

The Upendo Gospel Community Church Statement of Faith

Introduction:

Being in the historical line of the Christian Church, we highly value the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Chalcedonian Definition, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Three Forms of the Dutch Reformed Church, and other faithful and reformed creeds and confessions. We wholeheartedly agree with the historic articles of the Christian faith expressed in the five solas of the reformation – the Scriptures alone are our final standard, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and to the glory of God alone. This church thus belongs to the strain of reformed churches historically identified as Particular or Strict Baptists, today being commonly known as Reformed Baptists. Being a church plant of Trinity Baptist Church, Donholm (8th September 2024), we acknowledge the independence of local churches from any ulterior influence, including governments, persons, movements, and other local churches. Consequently, this church shall align with the doctrines of Scripture as set forth in *the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689* (hereafter, 1689 LBCF) and adopt this as our confession of faith. Though the 1689 LBCF is not infallible, we believe it to be a faithful summary of what is contained in the Scriptures and of our faith. We, therefore, insist particularly on the following points:

1. The Bible – the Word of God

We believe in the inerrancy and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures as they were originally written; their plenary and verbal inspiration by God; their authority and entire sufficiency, for they not only contain the word of God, but they themselves are the word of God (contra Barthianism); the New Testament being reliable or trustworthy in the witness it bears to the character of the Old Testament and its authors; and the necessity of the instruction of the Holy Spirit, in the Church, to understand the whole i.e., both the Old and New Testament Scriptures, according to the truth. The Holy Scriptures are our unique and final rule of faith and conduct. They comprise sixty-six (66) books of the Old and New Testaments. Since they were received by the Church, no further revelation has been given, for the instruments of Divine revelation, that is, apostles and prophets, as well as the peculiar gifts that give them their genuineness, have long ago disappeared or ceased. The canon is thus complete.

2. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – One God

We believe in one God, the Creator, Sustainer, Ruler or Governor, and Final Judge of all things, including time, space and matter. He is owed by all love, reverence, and obedience. We also believe the Trinitarian nature of this God as revealed in the Scriptures. The Scriptures clearly and expressly teach that God is one, that is, undivided in nature, being or essence. They also teach that this one God has chosen to reveal Himself in three Persons – the Father being God neither begotten nor made; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son being God, begotten but not made; the Holy Spirit being God neither begotten nor made but proceeding; all three Persons being equal in power and glory/majesty, receiving one honour, one Almighty God – sovereign in His eternal decrees of creation and providence, and of redemption and judgement.

3. Jesus Christ – Truly God and Truly Man

We believe in the Divine essence, eternal and absolute, of the Lord Jesus Christ; His unique conception by the Holy Spirit; His corporeal birth of the virgin Mary; His entire or true humanity yet without sin. Thus, we believe that the Second Divine Person, called the Word and the Son of God, took on flesh and dwelt among us, being named Jesus, who is Christ the Lord,

and the Saviour of the world. Consequently, we uphold the authority of His teaching and the infallibility of all His statements as the prophet of God; His life of voluntary humiliation as Man of Sorrows, which led to His atoning and substitutionary death, by which as an offering He poured out His precious blood as a perfect sacrifice for sin, thus redeeming all those that were given Him by His Father before the creation of the world. We uphold His corporeal or bodily resurrection on the third day; His corporeal ascension to heaven thereby sending the promise of the Father, that is, the Holy Spirit, to the church, which is His body and He, its Head. He is the only and eternal Mediator between God and man. We uphold His continual intercession for His people as High Priest sitting at the right hand of the Father, His current reign in heaven as universal Governor and King of kings, and His singular and personal return in power and glory to render judgment and usher in the new heavens and new earth.

4. The Holy Spirit – Author and Source of Life

We believe in the personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit who inspired holy men to write the Scriptures. It is by His action alone that the soul comes to regeneration leading to the graces of repentance and saving faith; it is by Him that the saints are sanctified by means of the truth; it is by Him that we understand the meaning of the Scriptures and are taught by God. We believe that His action is indispensable in the exercise of peculiar ministries as well as in the service and the daily life of every believer through the gifts He distributes as He pleases.

5. The Creation – Good and Stable

We believe that God created all things by His sole word, Genesis 1 and 2 being historical and not mythical. Thus, God's creation was good and firm, man being created in original righteousness and innocence. Satan and his angels are also God's creatures and are in no way His equals. Despite the corruption of the Fall, man is still made in the image of God, which makes his person sacred and his being without end. This is the foundation for the urgency to present the gospel to all mankind by evangelism and missions or disciple-making.

6. Fallen Man – A Sinner

We believe in the total and universal depravity of man, bodily and spiritually (morally), before God as a result of the Fall. Adam and Eve, our first parents, fell by disobeying God and thus lost their original righteousness and innocence in which they were created. By their own sin they ushered in corruption, misery, ruin, and death. Mankind is therefore deserving of eternal punishment, that is, hell. Through Adam as a representative head, all mankind who are his descendants are born in the state of sin, called original sin. This means that every man is unable to will the slightest spiritual good leading to salvation and this is the necessity, in consequence, of the new birth. This does not deny that through God's common grace man can do great and virtuous deeds. However, man, no matter how great his accomplishments, in his natural state is separated from and in enmity to God.

7. The Law of God – Universal and Covenantal Rule

We believe that the moral Law of God, as a perfect reflection of His unchanging character and righteousness, is the universal and perpetual rule of righteousness for all mankind. This Law, summarized in the Ten Commandments, was written on the heart of man at creation and thus is known inwardly by conscience (Romans 2:14–15). It continues to bind all men, believers and unbelievers, in all places and at all times, as the absolute standard of good and evil. It alone is the universal rule by which all human thoughts, words, deeds, and institutions must be judged. Though the whole of Scripture contains the Law of God, it is vital to distinguish between moral, ceremonial, and civil (judicial) aspects. The moral law is eternal and unchanging. The ceremonial laws, which governed worship and pointed to Christ (e.g., sacrifices, priesthood,

temple), were positive laws given to Israel under the Mosaic Covenant and have been fulfilled and abrogated in Christ (Hebrews 10:1–10). The civil laws, given for the governance of Israel as a theocratic nation, are no longer binding except in their general equity (1 Corinthians 9:8–10). Only the moral law remains as the universal rule for all humanity. Because of Adam’s fall, no man can attain righteousness by the law. The Covenant of Works, made with Adam as the federal head of mankind, required perfect obedience for life (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12–19). Once broken, this covenant could no longer offer life to sinners, only condemnation. Every person, by nature, remains under its curse apart from Christ. In contrast, the Covenant of Grace is the singular and sovereign covenant of salvation, first promised in Genesis 3:15, progressively revealed throughout redemptive history, and fulfilled in the New Covenant. Though promised in the Old Testament (e.g., through promises to Abraham, types under Moses, shadows in the deliverance events, and so forth), the Covenant of Grace is not to be viewed as a better administration of the Old Covenant in the New Testament, rather, it is entirely new and effective in its power and function, being fulfilled solely by and in Christ, and inaugurated at the Last Supper. It is distinct, unilateral, and redemptive, established by God alone through the Mediator, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 8:6; 9:15). In this new covenant, the moral law is written upon the hearts of believers (Jeremiah 31:33), not for justification, but as the rule of life in union with Christ. Thus, we affirm the continuity of the moral law across covenants and the discontinuity of ceremonial and judicial laws, recognizing that all law finds its unity and fulfillment in Jesus Christ, our covenant Head.

8. Election and Regeneration – God’s Free Choice and our Conversion

We believe that God eternally chose of His own free will some persons to eternal life – not because He could foresee any merit or faith or good works in them, but because of His great mercy in Jesus Christ. Those God elected He predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. These are called, justified, sanctified, and glorified. God calls these within the bounds of time, by the mean of His holy word and the Holy Spirit, effectually through regeneration, into fellowship and union with Christ and His church. As a result, God, by the free and invisible work of the Holy Spirit, enlightens their minds and renews their wills and affections to be like those of Christ.

9. Justification and Adoption – By Grace, Through Faith, Children of God

We believe in the eternal justification of the sinner; by grace alone; through faith alone; through the sole and unaided penal, substitutionary, and propitiatory merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ whose imputed righteousness is the unique foundation for the sinner’s acceptance before God. For the sake of Christ, all who are justified are numbered with and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, being made sharers and inheritors with Christ in sonship as adopted sons. Therefore, there is now no condemnation to these adopted ones.

10. Sanctification, Good Works, and Witness – Proofs of Conversion

We believe in the sanctified life of those who profess to be Christians being the visible proof of their conversion to God. The duty of every believer and every church of Christ is to live out and propagate the gospel to the ends of the earth. This must be achieved by means of believers’ individual and corporate witness, using to this end all methods compatible with the Word of God. In addition, while justification is by faith alone, this faith does not come alone. Once justified, a believer must necessarily do good works prepared by God for him beforehand. The believer’s obedience to the law of God through the gospel must appear in all areas of his life.

11. Sacraments or Ordinances – Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

We believe there are only two sacraments, that is, baptism in the name of the Trinity and the Lord’s Supper or the Lord’s Table. A sacrament is a positive, holy ordinance or order instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ, by which, through outward signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented and communicated to believers, who, at the same time in reciprocation, commit themselves to follow the Lord. The Lord’s supper is in no way a sacrifice for sin and involves no transformation of the substance of the bread and of the wine. The Lord’s supper is the communion of believers, by the Spirit and by faith, in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ at Golgotha. Additionally, baptism is to be administered after conversion and public confession of salvation (that is, not to infants) and only by immersion (not by sprinkling nor pouring). We thus practice regenerate church membership. Baptism water does not save any man, but rather signifies his already saved state.

12. The Future – Heaven and Hell

We believe that man consists of both body and soul. To every man is appointed death, wherein the body returns to the dust and the soul or spirit immediately appears before God. The righteous are ushered to rest in God’s presence whereas the wicked are reserved in torment, all awaiting the Great/General Judgment. Jesus Christ on the last day, shall return once/singularly, visibly, personally, and bodily with the glory of the Father. The bodies of all human beings who died (including at infancy) will be raised/resurrected, both the just and the unjust, and be united with each his soul. God will then judge the world by the one Man He has appointed, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, in perfect righteous judgment, everyone shall receive their due – eternal blessing for the redeemed and eternal punishment for the wicked. The wicked men shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, whole, body and soul, together with Satan and his fallen angels. The righteous exclusively and without threat of ever losing it, with glorified bodies, shall in whole inherit and inhabit new earth (which will forever be united and unseparated from the new heavens) with the restoration of the whole creation in Jesus Christ unto the perfect fullness of God’s kingdom, to the glory of the Father.

13. The Unique Church – Called to be Pure

We believe in the community of believers which is composed of God’s elect in every age (the Church Triumphant and Church Militant) and every geographical location (local churches). Christians are to gather together frequently, especially on the Lord’s Day, in local churches and are called out of the world, living in the world but not of it. The local church must maintain the spiritual unity of all those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is their duty to further maintain in themselves and in the Church a standard of doctrine and life consistent with the teaching of the holy word of God. To each local church, Christ has given authority and responsibility for administering order, discipline, and worship, particularly through the authorized officers (elders/pastors/bishops) given by Christ in His word. These aspects are regulated by the ordinary means of grace – the apostolic teaching/preaching, prayer, the Lord’s supper (and baptism), and fellowship. This implies formal church membership, which can be discerned from the plain reading of God’s word. The officers of the local church are elders (also called presbyters or overseers/bishops, or pastors/undershepherds) and deacons, with one elder being the greater among equals.

14. The Lord’s Day – A Holy Day Unto the Lord

We believe that the Lord’s Day is a holy Sabbath and is given for the benefit of the local church. This day is to be ordinarily observed on the first day of the week, that is, Sunday. God’s Word grounds the Sabbath principle not in the Mosaic legislation but in the original creation. On this day, we rest from our normal occupations and worldly pursuits and give ourselves wholly and

communally to the worship and service of God. However, we acknowledge that there are legitimate reasons that may necessitate a lack of observance of the Sabbath, such as, works of necessity, works of mercy, extreme persecution, or illness. To neglect public worship on this day, except for legitimate reasons, or for worldly pleasure or gain is sin. We thus uphold and practice the Regulative Principle of Worship.

15. Independence – Unrestricted Freedom to Congregate, Worship, and Associate

We believe that the local church is free from outward manipulation or inward pressure to act in a way contrary to its purpose, calling, or against its own local congregation. Therefore, we do not subscribe to any denominational or episcopal system or movement where there is an outward influence directing and ordering the affairs of the local church. Christ, by His Spirit, rules the local church directly through the local church officers, who ought to rule with a sober mind and faithfully guide God's people by the truth. In addition, we are freed from the religious rules and worship guidelines set up by secular governments, though we seek to be law-abiding citizens insofar as we do not disobey God. This, however, does not mean that the church officers or members cannot benefit from the wisdom of other people, particularly believers in other local churches. We are thus free to associate with other individuals, governments, para-church organizations, and local churches that are doctrinally and practically aligned with our mandate as a local church, that is, primarily proclaiming and living out the Biblical gospel in this present world. Nevertheless, we are apolitical in our mission and mandate as a local church, though members can and do freely engage politically. Finally, we do not and will not condone any political platforming, campaigning, or propaganda in the local church, especially when we are assembled for any of our meetings.