

Identity and Faith Statement

General leaders, Commissioned leaders, Ordained leaders

I. Our Shared Identity Statement

Our living and growing commitments as we try to follow Jesus together.

We exist to Cultivate small holistic discipleship communities that are maturing and multiplying.

We define a disciple as one who is learning to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did.

We define Church as Prayerful Family on Mission.

We are the church and every part of our lives are expressions of ministry.

We are people who keep the person and presence of Christ at the center and head of everything.

We are people who long to be with Jesus, do what he did, and become like him.

We are people who know the God of the Bible is the God of today.

We are people who are enjoyed by God and from there enjoy one another.

We are people who remain the same in any environment (secular or sacred).

We are a people utterly dependent on God's voice in Scripture and the Holy Spirit's active leading.

We are people who embrace the messiness of community for there is no intimacy without conflict.

We are people who remain through tough times and celebrate in good times.

We are people who willingly pour into others in the small communities we create..

We are people who combat loneliness with intentional friendships.

We are people who willingly pour into our city with authentic love, friendship, and service.

We are people committed to making room for sojourners currently outside of a relationship with Jesus.

We are people who know our spiritual maturity is limited by our emotional and relational maturity.

We are people who break down the false divide between secular and sacred parts of life.

We are people who seek to make the Kingdom of God tangible through our lives.

We are people who trust that God knows us better than we know ourselves.

We are people who believe there is no growth without risk.

We are people who create space for *everyone* to take those risks with God.

II. The God Story - Narrative Theology

Our intentional commitment to indwell and embody the authority of the Scriptures.¹

In the beginning God created all things good, good, good, good, good, good, and good. He was and always will be in a communal relationship with himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.² He is a social God of love who created humanity to be relational like him and with him. He created us as his image bearers with a missional calling to rule, serve, care for, and cultivate the earth. God created humans in his image to live in fellowship with him, one another, our inner self, and creation.³ The enemy tempted and deceived the first humans to try and attain in their own strength what was already given to them, to be like god(s). This action, and the actions of every subsequent descendant, has allowed evil beings to operate with great authority in creation. Evil entered the story through human sin. This devastating event resulted in humanity's bondage to Evil and Sin, impacting our relationships with God, others, ourselves, and creation. This left humanity and the entire creation in desperate need of redeeming.⁴

We believe God did not abandon his creation to this state; rather he promised to restore this broken world through the very humans who had permitted brokenness to enter it. As evil entered creation through humanity, so too would God redeem all things through humanity. God chose specific people in Abraham and his descendants to represent him in the world. God promised to bless them as a nation so that through them all nations would be blessed. In time Abraham's descendants became enslaved in Egypt and cried out to God because of their oppression. God heard their cry, liberated them from their oppressors, and brought them to Sinai where he gave them an identity and a mission as his treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, a holy people. Throughout the story of Israel, God refused to give up on his people despite their frequent acts of unfaithfulness to him.⁵

God brought his people into the Promised Land. Their state of blessing from God was intimately bound to their calling to embody the living God to other nations. They made movement toward this missional calling, yet they disobeyed and allowed foreign gods into the land, overlooked the poor, and mistreated the foreigner. The prophetic voices that emerge from the Scriptures repeatedly exposed Israel's idolatry and mistreatment of others, namely the marginalized. Through the prophets, we learn how seriously God takes idolatry and His heart for the poor was made known. We believe that God cares deeply about both of these two things today.⁶

In Israel's disobedience, they became indifferent, and in turn irrelevant, to the purposes to which God had called them. For a time, they were sent into exile; yet a hopeful remnant was always looking ahead with longing and hope to a renewed reign of God, where peace and justice would prevail.⁷ We believe these longings found their fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, mysteriously God incarnated in flesh.⁸ Jesus came to preach good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted and set captives free, proclaiming a new arrival of the kingdom of God, bringing about a new exodus, and restoring our fractured world to a new promised land. He was rejected by many as he confronted the oppressive nature of the religious elite of Israel and the political empire

¹ We believe the Scriptures are "God-breathed" and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness to equip people for a new way of life (1 Timothy 3:16-17). And we believe that ultimately the Scriptures are a work of the Holy Spirit evidenced by the way that the authors were "carried along by the Holy Spirit" and this means that ultimately the authority of Scripture is ultimately the trust in God's reliability and faithfulness to humanity (1 Peter 1:21).

² We believe in the one true Creator God, who shows God's self through self-giving love in a communal relationship of oneness displayed in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1; Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 1:35, 3:22; John 1:32; Hebrews 9:14; Acts 7:55; Romans 8).

³ We believe God created all things good and all people in God's image for relationship with God, each other, ourselves, and creation (Genesis 1-2; 1 Timothy 4:4).

⁴ We believe people's rebellion against God broke their relationship with God and continues to perpetuate sin, death, brokenness, and destruction in our world (Genesis 3:15; Romans 5:12; Colossians 1:21). We believe God has not abandoned creation, and in love, sent to earth God's one and only Son Jesus, fully God and fully human, born of a virgin and without sin to redeem all creation (Matthew 1:28-55; John 1; John 3:16-17; Romans 8:19-25; Colossians 1:15-20).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

of Rome. Yet his path of ministry, suffering, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection brought hope to all creation. Jesus is our only hope for bringing peace and reconciliation between God and humans, as well as between humans and humans. Through Jesus we have been forgiven of past sins, liberated from our present bondages to Sin, and been adopted into a family called the Church that is both local and eternal. In effect, all who are willing to receive the gift of Jesus are brought into the right relationship with God and invited further into reconciliation with each other, ourselves, and creation.⁹

The Spirit of God affirms children of God as all those who trust Jesus and try to apprentice their lives under him. The Spirit empowers people with gifts, convicts, guides, comforts, counsels, and leads us into truth through a communal life of worship and a missional expression of our faith.¹⁰ The church is rooted and grounded in Christ, practicing spiritual disciplines and celebrating baptism and the Lord's Supper. The church is both global-universal and local-discrete, it is simultaneously mysterious and mundanely normal. We, as the church, are a prophetic community trying to live out the way of Jesus through love, peace, sacrifice, and healing; embodying the resurrected Christ, who lives in and through us, to a broken and hurting world.¹¹

We believe the day is coming when Jesus will return to judge the world, bringing an end to injustice and restoring all things to God's creational intent. God will reclaim this world and rule forever. The earth's groaning will cease and God will dwell with us here in a restored creation. On that day we will beat swords into tools for cultivating the earth, the wolf will lie down with the lamb, there will be no more death, and God will wipe away all our tears. Our relationships with God, others, ourselves, and creation will be whole. All will flourish as God intends. This is what we long for. This is what we hope for. And we are giving our lives to prophetically pull that future reality into the present reality where we live, work, rest, and play.¹²

⁹ We believe Jesus came proclaiming a new arrival of the Kingdom of God—a reality marked by love, grace, peace, and joy. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus defeated sin and death inaugurating a new creation that offers all people eternal life now. Jesus is the only way to access the free gift of grace, renewed peace, and reconciliation with God (John 1:29; Romans 3:22-26; 5:1-9; Mark 4:26; Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 4:20; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Hebrews 1:1-3; Revelation 21:5).

¹⁰ We believe Jesus Christ sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in the hearts of believers, empowers them with gifts, convicts, guides, comforts, counsels, and leads us into truth through a communal life of worship and a missional expression of our faith (John 14:26; 20:21-23; Ephesians 1:17-19; Acts 1:8). We believe Jesus calls people to be his disciples in all areas of life, exhibiting our faith in him by social and personal practices, which brings glory to God's name (Matthew 5:14-16; 22:36-40; Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11-12; 2 Peter 3:18).

¹¹ We believe the church is rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ, practicing spiritual disciplines, and celebrating baptism and the Lord's Supper. The church is the local and global community of Jesus followers who proclaim [through word and action] the good news of forgiveness, restoration, and reconciliation for all (Matthew 22:36-40; 28:19-20; John 20:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21).

¹² We believe Jesus will return to judge the world, bringing an end to injustice and restoring all things to God's original intent. God will reclaim this world and rule forever in a new heavens and new earth. Our relationships with God, others, creation, and ourselves will be whole. All will flourish as God intends. This is what we long for. This is what we hope for (Isaiah 11:1-9; Isaiah 65:19-25; Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:21; Colossians 1:19-20; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21).

II. A Historical Identity

Our commitment to learn from and with the Church's History, as we bring the God Story to life in our cultural moment and missional context.

We as a local church seek the longstanding faithfulness of the historical church who has declared for centuries that the loving God is revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We seek to rally around the simplicity and clarity of the earliest creeds that are endorsed by the Greek Orthodox, Roman, Catholic and Protestant branches of the global church family.

Apostles' Creed

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Nicene Creed

*I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
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.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.*