

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Doctrinal Statement of Hamilton Reformed Church

Introduction:

Hamilton Reformed church exists as the Body of Jesus Christ. (Colossians 1:24) As Christ's Body, we are called to live lives of unity, purity, and peace. (John 17:23; 1 Timothy 4:12; Romans 14:19) To accomplish that end we submit ourselves to the following doctrines and beliefs, the foundation and authority of which is the Bible, for the glory and praise of God, for our own personal salvation and spiritual growth, and for the benefit of Christ's kingdom and our witness before a watching world. All ministries and activities of Hamilton Reformed Church shall be conducted in such a manner as to support and promote these statements of belief and shall not act or hold positions contrary to them.

The Bible:

We believe that God has spoken in both the Old and New Testaments through the writings of human authors. Though God used humans to record His words, we believe these words are inspired by God through His Spirit, are the very words of God spoken to us, and that these words are without error in their origin or intent. God has given us these words in order that we might know Him, that we might know His complete will for our salvation, and that they might serve as our ultimate authority in that we believe all that it teaches, strive to obey all that it commands, and trust in all that it promises. (Psalm 119:105; Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:20-21)

God:

We believe in one God who is eternal, who created all things, in whom all things have their beginning and end. We believe in one God who is holy and just, loving and merciful, faithful and unchanging. God exists in a loving trinity of three equally distinct and divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each with His own roles but always existing as one God, with one nature and essence. (Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19)

Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, it has been God's gracious purpose to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory. Since he is not limited in knowledge or power by any force outside of Himself or the will of His creation, all that He wills and desires will come to pass. To this God we owe the highest worship, obedience, and love. (Deuteronomy 32:3-4; Ephesians 1:3-10, 3:7-13)

a) God the Father. We believe the Father is in the forefront of creation, serving as the designer, sustainer, and provider of heaven and earth. It is the Father who loves His creation, blesses it with every spiritual blessing, and who chose us to be in Him before the foundation of the world. It is the Father who plays a central role in the design of redemption. It is His righteousness that was violated and it is He who in His mercy and grace sends the Son. It is the Father's justice that is satisfied through the blood of Christ. It is the Father who elects and

chooses us to be the recipients of Christ's redeeming work. (1 Cor. 8:6; John 3:16-17; Romans 3:25-26)

b) God the Son. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, One Person with two natures. While Jesus, who in the Old Testament is known as the Messiah, has always existed with the Father, we believe He was sent by the Father to be conceived in human flesh through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, pointing to His heavenly Father, and was crucified and died, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of God the Father, interceding as our High Priest and Advocate. (Matthew 1:23; John 1:1; Ephesians 1:15-23; 1 Timothy 2:5-6)

We believe that Jesus Christ honored God's law as our Brother by His personal obedience and substitutionary death on the cross for sinners. (John 3:16) He is the one Mediator between God and man able by His sacrifice to reconcile God with man. One day he will return in power and glory to judge the world and complete His redemptive work when He will establish a new heaven and a new earth. We worship Him because of His grace toward us while we are yet sinners. (John 14:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Timothy 2:5-6)

c) God the Holy Spirit. We believe the Holy Spirit is eternally God and that Jesus promised His coming to all believers prior to His departure from earth. The Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father in all that He does. He convicts the sinner of sin and calls him/her to confession. He performs the work of transformation and sanctification in the lives of all who are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He lives within each believer performing the work of illumination, guidance, equipping, and empowering each one for Christ-like living and service. (John 7:38-40, 16:7-11; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-13; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 5:16-18)

We believe the Holy Spirit distributes gifts to the church for the edification of the body of Christ. These gifts display both the diversity and unity of the body and are given for the church's mutual edification and ministry. We believe every believer has been given at least one spiritual gift. (Roman 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:13-14)

The Human Condition:

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image as male and female. This gift of two sexes different yet complimentary reflects the goodness and design of God's creation for humanity. Since humanity is the crowning work of God's creation, each human being is created in His image, is sacred, and is worthy of respect and Christian love. This valuing and respect of human life must be accorded to all humanity with no exception. (Psalm 139:13-15; Revelation 5:9-10)

By willingly rebelling against God, as Adam and Eve's descendants, we are born under the condemnation of sin and also inherit a nature of sin. This sin so encompasses every dimension and aspect of our being that we say we are totally depraved, leaving us morally and spiritually dead, and sentenced to physical death. Only through God's work in Jesus Christ on the cross can sin be paid for and can we be renewed and reconciled to God. (Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 5:12)

Satan:

We believe that angels were created by God and exist to serve Him according to His good pleasure. We believe that a part of their number fell into sin under the leadership of Satan, who in his original rebellion against God is the initiator of sin in the universe. Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve resulted in their disobedience and fall into disobedience. Satan and his hosts are declared enemies of God and man and will be eternally punished in the lake of fire. Satan, though incredibly evil, is nevertheless subject to God's sovereignty and His eternal plan. (Hebrews 1:14; Genesis 3:15; Colossians 2:15; Revelation 20:10)

Salvation:

We believe that every man and woman needs to be saved from their sinful nature and the penalty of spiritual death. We believe salvation involves the redemption of the entire person – body, mind, and spirit – and is offered freely to all who, having been called by God, receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. Trusting Him as Savior, we pass from death to life, accepted by the Father as Christ is accepted and loved by the Father as Christ is loved. Unable to earn salvation on our own merit, we believe Jesus Christ is our perfect representative and substitute, serving on our behalf as the only perfect and complete sacrifice that will satisfy God's justice and allow us to be declared justified before Him. (John 3:16; Acts 4:12; Galatians 3:10-14; 1 Peter 3:18)

We believe this salvation is a gift of God's grace, secured through faith alone in Jesus Christ. This faith is a gift of divine grace and is not simply knowledge of Jesus Christ but is an act of personal trust accompanied by an evidentiary life of obedience and gratitude.

Sanctification:

We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is the ongoing work of God's grace within us through the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby we become new creatures in Christ Jesus. God sets believers apart for His own purposes that they might progress toward spiritual maturity by the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Regeneration involves a change of heart brought about by the Holy Spirit through conviction of our sin, gratitude for the work of Christ on the cross, and a growing love for God. It is accompanied by repentance and faith in Christ which leads to a continual transformation within us. (John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

The Church:

We believe the Church of Jesus Christ, of which He is the head, is comprised of all who have been baptized by the Holy Spirit and profess Christ as their Savior and Lord. (Matthew 16:16; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:20-23)

God speaks to us not only through Scripture and the Holy Spirit but also through the sacraments of Baptism and The Lord's Table which tangibly and symbolically declare the gospel and nourish the body of Christ when celebrated in genuine faith. (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

We believe that every believer is called upon to joyfully follow our Lord as a testimony of their personal faith in Christ. In serving as faithful witnesses, the church trusts the Holy Spirit to draw others to faith in Christ and broaden the impact and evidence of the Kingdom of Christ here on earth. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Hell:

We believe that Hell is real and represents an eternal life totally and fully separate from God. It is a place and state of eternal, conscious suffering where there exists absolutely no evidence of God's mercy and grace, where suffering and despair reign. Hell is declared by God to be the final and eternal home of all those who do not put their faith and trust in the work of Jesus Christ upon the cross. It is God alone who holds the right to judge and sentence one of His creation to eternal punishment in Hell. (Matthew 10:28; 18:9; Luke 12:5; 16:23; 2 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 20:11-15)

Heaven:

We believe that God will judge the whole world, assigning believers to eternal joy with the Lord in the new heaven and new earth, where we will forever celebrate His mercy and grace and praise Him forever. We believe that all believers who die are immediately present with the Lord, although their bodies still await the final resurrection at the second coming of Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 21:1-5)

Christ's Return:

We believe that God in His own time and in His own way will bring the present era to a close. According to His promise, our Lord Jesus Christ will return gloriously, personally, and bodily to take His Church fully to Himself and to establish His Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven. For believers, His coming is their blessed hope and demands constant expectancy, holy living, and sacrificial service. And never again shall any of those belonging to Christ taste death, mourning, crying, or pain, for the old order will have passed away. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:8-14; Revelation 21:1-5)

Christian Living

As an expression of our union with Christ and other believers, we commit ourselves to living in a manner worthy of the Gospel. With God's Word, the Holy Spirit, and fervent prayer in Christ's name as our power and guide, we are called to live lives of obedience, growing as disciples of Christ and making disciples among all people, always bearing witness to Christ in both word and deed.

To accomplish this end:

- We will submit ourselves to the study and obedience of the entire word of God as found in the Bible.
- We will yield to the power of the Holy Spirit who resides in us to produce the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

- We will seek out other believers to form communities of integrity, authenticity, trust, encouragement, and accountability.
- We will take advantage of public and private means of spiritual growth as found in public worship, the preaching of the Word, and participation in the sacraments (baptism and communion), Christian fellowship, and the practice of spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, fasting, meditation, etc.)
- We will be faithful stewards contributing to the work of Christ's Kingdom.
- We will develop and use our spiritual gifts as God has entrusted those gifts to us.
- We will be witnesses with Truth and Grace to our culture and world seeking to make disciples of others.
- We will guard our lives from destructive habits and activities that compromise our fellowship with God and our witness to the world.
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Human Sexuality and Marriage

We believe that all men and women are the temple of God and that as humans we are accountable to God for how we live our lives regardless of prevailing cultural norms. We believe human sexuality is a gift from God to be enjoyed within the context of the marriage relationship. We believe that marriage is an institution ordained by God and, according to Scripture, marriage is always spoken of in the natural order of creation as that between a man and a woman. (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 7:2; Ephesians 5:22-33)

We believe all sexual intercourse outside of marriage represents a sinful perversion of God's gift of sexuality. (*Porneia* in the Greek means all extra-marital and unnatural intercourse and is forbidden in 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:9-20; 10:8; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; and 1 Timothy 4:3) We believe that God created human beings male and female, and therefore, we hold the distinction between the two genders to be sacred and divinely intended.

Recognizing that we all struggle with sin, HRC will seek to provide an environment that welcomes people who struggle with sexual sin. We will seek to love all people in Jesus' name, pointing them towards Christ's power to forgive and heal, pointing them towards the Divine Truth and Grace. In doing so, we shed light on those behaviors that sin against God and violate our flesh, acknowledging there is a difference between sexual preference and temptation and actual practice.

We also believe that sexual sin is not characterized in Scripture as being more severe than other forms of sin. We will seek God to discern ways that we can directly and indirectly minister and share God's love with those who struggle with every kind of sin.

Family

We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society and that a marriage which reflects the Biblical priorities and principles is the foundation of a healthy family. Children are a gift and blessing from God. Parents, together with the help of the Christian community, are responsible to daily and diligently lead them to God and His Truth and Grace, demonstrating what an intimate and personal relationship with God looks like, and

helping them build a strong spiritual and moral foundation through a Biblical lifestyle, appropriate teaching, and discipline. (Deuteronomy 6:7-9; Psalm 127:3-5; Ephesians 6:1-4)

We also believe there are those God calls to lives of singleness and chastity. The apostle Paul taught that such a lifestyle was not only good but has the advantage of enabling the believer to serve the Lord without distraction. (1 Corinthians 7:8; 32-34)

Divorce and Remarriage

In our marriage vows, we promise to love, honor, and cherish until death. We recognize that living in this world we fall short of God's design, sometimes facing irreconcilable differences. Still, we believe God grieves divorce and that every attempt should be made between two partners to reconcile differences and with renewed commitment seek the necessary help to unite in the spirit of Christ's love.

Abortion and Euthanasia

We believe that God is the author of all life and human life is a sacred gift from God and must be respected from the moment of conception (fertilization) until natural death. We believe that the intentional, willful termination of a pregnancy at any time after conception constitutes the taking of an unborn life. Therefore, abortions, including for reasons of birth defects, gender selection, birth control, or even in the tragic instances of rape or incest, are inconsistent with Scripture and the glory of God. (Psalm 139:13-16) In the event of a risk to a mother's life where a choice between two lives must be made, we believe prayer and careful medical dialogue must take place before a final decision can be made.

We oppose active intervention with the intent to produce death (euthanasia), whether for the relief of suffering, economic considerations, or convenience. We do not oppose the withdrawal or failure to institute life support in patients where death appears inevitable or imminent.

Love and Unity

We believe that we should demonstrate biblical love for all people, believers and unbelievers alike, who may oppose us and toward those who engage in sinful practice and action. We must engage and embrace all persons lovingly, mercifully, graciously, gently, patiently, and humbly, regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, age, religion, or ideology. Although God commands us to abhor and reject sinful actions, we are to love, serve, and pray for all persons.

Church Policy

All staff, ordained and un-ordained, employed by the church shall affirm HRC's statement of faith, *What We Believe*, in its entirety. Any staff acting in a manner contrary to our statement of belief shall submit to disciplinary actions at the discretion of the Board of Elders.