

THE STATEMENT OF FAITH AND PRACTICE OF THE

JESUS FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

of which the Covenant Members Style 3 form the

NEW CREATION CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The JESUS FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, in common with the Christian Church generally, accepts the historic Creeds known as the Apostles', the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds. In the following clauses, however, the distinctive Faith and Practice of the Jesus Fellowship Church is fully stated.

1. **WE BELIEVE** in one Almighty God; in His eternal triune nature as Father, Son and Spirit, Three Persons in One, who are co-equal and consubstantial; and in His absolute sovereignty over the whole universe both material and spiritual. We acknowledge that He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things visible and invisible; that He is the source of all life; and that He is the Judge of all, both living and dead. We confess that He is self-existent, all-holy, infinite, omniscient, omnipresent, faithful and just, and that He is unceasingly worshipped by hosts of angels. We confess that He alone, in His Trinity and in His Unity, is worthy of worship forever by all mankind as well as the angels. We acknowledge that He is the invisible God who reveals Himself to mankind through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We confess that the regenerate, being born of God, are sons of the Heavenly Father, who is the First Person of the Trinity, the Author of all things created and that He acts in covenant grace to protect, supply, discipline, strengthen and glorify His children.

2. **WE AFFIRM** that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, the Son of God. We acknowledge that He is the Second Person of the Trinity, Creator of all things, the eternal Son of the Father, begotten and not created, of one substance with the Father and Spirit, incarnate by the Holy Spirit as Jesus of Nazareth, born of the virgin Mary. We confess that He is perfect God and perfect Man, who for us was crucified, died, was buried and rose again. We believe in His righteous, sinless life as a man, in His substitutionary, atoning death upon the cross for the sins of men, in His descent into Hades, in His bodily resurrection from the dead, in his ascension into heaven, in His position of full authority at God's right hand, in His delegated authority as Judge of all, in His present intercessory

ministry as Surety and High Priest on behalf of the redeemed, and in His future coming again to the earth in glory. We confess that, by His death, as a sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the whole world, according to God's law, and by the offering and continued effectiveness of His own blood, He has fully and sufficiently accomplished the redemption of His Church. By believing into Him, men and women are saved from sin and death and become partakers of eternal life in the Kingdom of God. We acknowledge that He is the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world on behalf of the elect, who are joined to Him through regeneration.

3. **WE CONFESS** that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah-King of Old Testament prophecy who brings to His people the salvation of God in an everlasting Kingdom of justice, love and peace; as the true Ruler of this earth, He now reigns as Lord Jesus Christ over, with and in His people; the visible fulness of His earthly rule awaits His coming again at a time known only to the Father.

4. **WE AFFIRM** that the Holy Spirit is fully God, the Third Person of the Trinity, of one substance with the Father and the Son, yet a distinct Person as each is distinct; He is the Giver of Life; with the Father and the Son together He is worshipped and glorified. He is the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. He personally indwells all true believers as the Spirit of Life and Truth so that they know and worship God in spirit and truth. We hold that such regenerate ones will know the presence and power of the Holy Spirit; He is the seal or guarantee of their redemption and sanctification in Christ; He is the inner well or fountain "springing up into eternal life" whereby they experience continually His living activity bringing God's purity, strength and wisdom to their souls. We acknowledge that the Holy Spirit is Christ's advocate and witness who will ever glorify Jesus Christ as Lord. We confess Him as the Spirit of Holiness, Love, Faith, Power, Joy, Peace, Adoption, Wisdom, Revelation, Grace and Healing in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and in the members of Christ's Body. He witnesses to our spirits that we are God's children, causing us to cry to God as Father. Through the one Spirit we are baptised into the one Body of Christ. We confess that the Holy Spirit joins the regenerate together in holy brotherhood as Christ's Body, bringing the variety of His gifts and grace to the individual members, and anointing them with power, so that there is a mutual functioning for the common good. We hold that the Holy Spirit will bring to the local church-community God's word in wisdom, revelation, direction and discipline. We acknowledge that believers, living and walking in the Holy Spirit, produce the fruits of righteousness and all godly virtues in the likeness of Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin and that some of the ungodly will repent and believe into the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. **WE BELIEVE** that angels have been created by God, to serve Him and to minister on behalf of the saved ones. We recognise that Satan, or the devil, a fallen angelic being, is the deceiver of the world, the father of lies and the tempter into evil. He is permitted by God, for the fulfilment of God's sovereign purpose, to have evil authority over mankind through spiritual world-rulers of

darkness, and demonic hosts of wickedness. Satan and his legions have, however, been totally overthrown by Christ through His cross, His blood, His burial, His resurrection and His ruling ministry as the ascended Lord and High Priest. Demons are therefore cast out of people in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We recognise that the spirit of this present world is deceptive, selfish, malicious and harmful; but we hold that the regenerate, through their identification with Christ's cross, are severed from the evil spirit of this world and, therefore, the devil and his demons have no right or power over them. However, the Father, for the purposes of grace, may allow evil powers to harass and oppose the saints.

6. **WE HOLD** that the first man, Adam, was created by God as a living soul in God's likeness to serve Him and to have dominion upon earth; through Adam's sin, the human race is now fallen away from God's presence and likeness, and carries the Adamic nature of sin and death. We believe, therefore, that sinful mankind, and the whole world with it, is under the dominion of the evil one and that all men and women are born as Adam's cursed seed and live in this sinful inheritance. We affirm that in such condition all are doomed to suffer the torment of an everlasting hell and that only through God's mercy in the new covenant of grace in Christ Jesus can men and women be released from the captivity of the flesh and be born anew of the Spirit and enter into eternal life. We believe that creation will be restored to its perfect state at the final establishment of Christ's Kingdom on the New Earth.

7. **WE BELIEVE** that God's eternal purpose is to reveal Himself in His creation and in particular to gain a people for His own possession and glory, by His election and calling of such a people from the nations of the earth. We acknowledge that God made covenant with Abraham as father of the chosen race of Israel and that the promised inheritance finds fulfilment through the new covenant in Jesus Christ, in which both Jews and Gentiles are of the true Israel, the Household and Church of the living God. We confess that God is faithful in honouring the covenant and that the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully ministers to His redeemed people the blessings of the Kingdom of God in righteousness, peace and joy.

8. **WE AFFIRM** that God works sovereignly in free grace to regenerate sinful men and women and bring them into union with Him in Christ. We believe, therefore, that sinful men and women are granted opportunity for repentance from sin, and faith towards God in and with Christ so that they are justified and born anew. We confess that they must be "born of water and the Spirit" to enter the kingdom of God. We believe that Scripture reveals the need for believers to be baptised in water, wherein they, through God's active grace, are fully identified with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. We hold that in baptism by immersion, through faith in the working of God, believers are united with Christ in the death and burial of the corrupt rule and cursed inheritance of fallen Adam and, rising with Christ in the living power of the Holy Spirit, henceforth walk in newness of life under the Lordship of Christ. In baptism,

believers receive the remission or washing of sins, confirmed by a clear conscience, and are thenceforth able to reckon themselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, being joined with the members of Christ's Body, in the local church-community. We believe that only true disciples of Christ should be baptised in His name and into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Such baptised disciples must then be taught to practise all that Christ and His apostles commanded.

9. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** that baptism in the Holy Spirit, normally with the manifestation of speaking in unknown tongues, is a vital work of God's grace bringing the triumphant witness in and through the believer of resurrection with Christ into first or perfect love and full sanctification. We hold that thereby believers find their true liberty and that the laws of God are written upon the new heart and the renewed mind. There is thus produced a living obedience to the holy will of God; believers will love God with their whole heart, mind, soul and strength, and their neighbour-brothers as themselves. However, we recognise that the full display of sanctification in strong, holy living, requires growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ with self-denial, and many experiences of the Spirit's grace as the soul thirsts for the living God.

10. **WE BELIEVE** that God's covenant people are called to be separated to Him from the ruling spirit of the world; they are crucified to the world in the cross of Christ and cannot love the world or the things that are in the world. They are, however, redeemed in Christ to act, in his name, as the light of the world and to bear prophetic witness to the Kingdom of God. We hold that they are to demonstrate the salvation of God corporately, as a visible expression of the Lordship of Christ. They are thus the city or Zion of God, his temple and dwelling place, displaying in true spiritual worship and in holy society the fruits of righteousness, to the glory of God.

11. **WE HOLD** that the regenerate should gather together as local church-communities to be a true brotherhood of holy love and service, functioning as the Body of Christ, the Household of God. We practise this by being joined together as church households and by meeting as congregations of church households. We recognise the diversity and harmony of spiritual gifts and graces, special offices and varied abilities, and that these function, according to the individual priesthood of every member, in the upbuilding of the Body in the holy perfection of love, and in the maturing of the saints. We hold that church-communities shall assemble regularly to worship God, receive instruction, exercise the ministry of spiritual gifts and special offices, pray and share in the covenant meal of bread and wine.

12. **WE BELIEVE** that God unites His elect children in the Body of Christ, his Church and we confess therefore His Church as local, universal, militant and triumphant. Christ is the Head of the Church and her sole authority. We do not accept that the unregenerate, or those not holding to the pure faith of Christ, can

be members of Christ's Church and we particularly exclude those holding doctrines regarded as heretical when tested by the tenets of the historic Christian creeds.

13. **WE AFFIRM** the call and command of Jesus Christ to renounce all other things to be his disciple, and recognise His prior claim over material possessions, family ties and social ambitions. We do not hold, however, that this requires rejection of the nuclear family or any form of strict exclusivism. We acknowledge that, in the regenerate, the power of the flesh and world is removed and that there will, therefore, be a desire to follow Christ in the fulness of the new creation humanity granted to them. We believe that Christ makes and trains His disciples through the serving authority of his ministers and through the jointings of holy fellowship. We affirm that the goal of discipleship is to present every believer mature in Christ in holy character and ministry.

14. **WE HOLD** that the regenerate, as may be possible, shall voluntarily have "all things in common", practising community brotherhood in accordance with the holy principles of devotion to Christ and of wholehearted sharing exemplified in the first church-community in Jerusalem. We believe that Scripture reveals, and the Holy Spirit now testifies, that Christ's Kingdom is marked by justice, meekness, mercy and genuine love. We practise, therefore, the law of Christ in loving our brethren as ourselves, observing material equality amongst members of the local church-community and expressing Kingdom righteousness in a common life of holy fellowship and shared possessions. Within prevailing social and legal conditions we believe, therefore, whenever possible, in the practice of such community living wherever a local church-community has been planted, and that all property and income of those members participating, shall be held and administered communally. We recognise, however, the right of every believer to determine this matter before God according to his own conscience.

15. **WE AFFIRM** that the Lord Jesus Christ taught that it is not possible to serve God and mammon. We believe, therefore, that personal wealth, the prides of this world, and the self-righteous heart, hinder men from seeking and serving God and His Kingdom. We believe that faith, love and service toward God and His Kingdom will be found more easily in those of personal poverty. We hold, therefore, that church-communities, practising community of goods in genuine discipleship and brotherhood, will find reality in the service of God, and will be distinctive from the society of fallen mankind. Such communities will maintain high standards of morality and industry, having a culture characterised by godliness, modesty, beauty, peace, joy and harmony, and will avoid all competitiveness, harshness and worldly ostentation. The members of such communities will voluntarily embrace personal poverty and practise a simple lifestyle together. We believe that God will richly bless such communities by providing for all their needs and enabling unrighteous mammon to be used, without selfishness, for the work of the Kingdom of God. We hold that such

communities may engage in honourable business activities and that employment of members in such businesses is regarded as a service unto the Lord.

16. **WE RECOGNISE** that God, in His sovereign will for this present time, grants grace to humanity in common so that goodness is to be found among the laws, the character, the behaviour, the knowledge and the inventions of the human race. We believe such common grace to be within God's providence for His covenant people.

17. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** that secular authority is ordained by God as an instrument for good and that the governing authorities should commend the practice of righteousness. We will therefore submit to the laws of government. We hold, however, that Christ's Church should be free to exercise the rights and responsibilities of faith and to worship without hindrance..

18. **WE HOLD** that believers are required to bear their own cross to be Christ's disciples. We confess that the world must persecute us, even as it opposed and rejected Jesus Christ, our Lord. We are identified with all who suffer for the sake of Christ and the gospel and rejoice that we also share Christ's sufferings, receiving persecution in God's grace, with patience and meekness and without retaliation.

19. **WE CONFESS** that the full gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. We hold that this gospel shall be proclaimed through the living and militant witness of the church-community moving as an active, anointed and compassionate army, and through church-planting and church-building servants, such as apostles, prophets and evangelists, sent out from the church and bearing witness to the authority of the Lord Jesus. We recognise that God chooses those who are foolish and weak in the world to shame the wise and the strong, so that no human being may boast in the presence of God. We practise ministry amongst the poor and disadvantaged expressing Christlike compassion in addressing practical and spiritual needs, believing that the church is called to do good to all, especially those of the household of faith. We believe that the heralding of the gospel of the Kingdom through the power of the living Word of God, confirmed with signs and wonders, shall cause many to be born of God and to be gathered together as the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ among the nations.

20. **WE AFFIRM** that God calls the regenerate to be holy as He is holy, and that they are washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God. We hold that, with a pure heart, a good conscience and genuine faith, they shall live in Christ, walking in holiness and perfect love in obedience to God. We acknowledge, however, that believers may become disobedient, break the covenant bond of brotherhood and depart from the faith by engaging in wilful sin. We hold that, where backsliding continues,

and there is no repentance and return to faith and obedience, apostasy will result. We teach, therefore, that believers must perfect holiness in the fear of God. We believe that the disciplines, practices, relationships and security of holy community are of God's grace to ensure growth in holiness and the display of personal and social righteousness.

21. **WE HOLD** that Scripture gives authority for the exercise of the disciplines of correction, or of exclusion from the church-community, should the holy standards of the covenant bond of brotherhood not be accepted and practised. We recognise, however, that the purpose of such discipline is to bring repentance to the sinful, so that they may be forgiven and restored to the brotherhood of the church-community.

22. **WE AFFIRM** that the Bible (the Old and New Testaments in the Protestant canon) is the fully inspired word of God and accept that these Scriptures alone are the warrant and revelation for our faith and practice, believing that the Holy Spirit interprets and applies the scriptural truth to the Church in this present age.

23. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** and observe the sacrament of the baptism of believers by immersion in water as an entry into the covenant bond of brotherhood; and the sacrament of holy communion in the Body and Blood of Christ through the meal of bread and wine, wherein we remember and celebrate our redemption in Christ Jesus, joyfully affirming that we are God's covenant people, and giving true recognition to that holy love which binds us together in perfect harmony.

24. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** and practise the washing of feet to declare our partnership in Christ and to symbolise our service to one another in the love of Christ.

25. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE**, that believers, having received a valid baptism into Christ and entered into the covenant bond of brotherhood, and showing in holiness and love the fruits of their resurrection with Christ, may voluntarily commit themselves to Covenant Membership of this church-community, In this, they pledge, along with their fellow Covenant Members, to live according to the pattern described in this church-community's Sevenfold Covenant of Membership. On the public declaration of this pledge, we receive such into Covenant Membership by the right hand of fellowship.

26. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** and practise the anointing of the sick with oil in the name of the Lord, and the laying on of hands with the prayer of faith for the healing of body and soul.

27. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** and practise the laying on of hands for baptism in the Holy Spirit, for the receiving of spiritual gifts, for healing, for commissioning to ministry offices, and for the conferment of serving authority and special grace.

28. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** that Christ's Church has power, through those with the authority and gifting for such ministry, to exorcise demonic spirits in Christ's name.

29. **WE HOLD** that infants, whose parents (or one of them) are living in faith and holiness as members of the church-community, shall be presented to the Lord with thanksgiving. We believe that the children of parents living sanctified in Christ are within the covenant of grace, though recognising the need for this to be confirmed by personal regeneration at that age when they become personally accountable before God. We recognise that godly parents will bring up their children in the discipline and nurture of the Lord, in accordance with the practice of the church-community.

30. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** the ordinance of holy marriage between the regenerate, in which husband and wife, being joined together by God, shall live together in the pure relationship of marriage as set out in Scripture. We recognise that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the Church, and that husbands must love their wives as Christ loved the Church. We hold, therefore, that wives shall be submissive to their husbands, having a gentle and quiet spirit.

31. **WE RECOGNISE** that it is the call and gifting of God for some believers, both male and female, to remain celibate in order to devote themselves to Christ.

32. **WE HOLD** that the governing authority within the church-community is vested by the Lord Jesus Christ in pastor-elders who are shepherds and ministers of His flock, being responsible for the spiritual and material well-being of every member, and for the upbuilding of the church-community in holiness and love. Some of these pastor-elders may move in further apostolic, prophetic or evangelistic church-planting and church-building service. We hold that all pastor-elders and church-planting and church-building ministers shall be subject to the authority of an Apostolic Group of mature men of God within the church-community. We recognise that the whole body of disciple-believers, , if living obediently in Christ, carries the authority of the corporate mind of the Holy Spirit. Pastor-elders shall be appointed from those scripturally qualified whose shepherding ministry is already apparent. We hold that no woman shall be a pastor-elder, for women are not to hold such authority over men.

33. **WE RECOGNISE** the office of deacon, and that deacons minister to the church-communities as practical and administrative servants under the authority of pastor-elders, being appointed from those scripturally qualified who have already shown their servant-heartedness towards the brotherhood.

34. **WE HOLD** that all members shall respect the serving authority of the Apostolic Group, church-planting and church-building servants, pastor-elders, and deacons. We recognise that if one of these proves unworthy of office, he shall be subject to the disciplines of the church-community.

35. **WE AFFIRM** that male and female are equal in new creation status, all being sons of God through faith and baptism into Christ. We hold, however, the scriptural distinction between manhood and womanhood for this present age in accordance with God's purpose in creation, and that men differ from women in role, appearance and dress. We recognise, therefore, this holy distinction throughout the church-community, acknowledging that sisters fulfil their varied ministries in the grace of womanhood and within the godly covering authority of the brethren.

36. **WE HOLD** that the keeping of special days and seasons is not warranted by the Scripture for God's people of new creation in Christ Jesus, who belong to the Kingdom of God. We recognise, however, the scriptural significance of the first day of the week, the Lord's day of resurrection.

37. **WE BELIEVE** that members should engage in personal communion with God, in prayer, meditation and worship. We recognise that personal and corporate fasting is authorised by Scripture. We acknowledge the practice of confessing sins in repentance before God, receiving forgiveness and victory; and we accept the need to confess faults to brethren, thereby finding healing and peace.

38. **WE ACKNOWLEDGE** that the physical bodies of all human beings are mortal and therefore subject to sickness, degeneration and death; but we hold that the regenerate, living in Christ, are redemptively released from Adam's bondage to corruption and that the Holy Spirit now confirms this by causing believers to yield the members of their bodies to God as instruments of righteousness, and by bringing a quickening, in Christ's grace, to this present mortal body. We affirm that the body is for the Lord, whether in life or in death; at death believers know Christ's resurrection victory as they leave their mortal body to dwell with the Lord; the body shall then be carried, with loving grief and triumphant faith, to burial in certain knowledge of resurrection wherein the mortal body puts on its immortal glory. We hold that physical life must be safeguarded from conception to natural death.

39. **WE HOLD** that the bodies of all shall rise at the coming again in majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ and that all shall be judged according to the deeds done in the mortal body, those in Christ to eternal life and those outside of Him to everlasting death; the regenerate, having received their full redemption glory shall reign for ever with Christ in the Kingdom of God.

40. **WE BELIEVE** that the truths contained in this Statement of Faith and Practice are in accord with the revelation of Scripture and are witnessed to by the Spirit of Truth Himself. We therefore maintain that insofar as this Statement sets out the doctrines and ordinances to which we adhere, it is unalterable. We recognise, however, that the Holy Spirit may give further revelation (within scriptural revelation), but hold that this revelation will supplement and not contradict these doctrines and ordinances. We recognise that the Holy Spirit may give further instructions concerning the practical application of these truths, so that the practices, whilst always according with the doctrines and ordinances, may from time to time need to be varied.

This Statement of Faith and Practice was received and approved by a full assembly of Covenant Members of Jesus Fellowship Church, meeting at the Chapel, Bugbrooke, Northamptonshire on Tuesday 11th March 1980.

Revisions to the text have been approved, pursuant to the Constitution of the Church, on 25th July 1984, 22nd July 1985, 7th May 1990 and 2nd August 2008.

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