several branches of the Brethren Church have adopted the motto: “The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible.”
 - They wanted to remain “open to new truth.” They expected that future studies would bring new insights about the meaning of the Bible.
- Beginning in the 19th century, several factors forced the Brethren to produce written declarations of their beliefs:
 - There were internal divisions within the Brethren Church. Splinter groups produced declarations of their beliefs, and the Brethren Church saw the need to clarify its doctrinal positions.
 - Many Brethren were writing tracts to explain their beliefs. The church saw the need to establish a doctrinal standard for these tracts.
 - Mission organizations saw the need to hold missionary candidates to a standard of doctrinal purity.
- The Brethren Church embraced the _____ movement of the early 20th century. This movement was a reaction to Liberal or Modernist theology. Liberals used traditional theological language but attached nontraditional meanings to the words. The Brethren produced statements which showed their opposition to Liberalism.

- In the 20th Century, the Brethren composed several documents to clarify their beliefs:
 - The Message of the Brethren Ministry
 - Dr. J. L. Gillin was a prominent leader of the Brethren Church. He led a liberal movement within the denomination. For example, he stated at the Annual Conference in 1915 that it was unnecessary for Brethren to believe in the deity of Christ.
 - The National Ministerial Association appointed a committee to write a statement of faith. This document was not a creed, but explained some of the important beliefs of the Brethren.
 - Dr. Alva J. McClain wrote “The Message of the Brethren Ministry.” It was adopted by the National Ministerial Association and endorsed by the National Conference of 1938.
 - The “Message of the Brethren Ministry” rallied the evangelicals within the denomination and the liberal influence quickly disappeared.
 - The Statement of Faith of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches¹
 - The National Conference elected a committee in 1967 to clarify and strengthen “The Message of the Brethren Ministry.” This committee was led by Dr. Russell D. Barnard.
 - The National Conference unanimously adopted the “Statement of Faith of the National Fellowship of Brethren Churches” in August 1969.
 - The title of the document was later changed to “Statement of Faith of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches,” in keeping with the revised name of the group.
 - Resolutions adopted by the National Conference
 - Occasionally the Brethren have seen the need to issue a position statement regarding theological issues of contemporary debate. In each case these

¹ See Appendix 1 at the end of this chapter.

issues are not sufficiently addressed by the Statement of Faith, but are important enough to warrant a declaration from the entire Fellowship.

- In more recent decades the Annual Conference has appointed both a Resolutions Committee and a Committee on Social Concerns. Together these committees bring contemporary issues before the Conference with a recommended statement of our position.
- Some contemporary issues are of such great importance that the Grace Brethren have adopted a series of “Continuing Resolutions” to declare our position. These Continuing Resolutions have become almost as significant as the Statement of Faith in defining the beliefs of the Grace Brethren.
- In the 21st Century, the Foreign Missionary Society of the Grace Brethren Church (dba “Encompass World Partners”) has recognized the importance of allowing well-established Brethren congregations in other countries to exercise the same autonomous governance that American Brethren enjoy. To that end, the Brethren of other nations have formed the Charis Alliance and established a forum for cooperation and ongoing witness: The Charis Commitment to Common Identity – to be discussed on pages 356-361.²

2. Analysis of the FGBC Statement of Faith

- Prologue:

“We of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, in harmony with our historic position, believing the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible to be our infallible rule of faith and of practice, and feeling our responsibility to make known the divine message of the Bible, present the following articles as a statement of those basic truths taught in the Bible which are common to our Christian faith and practice.”

- The Bible³

“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 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).”

² See Appendix 2 at the end of this chapter.

³ See “Bibliology: What the Bible Teaches about Itself,” pp. 11-29 of this syllabus.

- The One True God⁴

“Existing eternally as three persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).”

- The Lord Jesus Christ⁵

“His preexistence and deity (John 1:1-3), incarnation by virgin birth (John 1:14; Matthew 1:18-23), sinless life (Hebrews 4:15), substitutionary death (2 Corinthians 5:21), bodily resurrection (Luke 24:36-43), ascension into heaven and present ministry (Hebrews 4:14-16) and coming again (Acts 1:11).”

- The Holy Spirit⁶

“His personality (John 16:7-15); and deity (Acts 5:3-4); and His work in each believer: baptism and indwelling at the moment of regeneration (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9); and filling (Ephesians 5:18) to empower for Christian life and service (Ephesians 3:16; Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:22-23).”

- Man⁷

“His direct creation in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28), his subsequent fall into sin resulting in spiritual death (Genesis 3:1-24; Romans 5:12), and the necessity of the new birth for his salvation (John 3:3-5).”

- Salvation⁸

“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 (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 1:18-19).”

- The Church⁹

“One true Church, the body and bride of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25-32), composed of all true believers of the present age (1 Corinthians 12:12-13); and the organization of its members in local churches for worship, for edification of believers,

⁴ See “Theology Proper: What the Bible Says about God Himself” (Parts 1 and 2), pp. 31-55 of this syllabus.

⁵ See “Christology: What the Bible Says about Christ,” pp. 57-87 of this syllabus.

⁶ See “Pneumatology: What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit,” pp. 89-107 of this syllabus.

⁷ See “Anthropology: What the Bible Says about Man,” pp. 120-131 of this syllabus; and “Hamartiology: What the Bible Says about Sin,” pp. 155-160 of this syllabus.

⁸ See “Soteriology: What the Bible Says about Salvation” (Parts 1 and 2), pp. 161-202 of this syllabus.

⁹ See “Ecclesiology: What the Bible Says about the Church” (Parts 1 and 2), pp. 265-289 of this syllabus.

and for world-wide gospel witness, each local church being autonomous but cooperating in fellowship and work (Ephesians 4:11-16)."

- The Christian Life¹⁰

"A life of righteousness, good works, and separation unto God from the evil ways of the world (Romans 12:1-2), manifested by speaking the truth (James 5:12), maintaining the sanctity of the home (Ephesians 5:22-6:4), settling differences between Christians in accordance with the Word of God (1 Corinthians 6:1-8), not engaging in carnal strife but showing a Christ-like attitude toward all men (Romans 12:17-21), exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), and maintaining a life of prayer (Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 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)."

- Ordinances

"The Christian should observe the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, which are (1) baptism of believers by triune immersion (Matthew 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 Corinthians 11:20-22, 33-34; Jude 12), and the communion of the bread and the cup (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)."

-- Brethren believe that Christian water baptism is a symbolic ordinance reserved for believers, and that the appropriate mode of baptism should be triune immersion.

- The method of baptism

- We baptize _____

- We baptize _____

We don't baptize anyone without a profession of faith.

We don't baptize babies.

We don't baptize by proxy.¹¹

¹⁰ See "Evidence: What the Bible Says about the Christian Life," pp. 203-223 of this syllabus.

¹¹ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (both Mormon and Reformed) encourage their people to be baptized by proxy for persons who have already died, in the hope of ensuring salvation for the dead. They base this practice upon their interpretation of 1st Corinthians 15:29. However, Ephesians 2:8-9 make it clear that we are added to God's family, not by works (either works that we perform or that others perform on our behalf) but by inner faith in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Luke 16's story of the Rich Man and Lazarus shows that at the time of

- We baptize _____

We don't baptize by sprinkling.

We don't baptize by pouring.

- We baptize _____

THE BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL BASIS OF TRIUNE IMMERSION

(A fuller treatment of this material is found in Appendix 3 at the end of the chapter)

(1) This form satisfies the elliptical formula of Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19 –
 "...immersing them in the name of the Father, and (immersing them in the name) of the Son, and (immersing them in the name) of the Holy Spirit."

(2) This form duplicates the example of the first 800 years of church history.

(3) This form is the most graphic way to illustrate the truths of salvation:

- Cleansing from sin (Acts 22:16)
- New life in Christ (Romans 6:3-4)
- Absorption into the Body of Christ (1st Corinthians 12:13)
- Belief in, identification with, and worship of the Triune God (Matthew 28:19)

- Brethren believe that the Communion Ceremony is a symbolic ordinance reserved for believers, and that it should include the symbol of Christ's _____ ministry to the believer (cleansing), the symbol of Christ's _____ ministry (celebration), and the symbol of Christ's _____ ministry (crucifixion).

death every human being goes to one of two places, and that there is no crossing from one compartment to the other after death. Therefore, the best explanation of verse 29 seems to be that, after your Christian relative dies, you may decide to come to Jesus – and to be baptized in His name – because you want to be reunited with those loved ones in Heaven.

THE BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL BASIS OF THREEFOLD COMMUNION
(A fuller treatment of this material is found in Appendix 4 at the end of the chapter)

(1) Washing the Saints' Feet

- Christ commanded it (John 13:1-17)
- The 1st Century Christians practiced it (1st Timothy 5:10)
- The first several hundred years of church history demonstrate that it was regularly included as part of the Communion service

(2) The Love Feast, or Lord's Supper

- Christ instituted it (Luke 22:17; 1st Corinthians 11:33)
- The 1st Century Christians practiced it (1st Corinthians 11; Jude 12; Acts 2:42; 6:1)
- The first several hundred years of church history demonstrate that it was normally the context in which the other elements of the Communion took place.

(3) The Eucharist (the Bread and Cup)

- Christ commanded it (Luke 22:19; 1st Corinthians 11:24-25)
- The 1st Century Christians practiced it (1st Corinthians 11:26-30)
- For the entire length of church history, the Bread and Cup have been regarded as an essential and regular element of worship.

- Satan¹²

"His existence and personality as the great adversary of God and His people (Revelation 12:1-12), his judgment (John 12:31), and final doom (Revelation 20:10)."

- The Second Coming of Christ¹³

¹² See "Angelology, Satanology, Demonology: What the Bible Says about Angels, Satan, and Demons," pp. 143-153 of this syllabus.

¹³ See "Eschatology: The Doctrine of Future Things" (Parts 1 and 2), pp. 291-342 of this syllabus.

“The personal, visible, and imminent return of Christ to remove His Church from the earth (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) before the tribulation (1 Thessalonians 1:10; Revelation 3:10), and afterward to descend with the Church to establish His millennial kingdom upon the earth (Revelation 19:11-20:6).”

- Future Life¹⁴

“The conscious existence of the dead (Philippians 1:21-23; Luke 16:19-31), the resurrection of the body (John 5:28-29), the judgment and reward of believers (Romans 14:10-12; 2nd Corinthians 5:10), the judgment and condemnation of unbelievers (Revelation 10:11-15), the eternal life of the saved (John 3:16), and the eternal punishment of the lost (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:15).”

¹⁴ See “Eschatology: The Doctrine of Future Things” (Part 1), especially pp. 316-323 of this syllabus.

Appendix 1

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).

Appendix 2

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 God¹ 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

Appendix 3

What Is Baptism?

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I. THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

Christ commanded His disciples, “God therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit....”

This wasn’t the first time the disciples had heard of baptism. Baptism was frequently used as a symbol of ceremonial cleansing. When John the Baptist began to preach a baptism of repentance, his hearers were already well aware of the significance of such a gesture as a sign of cleansing from sin.

The New Testament word translated “baptize” is actually a term that has a narrow meaning. It’s the Greek for of the verb, “to immerse, to dip, to dunk.” Sprinkling isn’t baptism in the strictest sense; nor is “affusion” (pouring water on the head). Immersion is the only method of baptism which obeys the command of Christ regarding Christian water baptism.

II. THE METHOD OF BAPTISM

We baptize in water. The symbolic act of Christian water baptism serves as an important picture, illustrating several things that are true about your salvation experience.

We baptize believers only. We never baptize babies. If salvation is something which comes as a result of an intelligent, personal commitment to Jesus Christ, then babies are unable to understand the need for salvation and the baptism that symbolizes it.

We baptize by total immersion. As you’ll see in Part III, “The Reasons for Baptism,” the only baptism that can fully illustrate your salvation is a baptism in which your whole body is immersed.

We baptize by triune (or “trine”, three-in-one) immersion. There are two major reasons why we do this:

- a. *The words of Christ’s command favor this method of Christian water baptism.*

Matthew 28:19 is a sentence structure called an ellipsis. The sentence makes perfect sense to us, even though some of the words are deleted in the interest of verbal economy. You could add back the words and read it like this:

“...immersing them in the name of the Father, and immersing them in the name of the Son, and immersing them in the name of the Holy Spirit.”

If you walk into a local ice cream shop and say to the clerk, “Please give me a cone with a dip of chocolate and of vanilla and of strawberry,” the clerk will bring you a cone with *three dips*, because he understood your common elliptical sentence to mean, “Please bring me a cone with a dip of chocolate and a dip of vanilla and a dip of strawberry.”

If we understand Jesus’ words in Matthew 28:9 as implying a triple immersion we are allowing for a perfectly acceptable interpretation of His command.

But that’s not all! There’s another crucial piece of evidence for trine immersion!

- b. *The overwhelming evidence from church history demands that we use trine immersion as our method of Christian water baptism.*

Trine immersion wasn’t invented by the Grace Brethren. The written records of church history show that, for almost a thousand years after Jesus returned to heaven, trine immersion was considered the normal, orthodox, acceptable way to baptizing new believers. In fact, churches were often accused of heresy if they practiced any other method.

The following are excerpts from *Baptism in Scripture and Art*, by Rev. John T. Christian (Louisville, KY: Baptist Book Concern, 1907). Rev. Christian’s book attempted to prove the validity of immersion for the benefit of Baptist readers. In the process, he actually proved the validity of *trine* immersion.

(In) the Catacomb pictures ... of the act of baptism, as practiced by the churches, there is not a particle of doubt. It was performed from the time of Tertullian (2nd Century) by immersion, and indeed, generally by trine immersion (p. 55).

The Egyptian Church Acts require that certain deacons enter with the one to be baptized; the presbyter asks for the candidate’s confession, and “he shall immerse him three times, while he makes confession every time of his faith” (p. 55).

Jerome in the fourth century says: “We are dipped in water that the mystery of the Trinity may appear to be but one, and therefore, though we be thrice put under the water to represent the mystery of the Trinity, yet it is reputed but one baptism” (p. 58).

Gregory the Great, in the sixth century, says: “Let the priest baptize with a triple immersion, but with only one invocation of the Holy Trinity, saying, ‘I baptize thee in the name of the Father’ (then let him immerse the person once) ...” (p. 59).

Theodulf of Orleans gives the general practice of the eighth century. He says, “We are buried with Christ when we descend into the font of washing as unto a sepulchre, and are immersed three times in the name of the holy Trinity...” (p. 59).

The Didache, the Catacomb pictures, Greek and Latin, are in essential harmony on this point, and thus confirm one another. They all bear witness to trine immersion as the rule, and effusion or pouring as an exception. This view is supported by the best scholars, Greek, Latin, and Protestant (p 110).

There are several pictures which represent the baptism of Constantine (early fourth century). The earliest of these is set down by Hemans at a.d. 1140.... The claim is that Constantine was afflicted with leprosy and at the time of baptism by trine immersion he was healed (pp. 195-196).

Wharton B. Marriott, Episcopalian, says: “Triple immersion, that is thrice dipping the head while standing in the water, was all but the universal rule of the church in early times. Of this we find proof in Africa, in Palestine, in Egypt, at Antioch and Constantinople, in Cappadocia. The Apostolical Canons (350-400 a.d.), alike in the Greek, the Coptic, and Latin versions, give special injunctions as to the observance, saying that any bishop or presbyter should be deposed who violated this rule” (p. 231).

So where along the line did the Church stop baptizing by trine immersion, and why? If it was the method that Jesus intended (as this evidence supports), why haven't evangelical, Bible-believing churches generally adopted it in their baptism ceremonies?

It could be that, during the Dark Ages, the institutional Church began to promote the concept of infant baptism. Since babies were often upset by the prospect of being totally immersed (even once!), the traditions of the Church gradually allowed for (and eventually prescribed) baptism by sprinkling. By the time evangelicalism arose and “believer's baptism” was reintroduced, the significance of trine immersion was lost in the fervor to return to immersion. Today most evangelical Christians have never heard of trine immersion, because most pastors haven't heard of it, because most Bible colleges and seminaries dismiss it as an insignificant relic of ancient church history.

But those of us who have found a kinship among the Brethren are convinced that trine immersion is the method of baptism that our Lord Jesus intended that we should practice. Because *it is the best possible way to picture salvation*. Here's what I mean:

III. THE REASONS FOR BAPTISM

We baptize because Jesus commanded it. If that were the only reason in existence, it would be enough! He said in Matthew 28:19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them....” In Mark 16:16 He warned, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.” In Acts 2:38 Peter said, “Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Every Christian should be baptized in order to obey and to please the Lord Jesus. Every church leader should urge new Christians to be baptized. Jesus said so!

We baptize because it's a public ceremony. In Matthew 10:32-33 Jesus said, “Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven.” Our Lord wants us to let the world know that we are Christians. A public ceremony of baptism is the most logical occasion for that testimony.

We baptize because it's the best outward symbol we can use to show what God has done for us inwardly.

- a. *“The sins have been washed from my heart!”*

In Acts 22:16 Ananias said to Paul, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.” Paul’s sins were in his heart, not on his skin. The baptism merely represented what God had already done to cleanse him.

As you are baptized, you are saying to the audience, “Look, folks! Just as this water is washing completely over my body, God has completely washed the guilt from my life!”

- b. *“My old life has ended, and I've been raised to a new life because of connection to Jesus Christ!”*

Romans 6:3-4 uses the term “baptism” to describe the wonderful transformation that has taken place in the life of a new Christian. “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized in His death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

As you are baptized, you are saying to the audience, “Look, friends! Just as my body is being lowered into the water, Jesus has buried; and his death counted for me. And just as I am being raised up from this water, Jesus rose again; and I have a new life because of my connection to him!”

- c. *“I've been absorbed in the Body of Christ, the Church!”*

First Corinthians 12:13 is another place where “baptism” is used to describe a spiritual truth. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

At the moment of your salvation, the Holy Spirit paced you into the family of God. As you are baptized, you are saying, “Look! Just as my body is being absorbed into this water, I have been absorbed into the Christian family. I’m one of you now!”

- d. “*Each Person of the blessed Trinity has had a very special part in saving me!*”

Matthew 28:19 is the only Scripture where Jesus himself gives us the verbal formula to use in the baptism ceremony: “...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit....”

Why not baptize “in the name of Jesus” only? Because Christian water baptism is unlike any other water ritual. In Old Testament days, the priests washed themselves to signify inner purity. John the Baptist baptized people to show cleansing from sin. Jesus has elevated the symbol to a new level of meaning. Christians are baptized in the name of the Triune God. At our baptism we demonstrate that we believe in the existence of a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit, each of whom has had a profound impact on our lives.

To be baptized “in the name of the Father” is to say to the audience, “Look, my brothers and sisters! I bow to God the Father, to show that I believe in Him, and to show that I love and worship Him. He loved me enough to send His Son and to forgive my sins. I am baptized in His name!”

As you are baptized “in the name of the Son,” you are saying, “Look, church! I bow to the Son of God. I believe in Him. I love and worship Him. He died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins. I am baptized in His name!”

When one is baptized “in the name of the Holy Spirit,” it sends this message: “Look, all who watching! I bow myself to the Holy Spirit of God. I believe in Him; I worship and adore Him. He has entered my body and He dwells in me forever, giving me life. I am baptized in His name!”

If Christian water baptism were only meant to symbolize points a, b, and c, then single immersion would be the best method. But the unique feature of *Christian* baptism is that it publicly symbolizes one’s connection to the *Triune God*. Trine immersion is the method that most clearly demonstrates this truth. I believe that’s why Jesus intended for us to be baptized in this way.

IV. CONCERNING RE-BAPTISM

Within the Brethren Church, there has long been disagreement on the question, “Should we require all who are part of our congregation to be baptized by trine immersion before they may be recognized as official members?” This debate has distracted the Grace Brethren Fellowship from attending to weightier matters. It has divided families. It has split the Fellowship into fragments. Speaking personally, there was a time when I was in the midst of this heated debate; frankly, I believed and taught that trine immersion was so important that it ought to be a prerequisite for Brethren Church membership.

In these latter days, I have begun to see that while the *doctrine* of trine immersion may be an important topic of teaching in our churches (and certainly the method we ought to use when baptizing new believers), the *insistence* upon trine immersion as a prerequisite for Brethren Church membership (when the candidate for membership has already been baptized by immersion) is unnecessarily harsh and exclusivist.

In my experience as a pastor, I often welcomed new people to the programs of our local church – people who had accepted Christ in the past and who had been baptized then as a testimony to their faith in him – except that it was a different mode of baptism than trine immersion. I always said, “Praise the Lord for that high point in your walk with Christ!” No Christian should ever be made to feel that his/her previous baptism experience was somehow deficient.

There may be reasons why a prospective transfer member might consider the unusual step of being baptized again by trine immersion. But I have known people who did it for the wrong reasons, and regretted their decision afterward. And I have known church leaders who took one of two extremes in coaxing people toward re-baptism. Either they made too much of trine immersion by casting doubt on the validity of a previous baptism; or they made too little of trine immersion by urging people to “jump through a hoop” – being re-baptized under pressure by men rather than as act of worship to the Triune God.

Appendix 4

What Is Communion?

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I. THE DEFINITION OF COMMUNION

“An ordinance designed to remind the believer of Christ’s ministries for him, and to give the believer opportunity to display active love for Christ.”

II. THE COMPONENTS OF COMMUNION

a. *The Washing of the Saints’ Feet*

(1) It’s an order from Christ.

- It is clearly commanded.

The whole background to the ceremony comes to us out of that story in John 13:1-17. There are three places in this story where Jesus clearly commands and expects his followers to go through these same motions: “You ought to wash one another’s feet” (v.14). “I have given you an example, that you should do as I did to you” (v. 15). “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (v 17). The grammar of this last example makes it apparent that Jesus wanted his disciples to continually, repeatedly do what he had just shown them.

- There are signs that they did it.

The chief biblical example is in 1st Timothy 5:10. Paul tells Timothy to make sure that widows are taken care of in the church if they meet certain conditions. One condition is, “if she has washed the saints’ feet” – a clear reference to John 13.

- The early church practiced a Communion that included the Washing of Feet: Irenaeus, 100-200 a.d.; Tertullian, 160-190 a.d.; and Augustine, 350 a.d.

(2) It’s a symbolic rite.

- The physical act involves “re-cleaning” the feet after walking from the public bath.

- The invisible idea is not merely a lesson in humility, but a picture of the cleansing needed in order to enjoy fellowship with Christ.
- The effect to the believer: The Washing of Feet reminds us of the *present* ministry of Christ, a ministry that he performs every day of one's life.

b. *The Lord's Supper / Agapé / Love Feast*

(1) It's an order from Christ.

- It is clearly commanded.

Just as John 13 is the only place where Jesus is quoted commanding the Washing of Feet, Luke 22:17 is the only place where Christ commands us to perpetuate this Meal of Love. In 1st Corinthians 11, Paul talks about the Love Feast as though it were something the Christians were doing regularly. Verse 33 gives this command: "So then my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another."

- There are signs that they did it.

There are at least four places in the New Testament indicating that Christians were in the habit of practicing the Love Feast: 1st Corinthians 11; Jude 12; Acts 2:42; and Acts 6:1.

- Strong evidence comes from the documents of the church after the first century that the normal Communion services included the Agapé: Clement of Alexandria, 195 a.d.; Tertullian, 190 a.d.; and Origen, 225 a.d.

(2) It's a symbolic rite.

- The physical act involves a fellowship dinner.

In the Upper Room on the night Jesus gave the command, he and his disciples were enjoying a meal that brought them together. Jesus was savoring that sweet fellowship with them, because he knew it would be a long time before they would fellowship again.

- The invisible idea is that there's something to look forward to.

Someday when all of the Christians are gathered home to heaven, Christ and his Bride, the Church, will be united forever. To celebrate, we're going to have the

biggest wedding reception ever! The Lord Jesus must have been thinking about this very thing when he passed around the cup. “And when he had taken a cup and given thanks, he said, ‘Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes’” (Luke 22:17-18).

Sure enough, Revelation 19:6-9 describes that great day: “And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready.’ And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, ‘Write, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”’”

- The effect to the believer is to aid our anticipation of Christ’s *future* ministry for us. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3).

c. *The Eucharist (Bread and Cup)*

(1) It’s an order from Christ.

- It is clearly commanded.

Notice that in Luke 19, Jesus passed the cup around the table *twice*. The first time (verses 17-18), as noted above, he made the cup a symbol of the future Feast in the Kingdom. The second time, along with the sharing of bread, he passed the cup to signify his sacrificial death. “And when he had taken some bread and given thanks, he broke it and give it to them, saying ‘This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ And in the same way he took the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’” (Luke 22:19-20).

- There are signs that they did it.

From Scripture (as in 1st Corinthians 11:26-30).

From church history (as evidenced in every period since the time of Christ).

(2) It’s a symbolic rite.

- The physical act involves eating bread and drinking wine/juice.

- The invisible idea behind the act is that we benefit from Christ's death.
- The effect to the believer is to serve as a memorial of Christ's *past* ministry for us.

III. SOME RELATED QUESTIONS

a. When did the Church drop the Washing of Feet and the Love Feast? Why?

- (1) In 150 a.d., they began to separate the components.
- (2) By 300 a.d., many had abolished the components that were being abused (see 1st Corinthians 11:17-22).

It seems to this writer that the Church should have devised a way to keep the Washing of Feet and the Love Feast by correcting the abuses rather than ending the practice. In fact, it appears that the present practice among the Brethren has done precisely this, by limiting the quantity of food served, and by switching from wine to unfermented grape juice.

b. Is it really "Communion" without the Washing of Feet and the Love Feast?

- (1) There is a clear, biblical command to practice each component.

It is puzzling to see the lengths to which some of our evangelical friends (the same evangelical friends who are so careful to observe all of Christ's other commands) will go to rationalize away those commands. It seems as though they are trying to find excuses for ignoring the obvious simply because they never saw it before.

- (2) There is no clear, biblical command to practice all three components together at the same time.
- (3) However, several arguments favor practicing the three elements together as parts of one Communion:

- The three elements were given together by Christ.

All three symbols came out of that Upper Room on the night before the crucifixion. It seems that, in the mind of Jesus, the three commands had some close connection with each other.

- The early Church assumed that they were to be practiced together.

How do we know? According to their own writings, the early Church practiced a Communion that was composed of all three elements. Their proximity to the time, language, and culture in which the Lord gave the commands would suggest that they correctly interpreted his intent.

- The full picture of Christ's ministry is achieved only when all three are practiced together.

The Washing of Feet depicts the present ministry of Christ. The Agape is a symbol of his future ministry for us. The Eucharist pictures what he did for us in the past.

- The Scriptures don't give priority to any one of the three parts.

A typical non-Brethren method for dismissing the Washing of Feet as having no place in the Communion is to argue that the Eucharist is mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) while the Washing of Feet is mentioned only by John. Their reasoning is that, if the Washing of Feet were so important, it would have been mentioned in the Synoptics. The flaw in this argument becomes apparent when it is pointed out that the doctrine of the New Birth is laid out in John's Gospel alone, and yet the non-Brethren critics embrace it as a cardinal element of biblical soteriology.

Furthermore, in response to this approach we must point out, as stated above, that Luke's Gospel demonstrates that Jesus passed the Cup around the table twice, and that the Cup bore different significance each time. We must also point out that 1st Corinthians 11:20-22 is nonsense if the "Lord's Supper" consists only of a small taste of bread and wine. Gluttony and drunkenness are impossible unless there is a sizable quantity of food and drink available at the table.

In the Letter of Jude (verse 12), the Love Feast is mentioned (with the word "feasting" added as additional proof that a sizable meal is in view) as the context in which false teachers have promoted their heresies.

Someone has observed that Brethren who wish to observe only the Eucharist ought to provide an equally important opportunity for the observance of the Washing of Feet, and yet another opportunity for the observance of the Love Feast. (On the latter note, it should be emphasized that the Love Feast was more than just a "potluck dinner." It was a dinner with a purpose: looking ahead to the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. Therefore, it ought to be an event that includes singing and testimonies.)

- c. What is the status of a Christian who doesn't participate in Communion?

This is a personal, practical, and crucial question. One of the causes for weakness and failure in the lives of so many Christians, the cause of stagnancy and stunted growth in so many churches, can be traced to the fact that so many church members either are regularly absent from the Communion or partake "unworthily" (1st Corinthians 11:27). The Word of God has some grave things to say about a believer who regards Communion so lightly.

- (1) He is ignoring what Christ has done for him.

1st Corinthians 11:26 – "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." This implies that if a person does not participate in Communion, he is *not* proclaiming the Lord's death. He is ignoring what Jesus Christ has done on his behalf. What an insult this is to One who has shown such love!

- (2) He is disobeying Christ.

John 13:14 – "You ought to wash one another's feet." If a person deliberately stays away from the service where this part of the Communion is being obeyed, he is placing himself in rebellion against the One who commanded it.

- (3) He can't be blessed.

John 13:17 – "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." How often do we pray for God to bless us, when all the time he would love to bless us if only we would do the things he has commanded? If a Christian doesn't sense the blessing of God on his life, that Christian ought to ask, "How long has it been since I partook of Communion with a clean heart?"

- (4) He can't count Christ as his friend.

John 15:14 – "You are my friend, if you do what I have commanded you." A person shouldn't bother singing "What A Friend We Have in Jesus" if that person has not been joining his fellow believers regularly in Communion.

- (5) He isn't encouraging others.

Hebrews 10:24-25 – "Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our assembling together as some do, but encouraging one another; and so much more as you see the Day approaching."

Communion is the most precious and most clearly required of all the services we enjoy with other believers. At Communion, Christians encourage one another, they show their love for one another, they enjoy the fellowship of just being together. These are things that are to be expected of every member of the Body. So when a member of the Body absents himself from this most moving of events, he is sending a message to the rest of the church: “I don’t care about the group.”

One day in the past, Jesus shed his blood and allowed his body to be broken at the cross. He did it for us. He gave us a symbol to remind ourselves of what it cost him to pay the penalty for our sins and to get us to heaven.

Today he lives to make intercession for us. He is in heaven right now, hearing our prayers, cleansing our sins, making us vessels of honor, fit for his use. He does it for us. He gave us a symbol to refresh our memories and to help us appreciate what he is doing for us today.

There is a future day coming when we’ll be whisked home to heaven to be with him, to see him face to face, to celebrate our union with him at a great and glorious Feast. He’s going to do it all for us. He gave us a symbol to help us anticipate the tremendous ministry he’s going to perform for us on that day.

Communion is just a word that means “sharing.” The Communion service is the one thing we Christians can do together that celebrates everything we are and have together as the family of God. It’s a beautiful, rich, blessed gathering of brothers and sisters in Christ. It’s far too special for any Christian to purposely skip it or to regard it lightly.

Answer Key

Truth
Fellowship
Pietist
Fundamentalist
In water
Believers
By total immersion
By triple action
Present
Future
Past

Resources

Christian, John T. *Baptism in Scripture and Art*. Louisville, KY: Baptist Book Concern, 1907.

Etling, Harold. *Our Heritage: Brethren Beliefs and Practices*. Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1975.

Martin, Dennis D. "The Message of the Brethren Ministry," in *The Brethren Encyclopedia, Volume 2* (pages 817-818). Philadelphia, PA, and Oak Brook, IL: The Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc., 1983.

Assignments for Next Segment ("Other Brethren Beliefs and Practices") (1/6/18)

1. Read "Other Historical Beliefs and Practices of the Brethren" (pages 376-386 following).
2. Answer these questions:
 - a. Where do you find common ground between the Grace Brethren and other evangelicals?
 - b. Where do you find differences between the Grace Brethren and other evangelicals?
 - c. On which points do you agree or disagree with the historical beliefs/practices and the resolutions of the Grace Brethren?

**Grace Brethren Beliefs and Practices, Part Two:
Other Brethren Beliefs and Practices**

Nonresistance

1. Definition: The Brethren believe that the Christian must be ready to endure wrong treatment, persecution, or attack without violent defense or retaliation.
2. Biblical basis
 - Matthew 5:39-40
 - Romans 12:19
3. Brethren application
 - Nonresistance in war
 - Statement of the Annual Conference, October 29, 1949:

“We reaffirm our historic position with regard to war; namely, ‘that the Brethren Church from her origin has maintained that the use of violence or physical force, as a means to an end, on the part of God’s children, is contrary to Holy Writ.’”
 - In applying this principle when citizens are required by law to join the military, the Brethren Church has historically urged its members to volunteer for noncombatant duties whenever possible.
 - Since 1950 the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches has allowed each individual to make his own decision regarding military service.
 - Since 1970 there has been very little teaching on this subject in the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches. Careers in combatant military service and civil law enforcement are regarded by most evangelical Christians (including Grace Brethren) as honorable pursuits. Numerous ordained men serve as military and police chaplains.
 - Nonresistance in peace
 - Matthew 5:39-40 and 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 are the passages most relevant to this topic.

- When there is a dispute between Christians, it is clear that the believer must not pursue justice in the secular court. Rather, the dispute must be decided within the church. In the USA, there are organizations like Peacekeeper Ministries to help Christians resolve conflict without involving civil courts.
- When there is a dispute between a Christian and a non-Christian, the believer must “go the second mile” and display a gracious and generous spirit to the non-believer.

Non-Swearing

1. Definition: An oath is the strongest declaration of truth, calling upon God as witness to the truth and avenger of untruth. The Brethren believe that the Bible forbids the Christian to take an oath.
2. Biblical basis:
 - Matthew 5:33-37
 - James 5:12
3. Brethren practice
 - Traditionally, the Brethren have discouraged its people from joining any society that requires members to take an oath of secrecy – example: Freemasonry.
 - Traditionally, the Brethren have discouraged its people from “swearing to tell the truth” in a court of law.

Laying on of Hands

1. Definition: The Brethren believe it is appropriate to place hands on the head as a symbolic expression of blessing. The practice has often been referred to as “confirmation.” The practice was regarded as an ordinance of the church (on the same level with baptism and communion) in the *Message of the Brethren Ministry*, but is not listed as an ordinance in the *Statement of Faith of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches*.

“Brethren do not believe that their hands have supernatural or sacramental power as they lay them on another person. The value is symbolic; the act symbolizes giving as well as receiving the Holy Spirit. Those who impose hands are agents of God and represent

*the imparting of God's love, blessing, and power.” (H. Z. Bomberger, “Laying on of Hands,” *The Brethren Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, p. 731).*

2. Biblical basis

- To confer blessing (Genesis 48:18; Matt. 19:13, 15)
- To accompany baptism (Acts 8:17-18)
- To ordain leaders (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Timothy 4:14)

3. Brethren practice: The laying on of hands is practiced in connection with these ceremonies:

- Baptism
- Dedication of infants
- Anointing the sick with oil
- Ordination of elders (and sometimes deacons)
- Commissioning of missionaries

The Holy Kiss

1. Definition: The kiss is an expression of love and fellowship. The Brethren believe it is God's will that Christians greet one another with a “holy kiss.”

2. Biblical basis

- Romans 16:16
- 1 Corinthians 16:20
- 2 Corinthians 13:12
- 1 Thessalonians 5:26
- 1 Peter 5:14

3. Brethren practice

- The holy kiss is to be observed only among believers.
- The holy kiss is to be observed among all believers.
- The holy kiss is to be observed in a sanctified way.
- The holy kiss is subject to cultural guidelines. A handshake or embrace may be offered in place of a kiss.
- Among Grace Brethren in the USA, the holy kiss is usually practiced exclusively in connection with the washing of feet.

Continuing Resolutions of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches

Sanctity of Human Life

(From 1982; made a Continuing Resolution in 1985) *Human life is worthy of respect and protection at all stages from the time of conception. The sanctity of human life is established by creation (Genesis 1:26-27), social protection (Genesis 9:6) and redemption (John 3:16).*

(Added in 1996) *We sympathize with the plight of childless married couples who desire offspring, but who are unable to conceive. We oppose, however, new fertilization techniques which do not respect the unique worth of each new conceived life and which cheapen life by treating it as simply the property of another.*

Religious Freedom

(From 1987) *We commend the efforts of our governmental leaders, which strive to preserve the free exercise of religion guaranteed in the First Amendment of the Constitution.*

We express our strong objection to those efforts in government which would move the state away from 'benevolent neutrality' to religion toward a secularistic 'anti-religion' attitude, and which would reshape our nation as a secularist state.

We believe the free exercise of religion includes such activities as:

1. *Freedom to meet in public places and in private homes for worship, Bible study, prayer, and evangelism, including freedom for our children to have equal access to the use of public school facilities for such purposes.*
2. *Freedom to operate private schools to instruct our children in the relation of our faith and values to all life.*
3. *Freedom to determine the qualifications for membership in our churches and schools and to exercise discipline on the basis of these qualifications.*
4. *Freedom to determine the standards for employees of our churches and schools, and to discharge employees who fail to maintain these standards.*
5. *Freedom to offer personal and family counseling according to the teachings of the Bible to those who seek it, without being licensed by a state agency, and without fear of reprisal from those who do not agree with the counseling.*
6. *Freedom to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others both publicly and privately.*
7. *Freedom to teach and practice what we believe the Bible teaches about morals, sexuality, personal relationships, private and public conduct, and all other matters that come within the scope of our religious concerns.*
8. *Freedom to strive to influence public policy from the perspective of our Christian values.*

Personal Commitment

(From 1988) *We resolve as a national fellowship of churches, as local churches, and as individuals:*

- *To make four personal commitments.*
 1. *To spend quality time with Jesus Christ in the Word and in prayer.*
 2. *To fellowship with and minister to the body of Christ.*
 3. *To present the gospel to our friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors.*
 4. *To live this day as though Christ would return momentarily.*
- *To make four prayer commitments.*
 1. *To pray daily for spiritual revival.*
 2. *To pray daily for five unsaved people – “a handful for Christ.”*
 3. *To pray daily for our pastors, missionaries, and other spiritual leaders.*
 4. *To pray daily for those in authority.*

Homosexuality

(From 2000) We do not believe that the practice of homosexuality excludes anyone from the fundamental rights and respect that are properly due to all persons because of their inclusion in the human race (as image-bearers of God) or because of their citizenship.

We believe that the practice of same-sex sexual relations is contrary to the pattern of sexuality created by God and directed by his commandments.

We affirm marriage to be a monogamous and heterosexual covenant entered into before God and man. We oppose same-sex marriage and legally constituted “domestic partnership” arrangements that act as substitutes for the marriage covenant.

We oppose all governmental and corporate coercion that requires secular employees and religious organizations to acknowledge “domestic partnerships” in order to be full participants in civic or business affairs. No person or organization should lose rights because they do not support homosexual rights.

We oppose the introduction of “speech codes” or the forbidding of so-called “hate speech.” Such restrictions on speech lead to prohibiting, intimidating or discouraging people from expressing their convictions on homosexuality or being able to discuss or debate the issue in a reasonable way. We oppose the use of civil authorities to monitor such “hate speech.”

We affirm that it is virtually impossible for those in public education to discuss homosexuality (or other issues of human sexuality) in the absence of some kind of ethical framework. Educators should not presume that their policies and teaching are “value neutral” or “only healthy issues” and should approach such topics sensitive to and with a reasoned analysis of the ethical and religious issues involved.

Other Resolutions of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches

[Note: This is not a complete list, but a representation of Grace Brethren declarations on theological issues over the past 35 years.]

Capital Punishment (1977)

God is the author of all life, and human life is the highest of all His creative acts. God made man in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27; 9:6), hence all human life is sacred before Him since it reflects God Himself.

The act of murder has been plainly prohibited by God in the most basic laws He gave to Israel (Exodus 20:13). As defined, murder involves four elements: (1) a life is taken, (2) the life is taken intentionally, (3) the person whose life is taken is an innocent party, and (4)

there is a sinful motive involved in taking the life. God's Word states that all acts of murder should be considered as the most heinous of all crimes, punishable by the forfeiting of the life of the murderer (Gen. 9:6; Lev. 24:17, 21).

In view of the Biblical teaching regarding the sanctity of all human life and the seriousness of murder, we hereby resolve that: Abortion for convenience involves the four elements stated above pertain to murder. Thus abortion is an act of murder except in the critical case where death is assured for both mother and child without the performance of an abortion. We therefore resolve that the United States Supreme Court decision of January 12, 1973, allowing for abortion on demand is in opposition to God's Word.

The Bible teaches that in order to preserve the sanctity of human life, and to insure the safety and dignity of all people, the act of murder should be punished by the forfeiting of the life of the murderer (Gen. 9:6; Lev. 24:17, 21). Therefore, we resolve that capital punishment is a sacred responsibility given to government to be performed in all cases of deliberate and premeditated murder. The various Supreme Court decisions now in effect calling capital punishment "cruel and unusual punishment" are in opposition to the Word of God, and should be reversed to make capital punishment mandatory in the case of deliberate and premeditated murder.

Charismatic Movement (1979)

Very few churches are untouched by the Charismatic movement. Whereas a few years ago the practice of certain "charismatic phenomena" (speaking in tongues, emphasis on healing, the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" as a experience following conversion) was largely limited to specific churches and denominations labeled as "Pentecostal," these phenomena have now become common practices among Protestants of all shades and in the Roman Catholic community. Because of our loyalty to scriptural truth and because of our duty to be alert to modern-day trends and problems it behooves us as Brethren to evaluate this movement and set forth our position.

- 1. We give due credit to the movement for all its characteristics which the Scriptures would affirm. We take special note of its evangelistic zeal and the renewed interest in spiritual gifts throughout Christ's church which is due in part to the fact that this movement has called the church to reckon with a long-overlooked aspect of Biblical truth. We also commend this movement for its emphasis on genuine Christian fellowship, worship, and warmth which is readily apparent to everyone.*
- 2. We urge our pastors to educate themselves on the historical facts of this movement and on its doctrinal premises, so that informed answers to sincere questions can be received by members who have had some exposure to the movement.*

3. *Even more, we encourage a positive, affirmative approach to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the importance of the Spirit-filled walk, and specifically the operation of the gifts of the Spirit in the church today. Sometimes silence on the issue of spiritual gifts is read by “charismatic” individuals as a sign of denial or ignorance of the subject, thereby confirming in their minds the concepts they hear within the Charismatic movement. By all means, we urge that the necessary teaching and atmosphere be created to assist each individual Christian in finding and utilizing his own spiritual gift(s).*
4. *We express our conviction that in several crucial areas the doctrinal/practical position of the Charismatic movement is unscriptural. These areas include:*
 - a. *The stratification of believers into the two distinct categories of “Spirit-baptized” and “unbaptized” or “unfilled.” Such distinction is, we believe, indefensible in light of the Gospels (where believing in Jesus alone secures the Spirit once the Spirit has arrived at Pentecost), the Book of Acts (where one’s relationship to the Holy Spirit is determined by repentance and faith in Christ plus nothing) and the Epistles (where all believers are declared to be “baptized in the Spirit” and made partakers of Him). (John 7:37-39; Acts 2:38-39; 10:44-48; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:1-3; Eph.1:13-14).*
 - b. *The strong emphasis upon using personal experience as a guide to understanding the Scriptures rather than using the Scriptures as a judge of personal experience.*
 - c. *The emphasis on fellowship centered on (a sectarian understand of) the Holy Spirit rather than upon the overall work of the Trinity (Eph. 4:1-6). We believe that the Spirit’s interest is to uplift the Lord Jesus, not to draw unique attention to Himself. We do not believe that the Holy Spirit motivates people to be preoccupied with Him, but rather that He points us to the great unities of the faith common to all believers and calls on us to preserve the unity thereby created (Eph. 4:3). We reject the practice of trumpeting “Spirit-filled experiences” before men as being unnecessary and unscriptural.*
 - d. *The effort to “proof-text” the Book of Acts to prove that the gift of the Spirit comes after conversion and is usually, if not always, accompanied by speaking in tongues. We believe that the Book of Acts cannot be understood properly without regard to its dispensational uniqueness – that it spans the old and the new. In this light we understand the experience of the Apostles as historically unique and unrepeatable. No one today can fail to receive the gift of the Spirit at the moment of faith in Christ, for no one today lives part of his experience before the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.*
 - e. *The emphasis on healing as an unqualified present possession provided for all believers in the Atonement. We believe such a position cannot adequately explain what is yet reserved for the believer in his glorification (Phil. 3:21; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:53) nor the present experience of believers in this life (2 Cor. 12:7-10). We deplore*

the damage done to individual Christian experience when it is taught that illness betrays a lack of faith in God's promises. We insist that God has given no blanket promises for healing in our day and that to expect the same is to place faith in a word that is not there. However, we do confess that God does provide in keeping with his own purposes substantial healing for the whole person and we encourage prayer and ministry to this end (James 5:13-20).

f. The emphasis on "speaking in tongues" as a privilege available to every believer and extremely beneficial to one's spiritual life. In this regard we call attention to the following Biblical precepts:

(1) Scripture presents speaking in tongues as only one of many "charismatic gifts" (1 Cor. 12:8-10);

(2) Being a "charismatic" gift it is bestowed freely by God and is neither earned nor learned (1 Cor. 12:11);

(3) It never has been available to every believer (1 Cor. 12:30) and it is not essential to one's personal edification, for indeed it was not designed for that purpose (1 Cor. 12:7) nor would its private practice serve the believer's spiritual interests (1 Cor. 14:23). Rather than teaching that tongues always occurred only on rare and significant occasions when faith in Christ was realized (Acts 2:4; 10:44-47; 11:12-18; 19:1-6). We deplore the increasing practice of "training" people to speak in tongues, and we encourage a pastoral ministry to those who have become discouraged and disillusioned about their spiritual experiences because of such practices.

Creation vs. Evolution (1982)

We believe that God's work of creation constitutes a unique testimony to His power and His regard for man (Isa. 40:12-31). Since no human being observed God's original work of creation, we are totally dependent upon God's revelation in Scriptures for an understanding of how, in what sequence, and during what period of time God did this great work (Heb. 11:3). Therefore, we reaffirm our faith in the historical and scientific truth of the Genesis creation account and reject all compromising positions such as the theory of theistic evolution.

Prosperity Gospel (1983)

We affirm that Christ's death focuses primarily on man's sin problem, not his physical infirmities. Isaiah 53 presents Christ as the One who was crushed for our iniquities, the One on whom the Lord caused our iniquities to fall, the One who bore the sins of many (vv. 5-6,

12). We believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news about our sin problem (Rom. 3:23) because Christ died for our sins, not our sicknesses (1 Cor. 15:3). Christ was made sin (2 Cor. 5:21) and gave Himself for our sins (Gal. 1:4) in order to forgive our sins (1 John 2:12). We believe that when our bodies are no longer corruptible (1 Cor. 15:42-44) but have been redeemed through resurrection (Rom. 8:23), then Isaiah's prophecy of physical well-being (53:4) will be fully experienced – but not until then. In this life, regeneration is decidedly designed to provide spiritual health and not necessarily physical well-being (John 3:16; Rom. 6:23).

We also affirm that Christ saves people to bless them with spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:4) and not necessarily financial well-being. As Christians we are to walk in the spiritual works that are prepared for us (Eph. 2:10), not to expect to seek worldly wealth as our primary objective in life (Matt. 6:24). We believe that God chooses the poor of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom (James 2:5) not necessarily to be materially prosperous. Thus, Christians are to be content with either humble means or prosperity (Phil. 4:12). In fact, we believe that riches can even be a hindrance to being right with God rather than a help (Matt. 19:16-24; James 5:1-6).

Therefore, believing that a Christian's prime responsibility is not to seek physical "health and wealth" but rather God's kingdom and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33), we resolve that we should each commit ourselves afresh to the priority of living for the glory and pleasure of God (1 Cor. 10:31; Phil. 2:13) and to avoid the habits of regularly seeking God primarily for our own good and prosperity.

Ordination of Women (1991)

The Biblical office of elder/overseer is reserved for men and therefore the practice of licensing, ordaining, or placing women in the position of elder/overseer is a violation of the Word of God.

Bio-Ethics (1992)

We affirm, as the National Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, that:

1. *God is sovereign and the Creator of all life.*
2. *Life is divine in origin and mankind is created in the image of God.*
3. *God, in the creative process, gave mankind dominion of the created world.*

Therefore, in the light of these affirmations, we resolve:

1. *As an aspect of our God-given dominion over the world, biomedical research is a valid human endeavor.*
2. *Biomedical research must be guided by bio-ethics, which in turn needs the input of Judaeo-Christian values.*
3. *The “sanctity of life” ethic leads to respect for human life in all stages. This must affect our treatment of human life from the fertilized ovum through to the final breath of the potential organ donor.*
4. *We neither categorically approve nor disapprove of such procedures as in vitro fertilization, artificial birth control, artificial insemination, genetic screening and engineering, surrogacy and use of human tissue research and treatment of certain diseases. However, practices such as these do raise serious moral issues and side issues and must therefore be weighed carefully in light of Judaeo-Christian values.*
5. *Fertilization and insemination procedures which deliberately bring a new life into a home situation where no natural or adoptive father is present are a violation of the Bible’s high regard for the father role in the home. Serious dysfunction in the home, in the child’s social development and in society will likely result as is already evident by the social consequences resulting from the dramatic increase in fatherless households in urban America today. We, therefore, oppose these procedures when they will bring new life into a fatherless domestic situation.*

Euthanasia (1996)

We oppose “assisted suicide” as found in various “death with dignity” (euthanasia) proposals. We encourage the compassionate care of those who are terminally ill through programs such as hospices and through treatments which control pain and provide the maximum quality of life possible.