

# Doctrinal Statement

## Central Community Church

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*In respect for the historic Christian church, and in solidarity with the church universal, we have chosen to arrange our statement of faith in the outline of the Apostles' Creed.*

## Apostles' Creed

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### **We believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:**

There is one God, eternally existing in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> While having distinct roles, each member of the Godhead shares the same nature and attributes.<sup>2</sup> The self-existent, personal, triune God is all-powerful, all-knowing, unchanging, and everywhere present.<sup>3</sup> He is holy, righteous, and true, good and loving, just and merciful—eternally sovereign over all.<sup>4</sup>

From nothing, by His powerful word, the triune God created the heavens and the earth. Everything He made was good and declares His glory. On the last day of creation, He made Adam and Eve, male and female, in His image. Both were uniquely designed for joyful fellowship with God and each other. They were given creative roles in His kingdom on earth, which included cultivating, keeping, enjoying, and populating the earth. The couple was also given the assignment of ruling every living creature.<sup>5</sup>

Casting doubt on God's character and goodness, Satan (the father of lies), appeared in the form of a serpent and tempted the couple to disobey God. Instead of ruling the serpent, the couple exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature (hereafter "the god of this world") rather than the Creator who is blessed forever. As a result, sin and death (physical and spiritual) entered the human race, putting the man and woman at odds with each other and, more tragically, putting them at enmity with their Maker.<sup>6</sup> All the couple's offspring to this day inherited their parents' fallen, sinful natures from birth with One remarkable exception.<sup>7</sup> The couple's environment was also broken, cursed, and became hostile

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<sup>1</sup> Deut 6:4; Is 44:6; Mt 28:19; Jn 1:1-4; 1 Cor 8:4.

<sup>2</sup> Jn 3:16; 14:26.

<sup>3</sup> Gn 1:1; 18:14; 1 Sm 2:3; Ps 135:6; 137:7-10; Mal 3:6; Jn 1:1; Col 1:17; Jas 1:17; 1 Jn 3:20; Rv 1:8.

<sup>4</sup> Ex 15:11; 32:9-10; 33:19; Neh 9:8; Ps 19:8-9; 103:8; Is 14:24-17; Jer 10:10-11, Jn 3:16, 36; 17:3; 1 Jn 4:8; Rv 4:8.

<sup>5</sup> Gn 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Gn 3; Rom 1.

<sup>7</sup> Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Jn 3:5.

toward them. Utterly helpless, the whole creation groans for redemption and restoration, which God, in love, had planned to accomplish before the foundation of the world.<sup>8</sup>

## **And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord:**

Jesus Christ, the Word who was with God and was God from the beginning, is the eternal and only begotten Son of God through whom and for whom all things were made.<sup>9</sup>

After the fall, God's person, instructions for life, and plan of salvation were progressively revealed to mankind as He spoke first to Adam and Eve and then to numerous individuals, including common people, prophets, priests, and kings, through dreams, visions, acts, and words. The Holy Spirit moved His prophets to accurately record many of these words and events, which are available to us today in the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament of which Christ declared, "They testify of me."<sup>10</sup>

God has spoken most clearly through Jesus, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. In addition to obeying, teaching, fulfilling, and speaking the word of God, Jesus was the very living Word of God—the fullest and clearest self-revelation of God.<sup>11</sup>

In Jesus, the Sovereign Lord of the Universe came to earth as one of us, not to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many. In His life, He showed and told His followers how to live on earth and in heaven.<sup>12</sup>

The Holy Spirit superintended Christ's apostles in recording the life, works, and words of Jesus, the events surrounding His life, the birth of His Church, and instructions to its members. These are available to us today in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.<sup>13</sup>

Jesus is also the final Word of God, most clearly seen in the final book of Scripture, the Revelation of Jesus Christ.<sup>14</sup>

## **Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary:**

Being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, Jesus, the only begotten of God, was fully God and fully man. As such, He did not inherit sin. And though, Jesus, being led by the Holy Spirit, encountered direct temptation from the old serpent, the devil, He ruled the creature, fully refraining from sin in thought, word, or deed.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Gn 3; 3:15; Jn 6:37–40; Rm 8:18–25; Eph 1:4–6.

<sup>9</sup> Jn 1:1–3.

<sup>10</sup> Jn 5:39; 2 Pet 1:20–21.

<sup>11</sup> Mt 5–7; 5:17; Lk 24:25–27; Jn 1:14; Heb 1:1–3., ,

<sup>12</sup> Mk 10:45.

<sup>13</sup> Jn 14:26; 16:12–13; 2 Tm 3:16.

<sup>14</sup> Heb 1:1–3; Rv 22:18–19.

<sup>15</sup> Mt 1:22–23; 4:1–11; 26:38; Lk 1:26–28; 2:4;, Heb 4:15; 5:8. ,

By submitting to God the Father, God the Son willingly and necessarily limited His power without diminishing His divine nature to become the spotless Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.<sup>16</sup>

## **Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell:**

Sent by the Father, the preordained and primary purpose for which Jesus came to earth was to redeem mankind from sin and all of creation from sin's consequences in time and eternity. This redemption was secured through His life, death, and resurrection.<sup>17</sup> As prophesied in the Old Testament, Christ, the Messiah, suffered and died on the cross—laying down His life, not for His own sin (He had none) but for the sins of the world.<sup>18</sup> On the cross, Jesus carried our sins (all of them), absorbing the wrath and judgment of God in our stead.<sup>19</sup> In His death, Jesus experienced separation from God the Father—hell of hell—to reunite us with God, saving us from the penalty, power, and ultimately the presence of sin.<sup>20</sup> In death Christ, the Lord of All, ruled over and defeated “the god of this world”, for whom hell is reserved for eternity.<sup>21</sup>

## **The third day He rose again from the dead:**

As promised, after three days, Jesus rose from the dead, demonstrating victory over Satan, sin, death, and every associated consequence. The resurrection affirmed that Jesus was, indeed, God with us, and guaranteed that all who believe in him, the resurrection and the life, would live, even though they die—sharing in His power and victory over sin and death.<sup>22</sup> The resurrection also points to a future where all creation will experience release from the curse of sin and rule of the Evil One to experience redemption and recreation under God's reign.<sup>23</sup>

## **He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty: From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead:**

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples on various occasions, as well as to more than five hundred people over a period of forty days. Then He ascended into heaven where He sits at the right hand of God the Father.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> John 1:29; Phil 2:6–8.

<sup>17</sup> Jn 3:16; Acts 2:22–23.

<sup>18</sup> Is 53.

<sup>19</sup> 2 Cor 5:21.

<sup>20</sup> Mt 27:46; Jn 8:36; Rom 5:9–11; 1 Jn 1:9.

<sup>21</sup> Mt 25:41; Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 3:8

<sup>22</sup> Mt 16:21; Lk 24; Jn 11:25.

<sup>23</sup> Col 1:20.

<sup>24</sup> Acts 1; 1 Cor 15:6; Heb 7:24–25.

As surely as He ascended into heaven, this same Jesus will come back to earth. He will come bodily, suddenly, and unexpectedly “like a thief in the night.” He will come to judge Satan and the entire host of fallen angels, banishing them to eternal hell. He will come to judge unbelievers for rejecting Him as their Lord and Savior, condemning them to “the second death” —eternal punishment and separation from God.<sup>25</sup> He will come to judge believers. Those who are dead in Christ will rise to receive resurrection bodies along with all those alive at His return. He will not judge them in regard to salvation but will give them rewards for the good that they have done in obedient faith.<sup>26</sup> Finally, he will come to rule as King, ushering in a new heaven and a new earth, in which all who belong to Him will live and reign with Him forever. They will resume the work God ordained for them from eternity and assigned to them from the beginning.<sup>27</sup>

While many signs point to the ripening of Christ’s return, only God the Father knows the exact day and hour.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the exact progression of events leading up to Christ’s return is difficult to discern with certainty. In the meantime, believers are called to advance His will “on earth as it is in heaven” in readiness, sanctification, and fervent expectation while Christ sits at the right hand of God, ever living to make intercession for His own.<sup>29</sup>

## We believe in the Holy Ghost:

Until Christ returns, God is present immediately and intermediately via the third person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit promised and sent by the Father and the Son. Immediately, though invisibly, the Holy Spirit is restraining evil in our world while convicting people of sin, righteousness, and judgment and drawing them to Christ. He indwells, fills, empowers, and comforts individual believers, guiding them as Jesus promised “into all truth.” *Intermediately*, the Holy Spirit manifests Himself through the Scripture and through believers whom He indwells<sup>30</sup> (see The Holy Catholic Church).

Regarding Scripture, the same Holy Spirit, who hovered over creation, hovered over the prophets and apostles, enabling them to speak at God’s bidding on His behalf and to author the written Word of God. Though the authors were human and sinful, their words (in the sixty-six books we know as the Bible) were authored by God and recorded without error, conforming fully to the intent of the Author.<sup>31</sup> As such, we are to accept them as God’s final authority on all matters of faith and all issues of life to which they speak. Believers are to diligently study, rightly interpret, and faithfully obey the Scriptures. The same Holy Spirit who superintended the writing of Scriptures, leads readers into their true understanding, and empowers them to obey.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> 1 Thes 4:16–17 Rev 2.,

<sup>26</sup> Rom 14:10; 1 Cor 3:0–15; 2 Cor 5:10.

<sup>27</sup> Gen 1–2; Rev 21–22.

<sup>28</sup> Mt 24:36; Mk 13:32.

<sup>29</sup> Lk 12:35–38; Ti 2:11–14.

<sup>30</sup> Jl 2:28–29; Jn 14:16–18 15:26;16:7-11; 1 Cor 6:19.

<sup>31</sup> Jn 14:26; 2 Pet 1:21.

<sup>32</sup> Ez 36:27; 1 Cor 2:14; Gal 5:25; Eph 1:17–18; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Jm 1:22.

The foremost goal of Scripture is to reveal our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His creative and redemptive purposes.<sup>33</sup>

## **We believe in the holy catholic Church: the communion of saints:**

The Holy Spirit also manifests Himself through believers whom He indwells.

Following Christ's ascension into heaven in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and as promised by Jesus, the Holy Spirit was poured out on all believers on the Day of Pentecost to indwell and empower them to carry on the ministry and work of Christ in the world. Thus, the Church and the communion of the saints were born.<sup>34</sup>

All believers in Christ have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ, the one and only holy, universal, and eternal Church, of which Christ is the head and believers are members. Having baptized believers into the Body of Christ, the Holy Spirit permanently indwells and assures each one of his/her adoption into the family of God.<sup>35</sup> Though the Spirit of God, like the Son of God, will never leave or forsake us, believers are to be continually filled by (live under the influence of) the Holy Spirit, manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.<sup>36</sup>

The fruit, gifts, and power of the Spirit are given to members to build up the Body of Christ into maturity and oneness and to serve the world through our daily work and witness.<sup>37</sup>

The visible Church consists of local groups of believers throughout the entire world who gather to worship God, listen to His Word, fellowship with His people, and obey Christ's ordinances of baptism and communion. Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the prescribed public profession of believers' identity with Christ's death, resurrection, and new life.<sup>38</sup> Communion involves eating the bread and drinking the cup, symbolizing Christ's body broken for us and His blood shed for the remission of our sins, which we are to do in remembrance of Him until He returns.<sup>39</sup>

The Holy Spirit not only manifests Himself through believers when they are gathered but also when they are scattered. Christians are called to fulfill the redemption mandate of going into all the world and proclaiming the Good News of the gospel, making disciples of all peoples and baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>40</sup> Christians are also called to fulfill the creation mandate given the first couple in the beginning. As "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works," Christians are sent into the world to work, learn, explore, create, enjoy, fix, heal, feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, defend the defenseless, love justice, show mercy, and contribute to society—to love our neighbors as ourselves.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Lk 24:44; Jn 5:39–40.

<sup>34</sup> Acts 1–2; Rom 8:11.

<sup>35</sup> Acts 1:4–5; Rom 8:16; 1 Cor 12:12–13; Eph 1:13–14, 22–23.

<sup>36</sup> Gal 5:22–23; Eph 5:18

<sup>37</sup> Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 12:4–11; Eph 4; 1 Pet 4:10.

<sup>38</sup> Mt 28:16–20; Jn 4:23; Acts 2:38, 42–47

<sup>39</sup> Mt 26:26–27; Mk 14:22–25; Lk 22:14–23; 1 Cor 11:23–26.

<sup>40</sup> Mt 28:19–20; Acts 1:8.

<sup>41</sup> Mt 5:13–16; 25:35–36; Mk 12:31; Rom 12:9–21; Eph 2:10; Js 1:27.

Members of Christ's Body are to pray for and work toward God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven and as it will be done in the new heaven and the new earth, when God makes all things new and the Lamb is sitting on the throne.<sup>42</sup>

## The forgiveness of sins:

The foremost benefit of Christ's death to believers is redemption, the forgiveness of sins. There is no amount of good works persons can do to merit pardon of sins and to buy their way to God. Salvation is a gift of God, entirely His work and received by faith alone in Christ alone.<sup>43</sup> Because Christ died in our place, and if we truly repent and have genuine faith in Him, God declares us positionally righteous and forever justified. The result is permanent and immediate adoption into God's family, the regeneration of our souls, and the beginning of sanctification (becoming more and more like Christ).<sup>44</sup> The complete removal of sin will not occur until we are present with the Lord. In the meantime, however, believers are called to pursue and experience sanctification in this life by the Spirit of God and the Word of God along with the people of God.<sup>45</sup>

Christ's forgiveness is a mandate and model by which His followers are to forgive others. Forgiveness is meant to not only be experienced but also to be extended, serving as evidence that His grace has in fact been received.<sup>46</sup>

## The resurrection of the body:

When Christ returns, all who have put their trust in Him will be raised to new life. The redeemed will be given new bodies, which will be incorruptible, glorious, and sinless. . The eternal state of humanity will include physical resurrected bodies in the new heaven and new earth. These new bodies will serve the purposes that God intended in creation and intends to resume in the new heaven and new earth, as we continue for all of eternity to bring glory to God, to do His work, and to enjoy him forever.<sup>47</sup>

## And the life everlasting.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and we rejected His rule. In the end, the redeemed "from every tribe, tongue, and nation" will rule and reign with Christ in the new heaven and new earth. Sin, death, suffering, and evil will be replaced by obedience, life, pleasure, and good. Christ will restore, and resume God's eternal work of creation with the full

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<sup>42</sup> Mt 6:10.

<sup>43</sup> Rom 3:23-25; Eph 2:1-22; Col 1:13-14; Ti 3:5; Heb 10:4.

<sup>44</sup> Jn 1:12-13; 3:3; Rom 4:5, 25; 5:1-2; 2 Cor 5:17-21,

<sup>45</sup> Rom 8; Gal 5:16-24; 1 Thes 2:13; 3:13; Heb 10:23-25.

<sup>46</sup> Mt 6:14-15; Lk 7:47; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13.

<sup>47</sup> 1 Cor 15:35-57; Rev 21-22.

participation and cooperation of the redeemed. The kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.<sup>48</sup>

**Amen.**

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<sup>48</sup> Rev 11:15; 21:1-7.