

Brendan Prout Statement of Faith

Doctrinal Statement

The Gospel

God is completely holy and righteous, and by his very nature cannot tolerate sin. Man by nature is sinful and disobedient, and incapable of performing any work that would atone completely for sin or merit salvation. The bible tells us that all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and that the wages of sin is death. Jesus, the only Son of God and second person of the Trinity, became man to live a perfect life and through his death on the cross became the atoning sacrifice once and for all, defeating death and paying the debt of all sin, so that those who believe on Him for their salvation could be resurrected with him and be adopted in to God's family as sons and daughters.

The Scriptures

I believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments to be the full record of God's self-disclosure to mankind. Different men, while writing according to their own styles and personalities, were supernaturally moved along by the Holy Spirit to record God's very words, inerrant in the original writings. Therefore, those applying themselves to study its literal, historical-grammatical context can accurately understand God's Word. Scripture is fully trustworthy as our final and sufficient authority for all of life. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Triune God

I believe in the one living and true God, eternally (John 17:3) existing in perfect unity as three equally and fully divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20). Each member of the Godhead, while executing distinct but complementary roles in redemptive history, has precisely the same nature, attributes, and being, and is equally worthy of the same glory and honor and obedience (John 1:1-4; Acts 5:3-4). The doctrine of the Trinity states there is one God who eternally exists as three distinct Persons--the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is one in essence, and three in person. These definitions express three crucial truths: (1) The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons, (2) each Person is fully God, (3) there is only one God. The Bible speaks of the Father as God (Phil. 1:2), Jesus as God (Titus 2:13), and the Holy Spirit as God (Acts 5:3-4).

God the Father

I believe God the Father created all things in six literal days for His glory according to His own will (Revelation 4:11), through His Son, Jesus Christ. He upholds all things by the Word of His power and grace, exercising sovereign headship over all creation, providence, and redemption (Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3).

God the Son

I believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, moved by love in accordance with the will of the Father, took on human flesh (John 1:1, 14, 18). Conceived through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the virgin Mary. He, being fully God and fully man (John 14:8-9), lived a sinless life and sacrificially shed His blood and died on the cross in our place accomplishing redemption for all who place their faith in Him. He arose visibly and bodily from the dead three days later and ascended into heaven, where, at the Father's right hand, He is now Head of His Body the Church, the only Savior and Mediator between God and man, and will return to earth in power and glory to consummate His redemptive mission (1 Timothy 3:16). This part of the Nicene Creed sums it up nicely:

Jesus Christ is the Lord, the only son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy

Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

God the Spirit

I believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ during this age. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He draws the unredeemed to repentance and faith, and at salvation imparts new spiritual life to the believer, bringing that person into union with Christ and the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit sanctifies, seals, fills, guides, instructs, comforts, equips, empowers, permanently indwells at salvation, and bestows spiritual gifts to the believer for Christ-like living and service (John 16:8; 13:15; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 1:22; 4:11-12; Romans 8:9-17; 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 12:4-5, 11-13, 19; Galatians 5:25; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

Mankind

I believe that God created mankind—male and female—in His own image and likeness, free of sin, to glorify Himself and enjoy His fellowship. Tempted by Satan, but in the sovereign plan of God, man freely chose to disobey God, bringing sin, death and condemnation to all mankind. All human beings, therefore, are totally depraved by nature and by choice. Alienated from God without defense or excuse, and subject to God's righteous wrath, all of mankind is in desperate need of the Savior (Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 3:10-19; Romans 1:18, 32).

Salvation

I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, as the substitutionary atonement in our place, and that salvation is found in none other than Jesus Christ. Before Creation, God chose those who would be saved and granted this unearned grace solely based on His sovereign good pleasure. Jesus Christ's death on the cross was the sole and complete payment for sins, fully satisfying God's righteous wrath, for each person that turns from sin in repentance and places their faith in Christ alone by grace alone. At salvation each person is made a new creation by the Holy Spirit, declared righteous before God, and secured as an adopted child of God forever. Genuine faith continues in obedience and love for Jesus Christ with a life eager to glorify God and persevere to the end (Romans 8:37-39; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

The Church

I believe that upon placing one's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, the believer is made part of the Body of Christ, the one universal Church, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. The Scriptures command believers to gather locally in order to devote themselves to worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, fellowship, the ordinances of baptism and communion, service to the local body through the development and use of talents and spiritual gifts, and outreach to the world to make disciples (Ephesians 1:22-23; Acts 2:42-46; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Matthew 28:18-20). Wherever God's people meet regularly in obedience to this command, there is the local expression of the Church under the watchful care of a plurality of elders. A church's members are to work together in love and unity, intent on the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ (Ephesians 4:16).

Baptism and Communion

I believe that Christian baptism is a public declaration of the believer's salvation in Christ, identifying with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection symbolized by immersion in water. The Lord's Supper is the united commemoration by believers of Christ's death until He comes and should be preceded by a careful self-examination (Acts 2:41; Romans 6:3-6; 1 Corinthians 11:20-29).

Missions

I believe it is the aim, duty, and privilege of every believer and local church fellowship to glorify God by responding as active participants in the Great Commission call of Jesus Christ to go and make disciples of all nations. I believe the primary focus and priority of this call is centered on efforts that establish, strengthen, and reproduce biblically-based churches, which will then plant churches that plant churches for future generations and God's glory.

Things to Come

I believe in and expectantly await the glorious, visible, personal, premillennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blessed hope of His return has vital bearing on the personal life, service, and mission of the believer (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). I believe in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost. The lost will be raised to judgment and experience eternal wrath in hell. The saved will be raised to eternal joy in the new heaven and new earth in the manifested presence of God (Acts 1:3, 9; Hebrews 7:25-26).

Church Membership

I believe in the importance of serving the body of Christ by offering clear paths for people to start and develop healthy and growing relationships with others in the church body. I value an intentional plan to help every interested person enjoy godly relationships in the church. Church membership is a byproduct of people who are growing in Christ and who grasp the importance of serving the Lord by using their gifts to serve others in the local church.

The Bible says that every believer is to be a member of the vine, or else we'll wither and die. Jesus calls us to be part of the vine in John 15:1-8. We're also told not to give up the habit of meeting together in Hebrews 10:25, and given the example of the early church in Acts 2:42-27. There is no such thing as a lone Christian, according to the Bible. We are called to be members of one body in 1 Corinthians 12:12-30. The church of Christ, is the whole company of regenerate persons in all times and ages, in heaven and on earth (Matt 16:18, Eph 1:22-23, Eph 3:10, Eph 5:24-25, Col 1:18, Heb 12:23). According to the Bible, to be a member of this body, one must believe and follow Christ as a disciple, and be baptized publicly in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt 20:19-20).

Church membership requirements are that a person gets baptized (or attests to having been previously baptized), understands church membership, meets with a pastor and commits to a covenant agreement to become a member, affirming that he will serve in a ministry, contribute financially to the work of ministry, and attend services regularly.

Baptism and Communion

The Bible clearly teaches only two symbolic practices that Christians are to regard, and both are directly connected with corporate worship in a local church: Baptism (Matt 28:19, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 10:48, Acts 16:30-33, Acts 22:16, Rom 6:4) and the Lord's Supper (Matt 26:26-29, Acts 2:42, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 10:16-17, 1 Cor 11:23-30)

Neither ordinances are efficacious means for salvation but are yet important symbolic practices that Christ has appointed to be administered in his church as visible signs of the saving truth of the gospel. They are outward signs, in that they vividly express this truth and confirm it to the believer. Christ alone saves, not works or acts (Eph 2:28).

Baptism and communion are the only two ordinances required in the church by the Bible. I believe that Christian baptism by immersion in water is a public identification with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Although baptism is not required for salvation, it is commanded of all believers and is for believers only (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38, 41; Acts 18:8). Scripture shows that a person was baptized after personally receiving forgiveness of sin through accepting Jesus Christ. The waters of baptism are a symbol of our death, burial, and resurrection to newness of life that

happens when we become new creations in Christ (Colossians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:1-4).

Communion is the commemoration by believers of Christ's death, and a reminder—through the bread and the juice—of the Savior's broken body and shed blood. Communion is to be a time of confession of our sin and should be preceded by careful self-examination according to Acts 4:13; Romans 6:3-6; 1 Corinthians 11:20-29.

Missions

Realizing that the cause of Christ extends beyond any one local fellowship, we commit ourselves to an ongoing ministry of extending the call of Christ to make disciples around the world (Matthew 28:19-20). The Church is to commit to evangelism in the local community first, then growing into ever extending reach into the world, following the model of the early Church going into Jerusalem first, then Judea and Samaria and then to the ends of the earth.

Charismatic Movement

I believe the most authentic and selfless expression of the Church is a non-charismatic, theologically conservative, evangelical fellowship that welcomes all who know Jesus Christ as their Savior and all who are seeking Him. Those who claim to possess the gift of tongues and other sign gifts are welcome to worship and fellowship with us if they are willing to be a source of unity rather than division within our church body. I believe that the Christian life is supernatural and that the Lord continues to perform miracles. I also believe that current displays of the gift of tongues serve to distract from the main task of the local church, which is to glorify God through the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). I believe that the gifts of tongues, as defined by the Bible, is meant as a sign to non-believers, not intended for aberrant use when described as edification to the body of the church, and not to be flagrantly displayed nor sought after, per Paul's warning.

Current displays of the gift of tongues:

Give unwarranted prominence to the gift, which is described in the New Testament as being only one of many spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12).

Emphasize speaking in tongues as the primary manifestation of the Spirit's work in a person's life, while minimizing the Spirit's work in producing a holy life (2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 2 Timothy 1:9), and a life that displays the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

Often suggest that speaking in tongues is a required proof of being Spirit-filled or of possessing salvation in Christ, even though the Scriptures do *not* teach this.

I would seek to prevent the propagation of doctrines that would cause divisions within an individual church. Therefore, members of and adherents of the local church body are not to propagate the teachings and emphases of the current charismatic movement. Although we do not control personal, individual interactions with the Lord, the expression of tongues and other sign gifts are not to be outwardly expressed at meetings that are under the organization and authority of the local church.

Church Planting

The church exists to glorify God through the fulfillment of the Great Commission, and in the spirit of the Great Commandment (Matthew 28:19-20, Matthew 22:37-38).

The Great Commission is fulfilled as disciples of Jesus Christ are made and grow in their relationship with Him and likeness to Him. God is glorified as we manifest His presence as we do His work (2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

In seeking to act upon the church's purpose, I recognize the extraordinary value in multiplying the reach of His ministry by planting local churches and by associating with existing, like-minded local churches. God is glorified when like-minded churches associate with one another in order to foster relationships that edify, protect, encourage, support, and admonish.

Elder Council

The governing members, serving as directors of the Tapestry Elders Council, lead in the association of affiliating with neighbor churches and oversee church planting. The Elders Council assists affiliate churches to more effectively spread the Word of God and the ways of God in order to build His kingdom. The Elders Council desires to bless all affiliate churches through the mutual exchange of pulpit and music ministry, consulting services, research, conferences, and seed money devoted to church planting and pastoral education programs.

Counseling Philosophy

The Lord changes lives and accomplishes His purposes directly through reading and applying the Scriptures, meditating on the truths of the Scriptures, and prayer. The Lord also uses those who minister His Word as they encourage, exhort, admonish, edify, implore, reprove, rebuke, and console others toward godliness. God needs no new or unique insight into the human condition in order to change lives, regardless of whether that insight is gained through psychology or some other tool of human origin. The Bible is completely sufficient for all knowledge regarding the general human condition and God's perfect plan for salvation. However, just as the Bible does not address all specific medical conditions and maladies, nor does it prescribe remedies for such, it does not present a complete exposition of all physiological, emotional and psychological problems, nor a comprehensive list of remedies for them. Though there can be problems that arise by improperly integrating the Scriptures with psychological theories when not viewed in a proper light of Biblical primacy and authority, I do not believe that proper counseling necessitates the diminishing of the God of the Scriptures or misleading people into believing that He has not provided and cannot provide sufficient truth, insight, and wisdom that will change their lives (Colossians 2:8-10).

God has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). He changes us as we discipline ourselves through obedience to the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Timothy 4:7; 2 Peter 1:5-11).

Each Christian's passion should be to become more like Christ and fulfill the Great Commandment to love the Lord with the entire heart, soul, mind, and strength (Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:2, Deuteronomy 6:5; Mark 12:30; Matthew 22:37-38).

The Christian who learns and applies the Word becomes mature and, in turn, can help others mature (2 Timothy 2:2).

Creation, Evolution, and God's Sovereignty

I believe God created the universe in six days and that before He created the universe, nothing except God existed (Genesis 1; Exodus 31:17; Psalm 33:6-9; Acts 17:24; Hebrews 11:3; Colossians 1:16).

God chose to create the universe and all that is in it to reveal His glory, divine nature, eternal power, infinite wisdom, and supreme authority (Isaiah 43:7; Psalm 19:1-2; Jeremiah 10:12; Romans 1:20; Revelation 4:11).

I deny the theory of evolution, which states that nonliving substances gave rise to the first living material, which then reproduced and diversified to produce all living creatures. I believe that all people are descendants of Adam and Eve, whom God created personally and individually and as complete human beings (Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 2:21-22; 1 Corinthians 11:8-9). The fall of Adam and Eve infected all people with sin and death, but the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives the opportunity to receive God's gift of eternal life (Romans 5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

God rules over His creation and cares about and is involved in the lives of individual people (Job 12:10; Acts 17:25; Acts 25:28; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:13; Ephesians 4:6).

Eternal Security of the Believer and Nature of Salvation

It is God's divine decision to save a person and it is God's kindness, forbearance, and patience that lead that person to repentance (Romans 2:4). All glory for the salvation and security of every believer belongs to God alone (Romans 3:21-31; Ephesians 1:7-9; Ephesians 2:8-9, Jude 1:24-25). I believe that everyone who is born again by the Spirit through Jesus Christ is eternally assured of salvation from the moment of conversion. This assurance relies on God's decisive grace rather than on the works of the Christian. Obedience, good works, and fruit-bearing do not earn or retain the believer's salvation but indicate the reality of the person's love of Christ and profession of faith (Luke 6:46; John 14:21; James 2:17-18).

Eternal security in salvation relies on the Lord's guarantee of each believer's adoption as His son or daughter (Galatians 4:4-7), His seal of the believer by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14), and the conviction that God gives the Holy Spirit to each believer as a down payment toward future bliss in heaven (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). A person who professes genuine faith in Christ immediately becomes His possession (Luke 23:42-43; Acts 2:40-41; Acts 16: 30-34), and nothing can snatch that person out of His hands (John 10:27-29). Having been bought with the price of Jesus Christ's crucifixion as complete payment for sin, Christians are not their own. They are Christ's possession (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). This assurance is absolutely certain, reserved in heaven, protected by God's unlimited power (1 Peter 1:4-5).

Romans 8, especially in verses 35-39, is explicit in stating that nothing – no sin, no decision, no action, NOTHING can separate the believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Once saved, always saved. God states that he foreknew our salvation, and predestined us to be saved explicitly in Romans 8:29-30 and Ephesians 1:3-6. The Bible also teaches about predestination in Acts 13:48, Ephesians 1:7-8, 2 Thess. 2:13-14, and 2 Tim. 1:9. The elect are discussed in Matthew 24:31, Mark 13:22, Luke 18:7, Romans 8:33, 11:7, Colossians 3:12, 2 Timothy 2:10, Titus 1:1, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 Peter 5:13; 2 John 1:1 & 13. There's no getting around it.

Process of Sanctification and Maturity

Mature disciples walk with Christ, worship Christ, and work for Christ. A person committed to a relationship with Christ focuses on a personal walk with Him, worshipping Him, and working for Him. That person will experience significant growth in personal sanctification and, therefore, will experience a closer personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and will become "complete in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). We are committed to multiplying the godly characteristics of leaders' lives into others (2 Timothy 2:2). This multiplication of ministry is key to the healthy growth of the church. I

believe the disciples of Jesus Christ should minister to one another in the local church, rather than one or a small number of professional pastors bearing total responsibility to care for the entire congregation. God has given spiritual gifts to all of His people to provide mutual ministry in the context of the healthy and strong local church (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Spiritual Warfare

Satan and his demonic servants viciously oppose the work God performs in and through His people (1 Peter 5:8; Genesis 3:1-7; Ephesians 6:12). God, who by His nature is infinitely more powerful than Satan, in due time will have complete and total victory over Satan (1 John 4:4; Revelation 20:1-10).

Although it is appropriate to pray in Jesus' name for protection against demonic activity, the Scriptures do not instruct the Christian to "bind Satan in Jesus' name." Rather, the Scriptures instruct the Christian to combat Satan by:

- Humbly drawing near to God, knowing that He will give grace, mercy, and strength (2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Hebrews 4:15-16; James 4:8; 1 Peter 5:6-10).

- Resisting Satan's temptations (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9).

- Rightly applying the truth of the Scriptures (Matthew 4:1-11; John 8:44; Ephesians 4:24-27).

- Forgiving offenses (2 Corinthians 2:10-11).

- Putting on the armor of God's truth, righteousness, readiness to share the Gospel, faith, salvation, and prayer (Ephesians 6:11-20).

- Demonstrating faithfulness to the Lord by enduring trials (Revelation 2:10; Revelation 2:13; Revelation 3:9-10).

Sufficiency of Scripture

I believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures and that they contain all the words of God that we need in order to completely trust and obey Him. The Scriptures are inerrant in their original writings (Psalm 119:97-104; Psalm 119:160; Matthew 5:18; John 5:46-47; John 10:35; 2 Timothy 3:15-16), and are infallible in their instruction (Proverbs 6:32; 2 Peter 1:19), eternal in duration (Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:23-25); the final authority and the standard for faith and practice (Matthew 4:4; Psalm 119); and sufficient for counsel in every issue of life (Psalm 19:7-14; 2 Timothy 3:16). I believe that the very words of Scripture in the original Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic are inspired by God.

Therefore, I believe that the Bible versions which translate God's Word most literally into modern English should be preferred, such as the English Standard Version (ESV) and the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Dynamic translations, or thought-for-thought translations such as the New International Version (NIV) should only be used for further illumination of the meaning of the original text, when a direct translation version makes the original meaning in its original context unclear.

Women in Ministry

I affirm the God-ordained and significant role that women should play in establishing and leading the local church. Every leadership opportunity is open to women except those that are excluded by Scripture. The Scriptures clearly state that men are to serve in the office of Elder and that women are not to serve in church positions in which they exercise authority over men or in which they teach doctrine to men (1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:6-9). I do not see this as an issue of equality, for men and women are equal under God. The Bible is clear that men and women do not have the same roles. Qualified women should serve in any leadership position that is not forbidden in the Scriptures. We are complementarian as the Church, not egalitarian. All people have equal value to God as His people; yet we have different roles as different parts within the Body of Christ.

The Bible is clear that women can serve as ministry leaders as deacons but the Bible does not make provision for them to serve in the role as elder. Men are the head of women, as Christ is the head of the church and the head of man (1 Cor 11:3).

The spiritual gifts of teaching and leadership are not gender specific, and the Bible does give examples of Godly women who led the people in various capacities, therefore it is an untenable position to say that women should not lead at all.

There are many biblical examples of women leaders. The following women were divinely called to lead, were affirmed by their religious communities, and were specifically recorded in scripture as part of God's revealed truth:

Old Testament:

- Miriam – prophetess; played major role in Exodus; led worship singing and dancing (Exodus 15:20)
- Deborah – prophet; judge; led Israeli troops into battle with Barak (Judges 4:4-5)
- Esther – directed God's people from the King's court (Esther 4:15-17)
- Hulda – prophetess (2 Kings 22:14)
- Athaliah (2 Chronicles 22:10-12)

New Testament:

- Anna – prophet who pronounced Jesus to be the redemption of Israel (Luke 2:36)
- Lydia – business woman who became a central leader in the Philippian Church (Acts 16:40)
- Priscilla – helped Paul establish churches at Corinth and Ephesus; corrected Apollo's preaching (Acts 18:24-26)
- Junia – an apostle (Romans 16:7)
- Phoebe – deacon; commended by Paul for her service to the church (Acts 21:7-9, Romans 16:1-16)

There are no explicit New Testament prohibitions against women serving in leadership. Although he accepted that people may have different roles in society, the apostle Paul proclaimed that all believers are equal in God's sight:

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29)

Much of the opposition to women in ministry is based on these two passages:

“As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.” (1 Corinthians 14:33-35)

“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.” (1 Timothy 2:11-12)

Related verses: 1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:22-23.

But what if Junia were a female apostle in authority?

Would that mean that it is okay for women to be pastors and elders since Junia would have been exercising that authority over men in the church? First, even if that were the case, the office of apostle (someone who was involved in Christ's ministry before his death and saw him after his resurrection) is finished and Junia's case would only apply in the early church and not today. Second.

we see apostle and elders mentioned together in Acts 15:2-6. An apostle is not an elder – the terms are not interchangeable – and the requirements for eldership include being male. No such requirement for apostleship is made. Even if Junia were an apostle in the sense of having seen the risen Lord it doesn't mean she was in authority in the Church. So, even if Junia were a female apostle in the early church, it does not mean that women today are qualified to be pastors/elders.

Sexuality

Consensual sexual intercourse is a divinely created and healthy expression of love's commitment to be enjoyed solely within the covenant protection of the marriage relationship, which is itself intended by God to be between one man and one woman. All other forms of sexuality, including homosexuality and polygamy, is considered sexual immorality and the Bible speaks against it in Lev 18:22, Lev 20:13, Rom 1:25-28, 1 Cor 6:9-10, 1 Cor 6:18, 1 Cor 10:8, 1 Thess 4:3-5, Heb 13:4, Eph 5:5, Col 3:5, Gal 5:19, Mark 7:20-23, Jude 1:7, Rev 21:8, and Gen 2:24.

Hell

Hell is a literal place of eternal torment created to punish all those who rebel against God. It is spoken of in Daniel 12:12, Matt 10:28, Matt 13:50, Matt 23:33, Matt 25:46, Mark 9:43-48, Luke 12:5, Luke 16:23, 2 Thess 1:9, 2 Peter 2:4, Rev 14:11, Rev 20:14-15, and Rev 21:8.

Worship

The chief purpose of mankind is to glorify God by loving Him with the entire heart, soul, mind, and might (Deuteronomy 6:5; Isaiah 43:7; Matthew 22:37). All believing men, women, and children are to glorify God and thus fulfill the purpose of their existence. Worship glorifies God through adoration (Psalm 95:6), praise (Psalm 99:5), prayer (Daniel 6:10-11), thanksgiving (Nehemiah 12:46), and a complete yielding to Him (Romans 12:1). Worship declares His worth, pays Him homage, and celebrates Him in a life of devotion. We seek to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth (Exodus 15:1-21; 2 Samuel 6:14-16; Psalm 5:7; John 4:23-24; Revelation 4:11; 5:12).

Several tenets guide our worship. We seek to:

Lift high the name of Jesus Christ (John 4:22-26; John 12:32; John 14:6).

Lead God's people to lift their hearts and voices to Him, giving Him praise and thanks in music and lyrics (Nehemiah 12:45-46; Psalm 66:1-4; Psalm 95:1-2).

Prepare hearts to hear the Lord speak through the proclamation of Scripture (Psalm 95:6-9; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42).

Emphasize fresh and contemporary expressions while retaining traditional elements that recognize the richness of our heritage in the faith (Deuteronomy 32:7; Psalm 33:3; Isaiah 46:8-9; Matthew 13:32, Ephesians 5:19; Revelation 5:9).

Pursue excellence in worship, knowing that God is worthy of our best (Exodus 12; Deuteronomy 17:1; Psalm 33:3; 1 Timothy 4:14-15; Hebrews 11:4).

Giving

The New Testament instructs us to set aside a portion of our income at the beginning of each week, in keeping with our income, to financially support the work of ministry of the church. (1 Cor 16:2). Ministers of the gospel are permitted to earn their living from the work of ministry (1 Cor 9:1-14, 1 Tim 5:18), supported by the giving of the church body. Those also supported by the sacrificial giving of members of the church include the poor, the widows, the orphans, and those among the brethren in

need (James 2:14-17). Tithing is not a New Testament principle. Giving and providing for the needs of one another and for the ministry *is* a New Testament principle.

The purpose of the OT tithe – was to provide for the poor, and provide for the Levitical priesthood. Those in need we are still obligated to care for, and Paul in the NT does express the right of a minister of the gospel to earn his living from ministry; however, rather than a defined percentage of income to be given, as detailed in the OT, the NT simply says believers are to determine in their hearts what to give on the first of the week, and to give cheerfully.

Those in financial hardship should not give, but be humbly willing to receive the provision given by others in the church.

Biblical Eldership

I am committed to the Bible's teaching that those who hold the offices of Elder and Deacon are to oversee various functions of the local church.

The Bible's teaching on the subject of two church offices is found in 1 Timothy 3:1-16 and Titus 1:5-9. There are multiple terms used for roles of believers in the church: shepherd, pastor, bishop, elder, overseer, deacon and novice. Scholarly analysis of these terms indicates that the terms pastor, shepherd, bishop, overseer and elder are used interchangeably to indicate the same role.

I make the only distinction in that those carrying the title of Pastor are vocationally supported by the Church, because they are responsible for such a wide variety of duties that they cannot reasonably be expected to work an outside job to provide income for their families. Those who are recognized as Elders are in fact tent-making pastors, serving the Church sacrificially as shepherds of the flock while working in secular professions to support their own families, not being a burden on the Church, in the manner of the apostle Paul. Both Pastors and Elders have the same role within the Church, to care for, shepherd, protect, teach, train and equip the members of the Church to perform the works of ministry that each is individually created to do, serving the Body. Elders are to provide oversight for the Church as a council of equals, not being meddlers, not lording it over others, but compassionately serving the members of the Body of Christ as loving stewards who must give an account for the souls of those entrusted to their care by the Master of the house, Jesus Christ.

Elder Qualifications (Titus 1:6-9)

- Above reproach
- Able to teach
- Husband to one wife
- Not addicted to wine
- Temperate
- Not antagonistic
- Prudent
- Uncontentious
- Respectable
- Free from the love of money
- Hospitable
- Manage own household
- Not a new convert

Elder Duties

The Scriptures show that the elders serve by leading and that their responsibility involves the spiritual oversight of the congregation. All elders are equal in authority but not necessarily equal in influence.

The elders' primary responsibilities include:

Doctrine - Ensuring that the doctrine of the church is biblical; all doctrinal issues in the church will be settled by the Board of Elders.

Direction - Ensuring that the direction of the church is consistent with the Tapestry statement of purpose and core values.

Discipline - Administering in love and humility the process of church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1-4; Titus 3:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:17-25; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, and Romans 16:17.

Plurality of Elders

The Scriptures teach that a plurality of elders governed individual New Testament churches (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; Philippians 1:1). The Scripture does not mention any congregations featuring a stand-alone pastor and leader. A plurality of godly elders, exercising their individual giftedness, aligns with the Scripture's teaching that wisdom is found in a multitude of godly counselors (Proverbs 11:14; Proverbs 12:15; Proverbs 15:22; Proverbs 19:20; Proverbs 24:6). This truth does not eliminate the possibility and likelihood that one or more elders will stand out from the others as more public in their ministries or more influential in their workings on the Elder Council, as the examples of Paul and Peter and other primary leaders influenced the early Church. As a house divided against itself cannot stand, the Elders strive for unity in all decisions, but a dissenting voice will not serve to prevent the Body from moving.

Elders affirm Elders

The Bible describes the role of Elder as being affirmed by other Elders, not as being chosen by the people from among the people, as Deacons are. All who would serve as Pastors at the church must be affirmed as Elders by the Elder Council.

Senior Pastor

There is no "senior pastor" nor "lead pastor" named specifically in the New Testament church as described in the Bible. However, God has always used a strong leader to guide and protect His people, from the beginning of our history through today. Paul, Peter, Timothy, Barnabas, and the other apostles may not have been named as lead pastors of the churches they shepherded, but they did clearly exert more authority than other elders, and can be considered the first among equals. Therefore, it is reasonable and prudent to have one leader following this example to pastor other pastors, lead and guide the local church, and for this person to be the Senior Pastor.

The Senior Pastor serves as an Elder and, because of his public presence and responsibility before the congregation, may be considered first among equals as a member of the Elder Council. The Senior Pastor should be gifted primarily as a visionary leader, preacher/teacher, worship leader, and as an equipper of the saints. He will serve as Chairman of the Elder Council and will be the final decision maker, when consensus is not attained by the Elder Council.

Biblical Servant Leadership

Jesus gives the example of servant leadership, stewardship, and being a shepherd among some of the key concepts of biblical leadership. All are inextricably linked together. All are necessary for proper biblical leadership.

As leaders, we must not strive to be served, but to serve others. (Mark 10:45)

We are not owners of anything; in fact, we do not even own ourselves but were purchased at a price (Ps 50:10, John 3:27, 1 Cor 6:20). Therefore, all we have belongs to God and it is our responsibility to care for it well as stewards entrusted with it. This has been true from the beginning when God gave men stewardship over the earth (Gen 1:28, Gen 2:15), is true of how we are to treat each other as believers (1 Pet 4:10, 1 Tim 6:17-20). We are to do our best not to be in debt (Rom 13:8) except the continuing debt to love one another. The Parable of the Talents gives us an example of how God desires us to be faithful stewards of that which He entrusts us with (Matt 25:14-30). We will be required to give an account to our Master of those entrusted to our care (Heb 13:17), just as the stewards in this parable are required to give account to their Master.

We must strive to be Christ-like in how we shepherd the flock, as Jesus gives us example of in John 10:1-14.

We need to keep that all in proper perspective as biblical leaders.

Biblical Church Government Structure

The church's head is Christ. (Col 1:18). The church is to have elders giving oversight and caring for the local flock, submitting to Christ and to other elders out of reverence for Christ, not lording it over others but serving them. (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5, 1 Tim 3:1-16, 1 Tim 5:17, Heb 13:7). The church is to have deacons serving the body of Christ, assisting the elders. (Acts 6:1-15, Phil 1:1)

Deacons

The Bible teaches that deacons lead by serving (Acts 6). The qualifications for elders and deacons are the same regarding an individual's character, but they differ in aptitude. The elders are to be able to teach while the deacons are to be able and proved as servants. Women are named in the Bible as deacons, and I gladly recognize deaconesses and place them in positions of authority and leadership according to their giftings.

Deacon Qualifications

(1 Timothy 3:8-12)

- Individual of dignity
- Above reproach
- Not double tongued
- First tested as servants
- Not addicted to wine
- Spouses must be faithful
- Temperate
- Not fond of sordid gain
- Holding to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience
- Husband of one wife
- Manages household well

Non-pastoral Ministry Leadership roles must be filled by those qualified as Deacons.

Deacons will be affirmed by the Elders, after being chosen from among the people and affirmed by a vote of the Members. In the case of staff positions and time-specific needs, a special committee formed by a combination of Elders and Members may be utilized to serve this purpose for expediency.

Pillars of the Church

Worship, The Word, Outreach, Prayer

Worship

Lifting high the name of Jesus through worship

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:24

The Word

Proclaiming the authority of God's Word without apology

"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." 2 Timothy 4:2

Outreach

Sharing the good news of Jesus with boldness

"And also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak." Ephesians 6:19-20

Prayer

Believing firmly in the power of prayer

"Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints." Ephesians 6:18

Vision

What we are calling people to be—glorifying, growing, grateful, gracious, and generous.

This is what authentic disciples of Jesus Christ should look like.

The job of the church, the Great Commission, is to make disciples. Not just more disciples, but better disciples—authentic followers of Christ who are unceasing and increasing in their passion.

Distinctives of the Church:

GLORIFYING

A disciple embraces the ultimate purpose of the universe, which is glorifying God. Take a look at Colossians 1:17-18. God's glory is the purpose of the church, the purpose of the family...and it is most obviously the purpose of every disciple. You are not your own. If you are a follower of Jesus, you belong to Him. And when we give God glory we are most aligned with the reason we were created. We join the chorus of heaven which unceasingly sings of what is unalterably true.

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

GROWING

A healthy Christian is a growing Christian—Colossians 1:27-28. None of us are perfect. None of us have arrived. Jesus died not just to give you heaven, but to give you life NOW. We don't only want more Christians, we want better Christians. We want to be disciples who are growing in more love for God, more love for others, deeper in the knowledge of His Word, more obedient to what He says. We are imperfect. But we are following a perfect and awesome Savior...and we are growing into His image.

“And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18

GRACIOUS

Graciousness flows from gratefulness, Colossians 3:12-14. The Church will always be a truth place. But the glory is being a place that is full of grace *and* truth. The glory that includes grace gives people what they do not deserve without ever compromising the truth, and that’s when we’re authentic disciples. That’s when we are like Jesus.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

GENEROUS

What you do with what you have. God is not lacking for anything. God is not stingy or short. And whatever you have, you need to be incredibly generous with it—with all of your heart, Colossians 3:17, 23. You can’t out give God. And by faith, we are to be people who are generous with our time and our resources. Generous with the abilities God has given us...and He will bring the increase.

“There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more...” Proverbs 11:24

GRATEFUL

Gratitude is the attitude that sets the altitude for living! From we who have received so much, the greatest insult to God is if we are not increasing in gratitude. There is never a time in our lives where our trials eclipse what mercy God has shown us. Giving thanks to God for all things is a hallmark of a true disciple, Colossians 2:6. Since we are forever and always the recipients of God’s amazing grace, with the privilege to be involved in His work, we want our gratefulness to be evidence of that.

“...Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...” Ephesians 5:20