

ANTIOCH, THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH, INC.

ARTICLES OF FAITH

Proposed Amendment

Fundamental Doctrine

The exclusive and fundamental doctrine of Antioch, The Apostolic Church, Inc. is the Bible standard of full salvation as solely defined, expressed, and practiced by the Apostles commissioned personally by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). This standard encompasses repentance from dead works; faith toward the One True and Living God, the Father, who was manifested in the flesh to humanity as the Lord Jesus Christ; water baptism by full immersion expressly in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; Spiritual baptism of the Holy Ghost with the initial external sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance; the receiving of and daily walking in the Righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the perfecting of love and holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord (Acts 2:4; 2:38; Hebrews 6:1-2; 12:14).

We acknowledge that the Bible grants spiritually appropriate latitude by personal affirmation and confidence regarding the specifics in the many ways that our faith is applied and practiced on a daily basis (Romans 14). Because they apply individually and not necessarily collectively, these applications and practices of Biblical principles are called *personal convictions*. Additionally, because of potential differences in how each of us “see” the expression of these personal convictions, each member of Antioch should pledge to endeavor to protect and maintain the unity of the Spirit; loving and respecting one another, until we all come into the unity of the faith as the Father leads us and enables us to mature in Him (Ephesians 4:11-16). Therefore, we admonish all Saints that they must not contend for their differing personal convictions to the disunity of the body.

The following affirmations are an important preface to this statement of the faith of Antioch, The Apostolic Church, Inc. We love everyone by and through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as He so loved everyone and demonstrated such consistently. However, also like Him, we do not embrace, practice, or condone those attitudes, actions, behaviors, life-styles, etc. that the Bible specifically details as being “sin.” Furthermore, we emphatically do not believe that we must embrace and/or confirm any aspect of someone’s non-Biblical life-style as an indicator of or a requirement for demonstrating God’s love for them as expressed through us. We believe that it is the highest form of love to tell someone the truth regardless of how unacceptable that truth may be to them. Fundamentally and prototypically, the Lord Jesus Christ is our example

and singular role model in all things. This includes actions and attitudes towards people and our love and treatment of them as expressed by all modes of speech and behavior; even if any or all of these are not acceptable to society as a whole or to any portion of it. Our goal is to be a source of His light into this world.

The Word of God

We believe the entire Bible to be divinely inspired by God in its original languages. While we acknowledge and use many translations for comparative expression and study, the *Authorized King James Version* is our preferred translation in all matters of doctrine at Antioch.

We believe the Holy Bible to be the infallible, unchangeable, eternal Word of God (Matthew 5:18-19; 24:35). The Apostle Paul declared, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible is the only God-given authority which humankind possesses; therefore, all doctrine, faith, hope, and instruction for the Church must be based upon and, in all instances, harmonize with the Bible. It is to be read and studied by means of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:27; 2 Timothy 2:15). "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Bible is the only source *of* and the final authority *in* all matters of doctrine. Its principles hold the answers to all questions concerning a Christian's "manner of life" and it supersedes all human opinions, preferences, religious traditions, and inventions. (Colossians 2:1-10). The Bible is superior to all laws of human origin (Hebrews 4:12). Therefore, we at Antioch believe that nothing is superior to the truth, wisdom, and principles of the Word of God.

Jesus declared the Bible to be the Truth, the Word of God (John 17:17); and, as such, it is the source of the knowledge of "sanctification" or "salvation."

Finally, all believers are commanded to "grow in grace and in the knowledge" of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). This is accomplished by studying the Word of God as we have been instructed to do (John 5:39; 2 Timothy 2:15). The primary source of all false doctrine and teachings is an ignorance of the Word of God (Matthew 22:29; Mark 12:24). We at Antioch believe that true spiritual maturity can only be achieved by having a thorough working knowledge and understanding of the Bible (Hebrew 5:12-6:3).

The Church and the Kingdom of God

We believe that after Adam and Eve, the Church is God's second act of "human" creation (Matthew 16:18-19). We believe that the Church was brought into being on the first day of the New Testament, which was the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:1-4 (see also Hebrews 9:14-17). God created it by Himself and for Himself (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 2:10). Collectively, the Church is variously identified as being His Body, His Bride, His Flock, His army, the Temple of God, and by numerous other descriptives. Individually, the members of the Church are variously identified as being His children (sons of God), His Saints, His disciples, His sheep, His laborers, and by numerous other descriptives as well. We believe that the Church alone as an entity is predestined to be saved and thus cannot be lost, with the actual roster of Church members being only those who each individually have made a free-will decision of faith to be saved. The Bible declares that it is impossible to be a part of God's spiritual body, the Church, without obeying His prescribed plan of salvation and continuing to walking in the faith and spiritual life as defined by both Jesus and the Apostles, whose teachings are the foundation of the Church (Matthew 28:20; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:19-22).

As illustrated by the typological reference to Noah's Ark in 1 Peter 3:18-21, only those who are actually in the Church will be saved. There is no salvation outside of the Body of Christ. Access to the blood of Christ and therefore the means to have one's sins forgiven is obtained only through fellowship with the Body (1 John 1:7-9). The Church is the Body of Christ on the earth and His blood is in His body. As the blood of our bodies cleanses us, so does the blood of Jesus in His body also perpetually cleanse His body.

The Church as a collective body is made up of all believers, as defined by the Bible. The *Kingdom of God* is the Biblical reference for the ministry of the Church in the earth. The Church is the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on the earth and to the world. When the Church utilizes the authority of God, it is operating within the Kingdom of God. Therefore, being "born again" both saves us and makes us a part of the Lord's Kingdom (John 3:3-5).

Entrance into the Church can only be obtained by being born again as Biblically defined, and only God Himself can facilitate the born again process to save souls and add them to the Church. However, we are commanded to know them that labor among us and to separate ourselves from those who do not faithfully hold to and practice the teachings of the Word of God.

We believe that all authority comes from God alone. While the Church is first and foremost a spiritual body, we acknowledge that, in obedience to the Word of God, the Church on earth must abide by all laws of government that do not specifically violate the Word of God. Therefore, we believe that Scripture permits the Church in any specific geographical area to incorporate, manage bank accounts, own property, carry insurance, and assume other such civil privileges not contrary to God's Word.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that no individual or local Church is capable of "preaching the Gospel to every creature"; therefore, for the Church to function as a unified and focused body in the earth, it needs to have some type of organizational structure that allows it to fulfill the Great Commission in the earth as the collective Body

of Christ. However, no human-initiated organizational structure, or its legal documents, and/or its organizational functions can ever supercede the rights, responsibility, and authority of the local Church to fulfill its portion of the Great Commission as the Lord leads it to do. In addition, it must always be remembered that, globally, the Church universal is and always will be the Body of Christ, regardless of how it may be divided or redefined by human-initiated organizational structures.

The Ministry/Leadership of the Church

We emphatically and categorically deny that the Bible teaches the “doctrine of clergy and laity.” We believe that all members of the Body of Christ, the Church, are “called” to minister the Word of God as members of His holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:2-10; Hebrews 5:12-14). All members of the Church are Saints of God. However, we acknowledge that God has called to Himself and commissioned certain Saints of His choosing to be His servants to His Body by imparting to them various ministry giftings to lead, minister to, and train/equip the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16). As both Paul and Peter stated, all who are in the Church are “brothers and sisters” in God and are therefore equal in God’s sight; God’s chosen leaders of His Body are not superior to any other member of the Church.

We also acknowledge that by God’s choice He has delegated His authority to certain members of His body to “rule” (oversee) the Church, its members, and its work. We believe that the distinct titles of leadership offices within the Body as defined by the Bible are Deacon, Elder, and Bishop. The specific responsibilities of these offices vary according to the needs of the local Church.

We believe that the Bible teaches us to acknowledge those that the Lord Jesus Christ has chosen to serve Him in leading His Body, and that we are to “obey” the Words of God that He gives them to minister to us, for they are given to us as examples of faith and Christian character (Hebrews 13:7,17). However, the Church does not “serve” these leaders, neither do these leaders serve the people of God; these leaders who are gifted by God to lead His Body serve God by ministering to His Body. Furthermore, according to Biblical principle; beyond giving Scriptural advice, we strongly oppose these God-appointed ministers to the Body of Christ involving themselves in making or mandating any personal decisions for any members of the Body. That is God’s prerogative and His alone. To do so is usurping His authority.

We believe that the Scripture teaches that those who preach/teach the Gospel should live by means of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14) and that the laborer is worthy of his hire (Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:7; 1 Timothy 5:17-18). Therefore, when possible, it is Biblical for these “gifted” elders to be in full time ministry to the Body of Christ.

Lastly, we believe that both males and females may be called by God to both minister the Word and serve in leadership of the Body within the parameters as defined by the Scriptures.

The Doctrines of the Church

We believe, as stated by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 6:1-3, that the foundational doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ and therefore of Christ's Body the Church are as follows: Repentance from dead works, Faith toward God, the Doctrine of Baptisms (Water and Spirit), the Laying on of Hands, the Resurrection of the Dead, and Eternal Judgment. Any fellowship of people who claim a membership in the true body of Christ must fully believe, teach, and practice all of these seven essential, fundamental, and foundational doctrines; which were taught by Christ and His apostles (Matthew 28:20; Acts 2:42). Furthermore, Biblically, there is no possibility of spiritual fellowship with any individual or body which does not believe, teach, and practice the same (2 John 1:9-11).

The Godhead and the Incarnation

According to the Bible, the Greatest of all commandments is to know and believe that there is only ONE GOD (Mark 12:28-29). This ONE GOD is from everlasting to everlasting and is therefore infinite (Psalms 90:2). He alone existed before all things. Therefore, we believe that the Supreme God of the Bible and thus of Christianity is one Divine Being: Our God is an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, invisible, and eternal Spirit; He is the Creator and owner of the heavens and the earth and likewise all things therein. The Supreme Godhead is singular and indivisible in ONE person (Hebrews 1:1-4). There is one God and God is One (Mark 12:29, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Galatians 3:20). Furthermore, we believe that our ONE God was manifested as the Father in Creation, the Son of God in redemption, and the Holy Ghost in regeneration; thus revealing the Godhead to humankind in these three primary offices and by these three primary titles of God.

The one true God, known as *Jehovah* in the *Old Testament*, instilled the fullness of the Godhead within the body of a fully human man (Colossians 2:9). His humanity was supernaturally begotten of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary and was born as Jesus of Nazareth, being thus the Son of God (God Himself was His Father) as well as the Son of man (the virgin woman was His mother) (Matthew 1:20-23). God was manifest in the flesh in, through, and by the humanity of the Christ. As Paul says, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16).

According to the Scripture, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). But, one who rejects the Son rejects God Himself; for "God [the Father] was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

We believe that, "In Him [the man Christ Jesus] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell" (Colossians 1:19). Therefore, though Jesus was a man according to His flesh, He was and is the Almighty God according to the Deity that indwelt His humanity.

His flesh was the Lamb of God that was offered as the sacrifice for our sins (John 1:29,36; Hebrews 10). In His flesh He serves as mediator between Deity and all of humanity: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

We believe that it is idolatrous and heretical to divide or categorize God into parts by any interpretation, i.e., defining God as existing in multiple persons or attributing more than one personality to the Godhead. As Jesus Himself said, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58); "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24); "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:24); and "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30).

For the reasons stated above, we exclusively reject Trinitarianism, Arianism, or any other pseudo-Christian doctrine of the Deity and the Godhead which originated from a source other than the Holy Scriptures and which in any way dilutes God's essential and absolute oneness of being.

The Old Testament emphatically declares in Isaiah 45:5-6 that there is only ONE GOD: "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else." (See also Isaiah 44:6-8; 45:21; Hosea 13:4). The words of Christ Himself definitively declare that He is the same God as the One God of the Old Testament: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8). Also, we believe the inspired words of the Apostle Peter: "God has made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). We believe that Jesus' deity is identified by the title *Lord* and that His humanity as the "Son of God" is identified by the title *Christ*.

We believe that the man Christ Jesus has ascended into heaven and both now and forever reigns over all Creation (Acts 1:9, Ephesians 1:20-23, Hebrews 8:1). He exists as the only eternally visible representation and manifestation of the One true and invisible God (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3).

The Name Above All Names

We believe that the Supreme God has but one personal and proper name. Though God used various titles; such as "*Elohim*," "*Adonai*," "*El Shaddai*," and "*Jehovah* (Lord)" (God's redemptive name in the Old Testament); in the New Testament His fully revealed name is *JESUS*. With the accompanying, descriptive titles as stated in Acts 2:36, the fullest and most complete statement of God's eternal, redemptive name is revealed as and declared to be *Lord Jesus Christ* (Acts 16:31; Acts 20:21; 1 Corinthians 8:6).

The Prophet Isaiah declared: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

This prophecy was fulfilled when the Son of God was named: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

To call upon the name of *Jesus* is to call upon the name of God the Father Himself. Hebrews 1:4-5 speaks of Jesus "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath BY INHERITANCE OBTAINED A MORE EXCELLENT NAME than they. For unto which of the angels said he [God] at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" If the Son of God "inherited" His name, the name *Jesus* would have to be the Father's name first.

The name *Jesus* is the most exalted name in all the universe (Ephesians 1:21; Philippians 2:9), and Paul declared that at the name of *Jesus* every knee in heaven and in earth shall bow in acknowledgment (Philippians 2:10). Furthermore, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). To call upon the name of the Lord for salvation as described in Acts 2:21 is only fulfilled by having the name *Jesus* invoked ("called") upon the recipient of water baptism as described in Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16.

As Paul has written, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..." (Colossians 3:17). Therefore, everything that we do and speak should bring glory to the Name of the Lord (Psalms 29:2; Revelation 15:4).

Creation

We believe that the I AM God existed before everything else (Psalms 90:1-2). We believe that God and God alone is the Creator of the Universe and all that is therein (Psalms 24:1; Isaiah 45:18). He was before all things and by Him all things consist (Colossians 1:12-20). All things were made according to His will and for His purposes (Romans 11:33-36; Revelation 4:11). Furthermore, we believe that God made earth specifically as the dwelling place for humanity.

We believe that the Universe was created first, then the earth. The seven creative "days" (including the seventh day when God rested) were all in reference to earth and its environs. We do not believe that God created the earth and all that is on it in seven "24 hour days." We believe that He utilized seven "generations" (phases) of creation as stipulated in Genesis 2:4. Furthermore, "time" as we know it was not "created" until the fourth creative "day" (Genesis 1:14).

During the sixth creative period, the Lord's culminating act of the natural creation process was the creation of man in His image and after His likeness (Genesis 1:26-28). The Lord gave man dominion over the earth and everything in it. God's ultimate purpose for creation was so that He could fellowship with humanity and humanity could fellowship with God (Genesis 3:8).

Man and His Fall

God is love (1 John 4:7-8,16). His motive for creating humans was love. We believe that in the beginning God created man in His own image — innocent, pure, and holy. Because God desired to both love all humans and to be loved by them, He had to give them a choice to make in order to express their love, because love is a choice. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not placed in the Garden as a trap for Adam and Eve, but so that they could have a choice. To further emphasize this choice, God told Adam that he was not to eat of the tree and that the day that he did eat of it he would die. But, Adam and Eve who were the first of the human race, fell from their holy estate through the sin of disobedience by eating of the fruit of the tree, and God banished them from Eden (Genesis 1:26-27, 3:1-23).

As a result of Adam's wrong choice, sin entered into the world by one man's disobedience (Romans 3:23, 5:12). Even though we do believe that since that time all people are born with a *sinful nature* inherited from Adam due to his fall, we do not believe that anyone is ever born a sinner. We can only become "sinners" after we are mature enough to have a knowledge of sin and then choose to do those things that are contrary to God's Word and Will (Ezekiel 18:19-20; Romans 7:7-25). Once we have sinned, we cannot save ourselves (Romans 3). All humans need a savior (John 3:16; Romans 6:23).

Man's Need for Salvation

Romans 3:23 definitively states that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Furthermore, Romans 3 states that there is none good and none righteous. Wherefore, all of humankind need a savior, because "the scripture hath concluded all under sin" (Galatians 3:22). The Lord Jesus Christ is that one and only Savior (Luke 2:11; John 3:16-17; Acts 5:31; 1 Timothy 1:15). We believe Jesus' declarations about Himself to be literally true and thus binding on all people. For example, in John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." We also believe that it is the Will of God for all souls to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3-6; 2 Peter 3:9). Therefore, human beings will be eternally lost only because of each individual's own choice not to believe God and His Word, not because God is at fault or has selected particular individuals to be lost.

We believe that the salvation God offers to all of humanity is a gift from God and therefore is unmerited; it is provided solely by God's love and through His grace (Acts 15:11; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:1-15). It is love that motivates God to seek us out, make us aware of the Lord's eternal judgment upon sin, and then present to us an offer of forgiveness (2 Corinthians 5). It is therefore by both the fear of the Lord and the awareness of His love that people are inspired to repent of their sins and submit to God (Romans 2:4; Proverbs 16:6); thus allowing the Lord to save them.

The blood of Jesus Christ was shed for our redemption and for the remission of our sins (1 Peter 1:18-19; Matthew 26:28; Romans 5:9; Hebrews 9:14). Faith in His blood for our atonement is essential to salvation (Romans 3:24-25; Leviticus 17:11;

Hebrews 9:22, 10:18-22). We believe that Christ's blood can only be fully applied in the act of water baptism; therefore, without obedience to the Savior's command to be water baptized, the blood is not applied to our lives and our sins are not forgiven (1 Peter 3:20-21; Hebrews 9:14,22; Acts 2:38; 10:43; Luke 24:47; Matthew 26:28; Mark 16:16).

Biblical faith is always manifested in obedience to God's Word and to the Scriptural plan of salvation (Hebrews 5:9). Salvation is not dependent upon human goodness or "righteous" works, but by faith in Jesus Christ and repentance from sin as commanded by Jesus. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). Without obedience we have no means to manifest or demonstrate the presence of "saving faith" in our lives (James 2:14-26). Thus, we at Antioch do not believe that obedience "earns" us salvation through works (Luke 17:5-10), but that it is the only external evidence of the faith that does save us.

God's plan of salvation was declared in principle by Christ Jesus Himself in John 3:5: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The principles of this plan were first put into practice on the Day of Pentecost (the "Birthday" of the Church) when Peter preached the first New Testament message: "Repent, and be baptized [birth of water] every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [birth of Spirit] (Acts 2:38).

The Gospel

We at Antioch believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was resurrected on the third day, and that these truths constitute the Gospel message (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). God calls all of mankind unto salvation, into personal fellowship with Him, and into the Body of Christ through the preaching of the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14). God saves both Jews and Gentiles by the one and only Gospel of Christ, for the Gospel is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16).

To receive the benefits of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ we must "obey" the Gospel (1 Peter 4:17-19; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8; Romans 10:14-17). One "obeys" the Gospel by following in the steps of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21-25). Paul declared that to receive the work of the Gospel, we must die with Him in repentance, be buried with Him in water baptism, and be resurrected with Him by being baptized with His Spirit (Romans 6:3-9).

All saved men and women are commissioned to be witnesses of Jesus Christ, proclaiming the Gospel to the lost at every opportunity and supporting the propagation of the Gospel in all the nations (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15; Romans 10:14-15). The Gospel is to be "fully preached" (Romans 15:19), which includes casting out devils and healing the sick as testimonies to the power of the Gospel (Matthew 10:1-8; Mark 16:17-18).

Finally, the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only gospel message, and those who preach "another gospel" are to be accursed (Galatians 1:6-9), for they are "false apostles [and] deceitful workers" (2 Corinthians 11:4, 13).

Repentance

We believe that repentance is essential for salvation, as Jesus Himself said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). The word *repentance* means to "reconsider; to change one's mind; to change one's direction." Turning from a self-centered life of sin to a Christ-centered life of obedience to God is the first step in God's plan of salvation. Jesus preached, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). He instructed His Apostles, "that repentance, and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:27).

Peter preached, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you..." (Acts 2:38). Paul preached that God "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Peter wrote that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

True repentance is a deep change of attitude within one's heart towards God and towards sin, which is energized by "godly sorrow" for sin (2 Corinthians 7:10). It places a person in a proper position toward God to begin receiving salvation through the obedience of faith. True repentance reveals itself in one's attitude and actions. As the Prophet Isaiah said, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Isaiah 1:16-17). A person who has truly repented will no longer "sin willfully," but will endeavor to "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 10:26, 12:28). Biblical repentance is more than just confessing one's sins; it also connotes a surrender of the human will and a desire to conform to the Will of God in all things.

Water Baptism in Jesus Name

Jesus commanded water baptism for all who believe (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16). Following the instructions of the Lord (Matthew 28:19-20), the Apostles commanded water baptism (Acts 2:38; Acts 10:48; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21), thus making it very clear that water baptism is neither optional, nor ceremonial, nor symbolic in nature. Since disobedience to the Word of God is sin and since both Jesus and the Apostles commanded water baptism, then to refuse water baptism is disobedience and therefore sin. Thus, water baptism is a public act of obedience and a demonstration of our submission to God through faith in the Word of God. In light of these Scriptural facts, we believe that water baptism is essential to salvation and is the first element of the New Birth (John 3:3-5).

The word *baptize* literally means "to dip, plunge, or immerse." Therefore, Scriptural baptism requires full and complete immersion in water. Water Baptism is the burial of the "old man" who has "died" in repentance (Romans 6:3-7); thus, like a burial, the baptismal candidate must be "fully buried." Since baptism is a burial, it is only for those who have fully repented ("fully dead" figuratively); having turned from their sins and a love of the world and confessed their faith that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one true and living God. It is to be administered by those authorized by the Bishop and/or

the Senior Elders in obedience to the Word of God, and with the name of our Lord Jesus Christ invoked according to the Acts of the Apostles 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5; thus fulfilling Matthew 28:19.

The stain of sin upon one's conscience can only be removed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:14). Since all sin is against God, God is the only one who has the authority to remove it. God extends His mercy to us and purifies our hearts by faith (Acts 15:9). Since Biblical faith always involves action as an expression of what is believed (James 2:14-26), our Father has ordained one act exclusively for everyone by which He will respond with the removal or remission of sins. This act is baptism in water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Colossians 2:11-12). Participating in a fully Biblical water baptism as an act of and demonstration of faith results in God's forgiving, remitting, cleansing ("washing away"), and forgetting ("remembering no more") our sins (Colossians 1:14; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Hebrews 10:17). This constitutes "imputed righteousness" and "justification by faith" (Romans 4:6-7, 3:28). In this respect, "baptism doth also now save us . . . [by] the answer of [seeking for] a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21).

After being properly water baptized as an initial act of faith, the conscience will be kept "void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16) if we will "walk in the light as [Jesus] is in the light" and "confess our sins" (1 John 1:7-9). "Confession of sins" as a means of receiving forgiveness of sins is only available to those who have been born again through obedience to Acts 2:38 and are thus and thereafter "walking in the light" (1 John 1:1-9).

We do not believe that the physical act alone of being immersed in water removes sin, but rather the application of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ as a divine response to the obedience of faith and the calling of the name of Jesus as participated in and demonstrated in water baptism *produces* the forgiveness and removal of sins (Acts 10:43; Acts 22:16; Hebrews 9:22).

Since water baptism constitutes us being "buried with Christ" as a precursor and prerequisite to our being resurrected with Him through being baptized with the same Spirit that resurrected Christ from the dead (Romans 8:11), it is not possible to be a full recipient of the Gospel (the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ) without being water baptized. We cannot believe the Gospel without obeying the Gospel.

We also believe that water Baptism in the name of Jesus is the only means of access into "the body of Christ." Paul said in Galatians 3:27, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Anyone who has not been baptized into Christ by water baptism in His name is not in the body of Christ, the Church.

Finally, we at Antioch do not believe that small children are sinners and in need of water baptism in any form. Biblically, no one is "born" a "sinner." We are only born with a "sinful nature." Only after becoming mature enough to understand right and wrong and then choosing to do wrong do we become sinners. Children can only fall into sin as they consciously choose to do something they know is morally wrong after reaching an age where they clearly understand the difference between right and wrong. This is called "the age of accountability" and is generally considered to be about the age of twelve (12). Consequently, while there are individual exceptions, at Antioch we

generally do not believe in baptizing anyone prior to the age where they can clearly understand their sin, can willingly choose to turn from sin and unto God, and can personally choose to be baptized in an exercising of their own faith.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is essential to salvation and is the second essential element of the New Birth (John 3:3-8; Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9-11; Titus 3:5). The gift of the Holy Ghost is the “witness of God” that God has accepted the faith of the believer as expressed in repentance, confession, and water baptism (Acts 11:13-18, 15:7-9).

Jesus Christ Himself is the One who gave the gift of the Holy Ghost to all of humanity, which gift is His own Spirit made available to everyone (Acts 2:33). In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist declared, “He [Jesus] shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” Jesus foretold this Spirit baptism when He breathed on the Disciples and commanded “Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22), later saying to these same Disciples, “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts 1:5) (See also John 4:7-15; 7:37-39). Acts 2:4 records the fulfillment of Jesus’ words: “They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Jesus further confirmed this when He said that they that believe “shall speak with new tongues” (Mark 16:17).

The concepts of being “baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire,” being “born of the Spirit,” and “receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost” are essentially synonymous and do not describe different operations or dispensations of the Holy Ghost. To be “filled with the Holy Ghost” usually refers to a person being baptized in and by the Holy Ghost, but can also refer strictly to the anointing and empowering by the Spirit to speak (Luke 1:41; Acts 4:31; Ephesians 5:18).

Although there are many, diverse evidences and manifestations of the work of the Spirit of God that transpire within the lives of all believers throughout their lifetime, all who receive the gift (baptism, infilling) of the Holy Spirit will manifest the same initial, physical (external) evidence (“sign” of faith - Mark 16:17) that always accompanies being “born again” of the Spirit (John 3:8): Speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance (Acts 2:4).

The speaking with or in other tongues, as recorded in Acts 2:4, 10:46, and 19:6; differs in import and intent than the “gift of tongues” as explained in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. While both vocal expressions may sound similar to those who do not personally speak with tongues and are indeed similar operations of the Spirit, they each serve completely different purposes. We at Antioch believe that “speaking in tongues” is the manifestation of the Spirit that is given to every individual (1 Corinthians 12:7), and that in doing so our spirits with the aid and empowerment of the Holy Spirit are praying directly to (1 Corinthians 14:14; Romans 8:26-27) and communicating directly with God (1 Corinthians 14:2). When accompanied by the “gift of interpretation of tongues” as required by the Apostle Paul, the “gift of tongues” is God speaking to His church for the purpose of edification (1 Corinthians 14:3-5). Therefore, the direction and purpose of the

communication of speaking with tongues and the gift of tongues is very different, the one from the other. Not all believers are appointed by God to exercise the gift of tongues accompanied by the gift of interpretation whereby He speaks to His Church, but all believers should be able to pray/talk to God through being supernaturally enabled to communicate with Him by means of speaking with tongues.

The Lord through the Prophet Joel said, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28). Again, John the Baptist foretold the purpose of the Christ: "He [Jesus] shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." In explaining this phenomenon Peter said, "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He [Jesus] hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33). Further, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). Therefore, it is the will of God that everyone He calls by and through the Gospel receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Relationship With God

At Antioch we believe that the Constitution of the United States guarantees us the freedom to freely exercise our "religion" without interference from any source. However, true Christianity is not just a "religion," but rather it is the pursuit of an intimate, personal relationship with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:7-10). We hold that the purpose of Biblical Christian teachings are to instruct believers concerning how to live in true fellowship with Him as our Lord (Mark 12:28-30; Jeremiah 9:23-24). The desire for this relationship is the proper motive for seeking God, serving God, and obeying the Word of God (Matthew 5:6; 6:33).

People do not need any mediator between themselves and God other than the man Christ Jesus specifically (1 Timothy 2:5). To know the Lord Jesus Christ is to know God. Jesus declared that we cannot come to God or know God except through Him (John 1:18; 14:6).

Once saved, it is every individual's personal responsibility to "follow on to know the Lord" (Hosea 6:3). Every believer ought to have the zeal of Paul, who counted all things but loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"; that he might "win Christ," and that he might "know God" (Philippians 3:7-10). Knowing God in a personal way will always be manifested in the keeping of His commandments and by showing love for all others that we encounter (1 John 2:3-5, 4:7-8). The Apostle Peter finished his personal writings in the Scripture with this admonition: "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

The pursuit of a relationship with God requires beginning each day with prayer, engaging in times of prayer throughout the day, conducting regular personal study of God's Word, and participating in seasons of "chastening of the soul" through fasting as the Spirit of God directs (Colossians 4:2; Matthew 9:15; 2 Timothy 2:15). As the foundation of our spiritual life, we should be seeking God, His Kingdom, and His righteousness first (in time and priority) every day (Matthew 6:33). Furthermore, since

our relationship with God as individuals is different than our relationship with Him through fellowship with His Body, the Church, it is also imperative that if we are to grow in our relationship with Him, we must fellowship with the Body of Christ and participate in its spiritual life and ministry.

Biblical Grace

Antioch, The Apostolic Church does not believe in the “easy believism” preached by much of the denominational or independent church world. Neither does it believe that God’s grace is to be seen either directly or indirectly as a “license” to sin. Although it is Biblically accurate to say that we are saved by grace and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9), it is not Biblically accurate to teach that we are saved by doing “nothing” but “confession” (Hebrews 5:9; see also Matthew 7:24-27; Acts 5:32; Romans 6:16-18; 1 Peter 1:22).

In consideration of both our spiritual lives and our participation in the ministry of the Church in the earth, Jesus said that “without Him we can do nothing” (John 15:5); therefore, Biblical grace is an “empowerment” by God’s Spirit to do those things that please Him which we would never be able to do by our own will and strength. In Philippians 2:13 Paul stated, “For it is God which worketh [energizes, activates, causes to be operative] in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (See also Romans 7:13-25; 8:1-17; Hebrews 4:16).

Paul states the above spiritual principle very succinctly in 1 Corinthians 15:10: “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” While we are not saved by our own works of righteousness (Titus 3:5), we are saved by His grace as “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Faith without works is dead (James 2:17-26). Obedience to the Word of God is not an attempt to earn salvation; it is a demonstration of “saving faith.” Again, the operation of “saving faith” in our lives is the “grace of God” empowering us both to desire and to do those things that please God (Philippians 2:13).

Biblical Righteousness

The Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to hunger and thirst for His righteousness (Matthew 5:6) and to seek for His Kingdom and His righteousness first (both in order of time and priority) every day (Matthew 6:33). The root for the Greek word translated *righteous* means “innocent.” This righteousness is not ours at all, but rather the Lord Jesus Christ’s own righteousness imparted or imputed to us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Any “righteousness” which we try to produce by “good works” is “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6) and is unacceptable to God. The guilty cannot be made innocent by “paying for their sins” through doing “good works,” thereby attempting to earn that “innocence” (righteousness). The Bible states that offending even in one point of the law makes us guilty of the whole law (James 2:10). Furthermore, the Scripture declares that the soul that sins (violates the Law of God) shall die (Ezekiel 18:4,20). Therefore, only an innocent (sinless) one dying in our place and being punished for our sins in our stead can give us His righteousness (innocence) as an unearned gift (Romans 5:17-19).

Isaiah 61:10 states that the Lord desires to clothe us with His “robe of righteousness.” (See also Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10.) We believe that we are given this robe of His righteousness in water baptism when we “put on Christ” by being baptized into Him (Galatians 3:27). It then becomes our responsibility through the grace of God to keep this garment unspotted by the flesh (Zechariah 3:3-5; Ephesians 5:27; James 1:27; 2 Peter 3:14; Jude 23; Revelation 3:4; 16:15). If we become “spotted,” then we must confess our sins so that the Lord may forgive us and cleanse us (clean our spiritual garment of righteousness) of all of the debilitating effects of our “unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

When we “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24), our sins and our past are covered by the love and mercy of God. David proclaimed in Psalms 32:1, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” It is only by first having Biblical righteousness that we can have true Biblical holiness; therefore, righteousness is the starting point of any Biblical relationship with God (Romans 6:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21). If we do not first have true righteousness within, then any outward separation that we demonstrate is not holiness at all, but instead is legalism.

Jesus commanded that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, whose outward separation without first having true righteousness became self-righteousness (Matthew 5:20). We must not emulate the Pharisees by attempting to enter into God’s presence having only our own righteousness (Philippians 3:9). Neither should we, like they did, establish for ourselves our own righteousness while not submitting to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:3). Therefore, the only Scriptural way for us as believers to be righteous is by not attempting to attain righteousness by striving to “do what is right” through our own strength, but rather by allowing the grace of God to produce “good works” through us (Philippians 2:13).

Biblical Holiness

Paul instructed us by the Holy Ghost: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with the idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

In agreement with Paul’s statements above, we at Antioch believe that to be accepted by the Father as His children, we must live a godly, holy, and righteous life that is characterized by being in the world but not of [aspiring to be like] the world (1 John 2:15-17; John 17:14-17). Furthermore, as those who belong to God, we should live according to the pattern and example of Jesus Christ as specified in the Word of God: “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:21-23).

Biblically, we are instructed to, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). For, “as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy. And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:15-19).

To be *holy* means to be “set apart from the world and set apart unto God for worship *to* Him, relationship *with* Him, and service *through* Him.” Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost; we are not our own. We belong to God body, soul, and spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:17-20; Ephesians 2:21-22). Romans 12:1-2 specifically communicates the importance of our outward appearance, conduct, and activities being in conformity to Christ and His Word, both inside and outside; and not to the fads, fashions, etc. of this present world (1 Timothy 2:8-10; 1 Peter 3:3-6). Paul’s teachings make it very clear that both our inside and outside matter to God and are both arenas for expressing our faith.

In light of these Biblical principles, we at Antioch wholeheartedly encourage our people to not engage in any activities which are not conducive to true Christianity and godly living, as defined for Covenant Members of Antioch by our “Covenant of Conviction and Commitment” statement.

The disciplines of godly living as taught at Antioch are not religious legalism, but are expressions of the teachings of the grace of God that is at work in the lives of all of those who are Biblically “saved.” Paul emphatically and definitively declared this principle: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12).

For Christians to be saved and continue in salvation, they must walk with God and keep themselves in the love of God (Jude 21) and in the grace of God. The word *grace* means “undeserved favor.” When a person transgresses and sins against God, the favor of God is lost. One who continues to commit sin and does not repent will eventually be lost and cast into the lake of fire (John 15:2,6; 2 Peter 2:20-21). The Book of Jude clearly speaks of the eternal destination of those who backslide from the faith.

Worship Service Attendance

Since the word *church* by definition means “the assembly of the called out ones,” it is not possible to believe in the Church and be a part of the Church without attending/participating in the assemblies/gatherings/services of the Church.

We believe that the Church is the “body of our Lord Jesus Christ” and that believers are “members in particular” of His body (1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 12:5). When two or three “members” of His body gather together in the name of the Lord Jesus, this constitutes an assembly of the called out ones, and Jesus has promised to be there in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20). Therefore, any gathering of believers where the presence of Jesus is manifested is an assembly of the Body. Like the early Church, the Body must meet regularly in public gatherings and from “house to house” (Acts 2:46; 20:20).

It is impossible for anyone to “join” *the* Church, which is defined as all valid members of the Body of Christ collectively. One must be “born again” into the Church (John 3:3-5). Jesus said that we have not chosen Him, but He has chosen us (John 15:16). All members have been called into the body of Christ through the Gospel (2 Colossians 2:14). All have been (water) baptized into Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:27) and (Spirit) baptized into the Body of Christ, *the* Church, by one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13), for there is but one body and one Spirit (Romans 6:3; Ephesians 4:4).

In light of these truths, we strongly believe that all members ought to be present whenever the Church assembles (Hebrews 10:24-25). The Early Church demonstrated this by continuing steadfastly in “fellowship,” continuing to meet where “all that believed were together,” and continuing “daily with one accord in the temple” (Acts 2:42,44,46). It is therefore the doctrine of Antioch, The Apostolic Church, Inc. that members should attend all scheduled church services, except for sickness, vacations, or other unavoidable circumstances.

Scriptural Praise and Worship

We believe that “it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely” (Psalms 147:1). God has chosen us to “shew forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). But in order to be “true worshipers,” we must worship God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). This Scripture teaches us that first of all we must worship God from our hearts, in spirit. This necessitates entering into and maintaining a spiritual relationship with God, which is not possible apart from the New Birth (described in John 3:3-5) and a whole-hearted love for God (Matthew 22:37).

Secondly, our worship must be “in truth.” This means that we must worship God according to the teachings of Scripture. We therefore worship God by praising him in the congregation of saints (Psalms 149:1); by clapping our hands (Psalm 47:1); by singing (Psalms 96:1; Colossians 3:16); by making a joyful noise (Psalms 100:1); by lifting our hands (Psalms 34:2); by dancing in the Spirit (Psalms 149:3); and by playing musical instruments (Psalms 150:3-5). At times, other outward manifestations and demonstrations of praise and worship may be expressed as long as everything is done decently and in order as submitted to those with oversight authority and accountability to God for the Body (1 Corinthians 14:40; Hebrews 13:7,17).

The Word of God commands “everything that hath breath” to praise the Lord (Psalms 150:6). Jesus said that if we hold our peace, the stones would cry out (Luke 19:40). Therefore, all believers **must** “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Hebrews 13:15).

Praise and worship are not synonymous. Everyone regardless of their spiritual status can praise God. But, true worship involves a life of commitment, surrender, obedience, spirituality, and service. Biblical worship is far more than just praise. Worship includes any act of devotion that demonstrates our love for God. Many believers praise and never become true worshipers. As stated above, Jesus declared that the Father is seeking for true worshipers.

Divine Healing

We believe that when the Lord Jesus Christ walked the earth nearly 2000 years ago, He healed “all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” and “all that were oppressed of the devil” (Matthew 4:23; Acts 10:38). We further believe that Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

The first covenant that the Lord made with the children of Israel after they were brought out of Egypt was a covenant of healing. The Lord said, “If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee [Jehovah-Rapha, the Lord that healeth]” (Exodus 15:26).

The vicarious suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ paid for the healing of our bodies, the same as for the salvation of our souls: for “with His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). Matthew 8:17 reads, “[He] Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” And Peter has written, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

Since the healing of the body was in the atonement, healing is for all who believe. Jesus said that believers “shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:18). James wrote, “Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:14-16).

Jesus not only healed the sick Himself, but He gave His followers the power to do the same thing: “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (Matthew 10:1, see also Luke 9:1-2; 10:9). Jesus said in John 14:12, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” Jesus also said that one of the signs that would follow believers is that they would lay hands on the sick and that they would recover (Mark 16:17-18). John wrote that believers ought to “prosper and be in good health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 1:2).

It is important to note that while we do believe that all healing comes from God, we do not believe that it is sin or an act of unbelief to receive medical treatment or to take medicine. We believe that all knowledge about the human body that medical science has “discovered” was in existence before man “discovered” it. While we believe that our Creator God and Father both designed and created the human body to heal itself when wounded or injured, it is not wrong to accept assistance from the medical community to aid in that process. Furthermore, we do not believe that it is contrary to the principles of the Bible to either give or receive blood or to donate organs or receive an organ transplant.

Communion

We believe that all saints should participate in Communion and that it is Scripturally proper for Communion to be shared both in public worship services and in small groups of believers in homes.

Jesus instituted Communion on the night of His betrayal while eating the Passover supper with his Apostles: "And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me. Likewise also [He took] the cup after supper saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19-20). In John 6:53-58, Jesus communicated the eternal importance of a believer partaking of communion.

We believe that there is great spiritual significance and blessing in partaking in Communion. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-24, Paul instructed the Church as to how to observe Communion; thus, he instituted the use of literal unleavened "bread" and the fruit of the vine (grape juice) to be partaken of literally, as emblems of Jesus' broken body and shed blood. Since "wine" is the product of fermentation (death and decay), we do not believe in using literal wine that contains intoxicants in participating in Communion.

It is important to note that there is no Scriptural evidence for how often the Church should celebrate Communion. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:24-26 quoted Jesus as saying "as oft as ye drink" and "as often as ye eat" without any frequency described at all. Therefore, we believe the frequency of Communion should be at the discretion of the Senior Elder of a Congregation and/or of the Bishop for the whole Body of Antioch.

Foot Washing

We believe that foot washing is a divine institution in which the Lord expects all who are part of His body to participate (John 13:8,14). For when the Passover supper was ended we read, "He [Jesus] riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded" (John 13:4-5).

Jesus said, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15). This example was given by our Lord, and we should follow His example by washing one another's feet and by manifesting His spirit of humility and servitude. While this first example with Jesus' instructions was directly associated with the "first Communion," there are no stipulations made by Jesus or any of the Apostles as to the frequency of foot washing; neither are there instructions that it must be done every time Communion is done nor that it cannot be done without being joined with Communion.

Participation in Evangelism

Jesus commissioned His disciples and commanded them to “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Furthermore, He commanded all of His disciples to go and teach all nations and make them disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). We at Antioch believe that this is still the primary purpose and mission of the church today. We do not believe that anyone can be a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ without being involved with Him in His mission on earth to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). We believe that the fruitfulness of believers demonstrates that they are truly disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and that their fruitfulness brings great glory to God (John 15:8). According to the Scriptural context, this “fruitfulness” cannot and must not be construed as the “fruits of the Spirit.” Jesus is the Vine (John 15:5) and the fruit produced through us, His branches, must be more “grapes” (souls).

We believe that since our Lord Jesus Christ specifically requested prayer for laborers to be sent into His harvest, then it is the responsibility and duty of every saint to be involved in evangelism of the lost (Matthew 9:37-38). God has placed every believer in the “priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9) and He has given to all of us the “word” and the “ministry” of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19); we are all “ambassadors for Christ,” beseeching the lost in His stead [place] and urging them to “Be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

All saints (believers/disciples) are expected to be involved in the “work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). Failure to do so is a failure to “occupy” until the Lord comes (Luke 9:13). Involvement in evangelism is to do business with the “talents” that the Lord has given (Matthew 25:15-28). Those who hide their talents are “unprofitable servants” and will be cast into “outer darkness” (Matthew 25:30).

We also believe that since fruitfulness is not possible without being “connected” to Jesus in an intimate, personal relationship; the absence of fruit in the life of the believer is evidence of a disconnection between Jesus and the believer. If left unaddressed, this disconnection between the branch and the vine will result in the believer being cut off and burned as a barren, unfruitful branch (John 15:1-7).

The Doctrine of Revival and Harvest

We at Antioch believe that God has promised a sweeping, worldwide, Apostolic revival and harvest prior to His coming to “catch away” (rapture) His Church. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached that “it shall come to pass in *the last days*, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17). He associated this “outpouring” with the coming of the “day of the Lord” (vs. 20). James wrote, “Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain” (James 5:7). Because the Lord confirmed His promise to Abraham by swearing an oath against His own Deity (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:15-18; Hebrews 6:13-20), we do not believe that the Lord will return for His Church until after this harvest fully takes place in the manner and to the degree which He promised it to our father

Abraham (Galatians 3:6-[14]-29; Romans 4:1-25). We believe that this spiritual harvest of lost souls given by promise to Abraham and confirmed with an oath to him is the last sign that must take place before the rapture can occur.

The coming revival and harvest will be a sovereign move of the power and Spirit of Jesus Christ. It will not be produced by human effort. Yet, Jesus will not do it independent of/from His people (Matthew 9:37-39; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9; 2 Corinthians 5:5-21). The promises of the Word of God indicate that the revival and harvest will happen; the only question concerns who will participate in it. The principles of God's Word teach that God gives revival and harvest to every local Church and all valid believers to the degree to which they are prepared to receive it. Thus, it is incumbent upon all Saints of God to diligently prepare themselves for whatever labor the Lord of the Harvest ordains for them. We strongly believe that every member of Antioch has a God-ordained place in God's promised harvest.

Laying on of Hands

We believe in the doctrine of "laying on of hands" (Hebrews 6:1-2). Biblically, the phrase *laying on of hands* is an all-inclusive term that refers to many different types of ministry to and by the Body of Christ. Jesus said in Mark 16:17-18 that certain signs would follow them that believe. Among these signs is the declaration that believers would lay hands on the sick and that they would recover (Mark 5:23; Acts 19:17-18; 28:8-9). In addition, the Apostles laid hands on people for them to receive the Baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:14-19; 19:6). We also believe that authority is transmitted or imparted by the laying on of hands when ministries are commissioned for service (Acts 6:3-7; 13:1-4; 1 Timothy 4:14). We do not believe that God works specifically through our hands physically. We believe that when we lay hands on people in His Will, the Spirit of the Lord works through us to do the work; it is not our power or authority that does the work but His alone.

Obedience to Authority

According to our Lord Jesus Christ, all authority in heaven and in earth is His and His alone (Matthew 28:18). God never gives up ownership of that authority. However, He delegates that authority to be used naturally and spiritual for the purpose of oversight and order (spiritual, natural, and governmental). Those who have been entrusted with this authority will be held accountable to Him personally for how they have used His authority.

God's authority must never be used purposely for the personal benefit and/or profit of the one who has been entrusted with it. Doing so is very egregious to God. Jesus promised that those who seek first His Kingdom will have "all these things added unto them (Matthew 6:33). What God adds we receive; but, we must never use God, His gifts, or His authority for our own gain in either profit or prestige (1 Timothy 6:5-6).

We believe that God Himself has established authority both in the world and in the Church, and that His people are to submit themselves to these authorities. Paul instructs, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1). He then writes to all believers/disciples, "Obey them that have the rule [authority/oversight] over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).

We recognize the institution of human government as being of divine ordination; and, in so doing, affirm our submission to all lawful, civil government. However, in matters of conviction; when conflict arises between God's law and the civil law, we firmly declare our allegiance to God's law as having the preeminence in our lives, even if the penalty for obeying our Lord is imprisonment or death (Acts 5:29).

Spiritually, we believe that God has placed leadership giftings within His Church for the full equipping of the saints, that they may do the work of their ministry so that the body of Christ may both grow numerically and be edified spiritually (Ephesians 4:11-12). We believe the Biblical titles for the leadership offices in the local church are Deacon, Elder, and Bishop. In Antioch, The Apostolic Church, the leader of each of our Congregations is titled *Senior Elder* and the overseer(s) of all of Antioch is titled *Senior Bishop/Bishop*. The titles *Elder* and *Deacon* will also be used as determined by the Antioch Executive Council. Believers ought to submit themselves to those in leadership, following their faith (Hebrews 13:7) and their example (Philippians 3:17).

We believe that submission to the authority that God has placed as a spiritual covering in and over our lives is a very significant element that contributes to our being able to remain faithful to God and to His word. We also affirm that we strongly believe in the principle that one must be under authority to have authority (Luke 7:6-9). We do not believe that any man of God or child of God should ever be in a position where they are without a covering of God-appointed authority over them who provides them with spiritual accountability.

As with all authority both natural and spiritual, we do believe that there are limitations upon all authority and its usage. Spiritually, we do not believe that any Elder or Bishop has the right make personal financial decisions or other life decisions for the members of Antioch. Those who exercise God's authority must not exceed the boundaries of the Word of God and of God Himself in speaking beyond where the Word of God speaks.

CARE Ministry (Small Group Ministry)

We believe that in order to fulfill the pattern established by Jesus Christ and His Apostles; Antioch Church, its ministries, and its members ought to meet both publicly and in various private homes (Acts 2:46, 5:42, 20:20). We believe that the purpose of the CARE (Small) group ministry is for the building up of relationships within the body of Christ, for spiritual instruction to the Saints, for the provision of personal care and support of its members, and for the evangelization of all areas within the local community. We do not believe that it is possible to receive, care for, and disciple the promised results of God's endtime harvest without a fully functioning and effective CARE (Small Group) Ministry.

For the above stated reasons and for the purpose of Covenant Membership, the members of Antioch, The Apostolic Church, Inc. are all expected to participate in a CARE (Small) group or a suitable substitute that fulfills the Biblical principles of the Care (Small Group) Ministry. The Senior Bishop/Bishop and/or the Antioch Executive Council shall designate which ministries satisfy this definition. The Care (Small) groups/substitute ministries must be established under the direction of the Senior Elders and the Senior Bishop/Bishop and must be submitted to their authority. Members should attend all scheduled meetings, except for sickness, vacations, or other unavoidable circumstances.

Multiple Congregation Church

We at Antioch believe the Biblical structure for local church government is a single, corporate church body in a geographical region meeting in as many locations as growth dictates and as the Lord determines at any given time (Revelation 2,3). We believe that the Lord established the Biblical pattern for church government when He "put in order" His first church (Exodus 12:3): Israel, the "congregation in the wilderness" (Exodus 18, Numbers 11). In accordance with this principle, Antioch is a "multiple-congregation church body."

We strongly disapprove of the un-Biblical concept and practice of local church "autonomy" or "self-government" without external oversight. Therefore, the most senior spiritual oversight authority over both Antioch Church and the Corporation of Antioch, The Apostolic Church, Inc. is the Board of Trustees/Oversight Bishops as defined by the Articles of Incorporation, as Amended, and the By-Laws of the Corporation. For the purpose of the day to day oversight of Antioch Church, the oversight authority of the Trustees/Oversight Bishops is delegated to a local, senior oversight ministry known as the *Antioch Executive Council* [AEC], which is defined and described in the By-Laws of the Corporation. The AEC is comprised of at least the Senior Bishop/Bishop, the Senior Executive Elder, the Senior Elders of the Congregations, and other Executive Elders as appointed by the Bishop and confirmed by the Board of Trustees/Oversight Bishops (Numbers 27:15-23). All Elders, ministers/leaders, and all members of all ministries of Antioch are under the direct spiritual oversight authority of the AEC and are accountable to it at all levels of spiritual life and ministry.

As a “multiple-congregation church,” Antioch, The Apostolic Church, Inc. also encompasses congregations from geographical areas beyond the borders of the State of Maryland. We believe that a congregation can be a part of Antioch, The Apostolic Church, Inc. regardless of its geographical location anywhere in the world. These congregations of Antioch will be under all of the same requirements and expectations as all other congregations of Antioch, except in those specific requirements as determined by the Antioch Executive Council and approved by the Board of Trustees/Oversight Bishops as not being possible to accommodate because of inexpedient proximity to Antioch’s main locations.

The Catching Away (Rapture) of the Saints

We believe that the time is drawing near when the Lord Jesus Christ shall appear unto His Church from within the clouds; and then, the dead in Christ shall arise first and we who are alive and remain shall be caught up with them to meet our Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; Philippians 3:20-21). This “catching away” will occur before the period which is called by some the *Great Tribulation*. Therefore, Antioch believes in “Pre-Tribulation Rapture” Theology. God has not appointed His people to go through His wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:1-10). Specifically, we do not believe the members of the body of Christ will go through any part of the wrath of God that will be poured upon the earth during this seven year period Biblically designated as, “The Time of Jacob’s Trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7) and “Daniel’s 70th week” (Daniel 9:22-27). The true children of God today are earnestly and hopefully looking forward to this glorious event (Hebrews 9:28; Revelation 22:16-21).

We do acknowledge that some believers today hold to personal beliefs that differ on the timing of the “Catching Away” with respect to that stated above. If a member or leader of Antioch holds to a belief other than the one stated above, it is incumbent upon them to refrain from communicating and/or espousing this view to the disunity of the body. Holding to a different view will not be considered a violation of these Articles of Faith as long as those who support such views do not cause confusion, discord, or disunity in holding that view while being a member of Antioch.

Second Coming of Jesus

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again the second time — in person and just as He went away — a promise that was clearly set forth by the Lord Jesus Himself which was preached and taught in the early Christian Church by the Apostles. (See Matthew 24; Acts 1:11, 3:19-21; 1 Corinthians 11:26; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 9:27-28.)

At Antioch, we believe the “Second Coming of Jesus” actually has two different parts that take place seven years apart. As stated in the previous section, we believe the first part of the Lord’s second coming will be discreet and for the purpose of “catching away” His Bride (the Church) for the “marriage supper of the Lamb”

(Revelation 19:1-9). In this coming the Lord Himself never gets closer to the earth than “the clouds” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The church will be caught up to meet Him there and will be in heaven with the Lord during the entire seven year period of wrath (Revelation Chapters 4 and 5).

We believe that the second part of the “Second Coming” will be a public revelation of the Lord “for every eye to see” (Revelation 1:7). The Lord will stand physically upon the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:3-4), which is the same place from which He ascended into heaven 2,000 +/- years before (Acts 1:9-12). The church will return to earth “with” the Lord in this portion of the Second Coming, and this public appearance (revelation) will bring the seven years of wrath to an end (Revelation 19:11-21).

The Millennium or the Millennial Reign of Christ

We believe that the present distress upon the earth is the “beginning of sorrows” and that it will become more intense until there “shall be a time of trouble such as there never was since there was a nation even to that same time” (Matthew 24:3-8; Daniel 12:1). That seven-year period of great wrath will be followed by the dawn of a better day when there shall be peace on earth for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-5; Isaiah 65:17-25; Matthew 5:5; Daniel 7:27; Micah 4:1-2; Hebrews 2:14; Romans 11:25-27). The second part of Jesus’ “Second Coming” (the coming where “every eye shall see Him”) will usher in our Lord’s “Millennial Kingdom” (Revelation 20:1-6). The Lord promised to David that He would personally sit upon the Throne of David in Jerusalem and rule and reign over the earth for 1,000 years (Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:31-33). During this time, the church will rule and reign with Christ as Kings and Priests upon the earth (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

Resurrection of the Dead

We at Antioch believe that one of the most important doctrines of the Bible is that all of the dead are going to be resurrected, both the righteous and the unrighteous (Hebrews 6:1-2; Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Acts 4:2; 24:15). Our faith in the resurrection of Christ is one of the most foundational of all doctrines to our faith (Romans 6:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:13-57). In fact, if Christ did not rise from the dead, then our faith has no foundation and no power. This would make our faith no different than any other man-made, dead religion.

We believe that the culminating event of the Church Age will be the Catching Away (Rapture) of the Church, whereby the dead in Christ will rise first to meet the living in the air with Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18); this is called the “first resurrection.”

At the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ, every soul who has ever lived and has not yet been resurrected will be resurrected in order to face the Great White Throne Judgement (see the next section for an explanation of this).

The Final Judgment and Its Eternal Results

We believe that when the thousand years of the Millennial Reign of Christ are finished, there will be a resurrection of all the dead (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29), who will be summoned before the Great White Throne for their final judgment. Then, all whose names are not found in the Book of Life shall be cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone, the place which God hath prepared for the devil and his angels, Satan himself being cast in first (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:7, 15, 21:8). This punishment is called “eternal judgment” (Hebrews 6:1-3) and the “second death” (Revelation 20:14). From this judgment there is no remedy, no escape, and no second chance. It is final (Ecclesiastes 11:3).

We believe that the results of this judgement will be either eternal life or eternal death (Matthew 24:46; 25:41; Mark 9:44-49; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 14:10-11; 20:10-15). There is no Scriptural basis for teaching any source of hope for the damned after the judgement. The punishment determined at the final judgement will last forever unto eternity. It is for this cause that the church should be fervent in its efforts to “convert the sinner from the error of his way” (James 5:20). Paul stated the mission of the church in 2 Corinthians 5:11: “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . .”

Lastly, we do not believe as some do that the “wicked” will simply be “annihilated.” We believe that for our salvation to be truly eternal, the punishment of the wicked must also be eternal. It is not possible for one to be of a different longevity than the other.

Tithes and Offerings

We believe that tithing is God’s financial plan to provide for His work, and that it has been since the days of Abraham. Tithing came with faith under Abraham before the Law was given: Moses’ law enjoined it and Israel practiced it when she was right with God. Furthermore, Jesus Himself endorsed it (Matthew 23:23) and Paul said to lay by in store as God has prospered you. A *tithe* is defined as ten percent (10%) of all of our increase (Proverbs 3:9; Deuteronomy 14:22,28) and is holy unto the Lord (Leviticus 27:28-32). Tithes and offerings are God’s portion of those things that He has bestowed upon us for our sustenance. Those who fail to pay tithes and give offerings are guilty of robbing God (Malachi 3:8-10) and are Scripturally cursed. According to Jesus, financial faithfulness is the least and lowest level of faithfulness that a child of God can demonstrate (Luke 16:10-13). To be trusted by the Lord with more of His kingdom and His promises, we must demonstrate that we are serving Him and not “mammon.” Thus, in this light, faithfulness in tithing and offerings is a prerequisite for being a Covenant Member of Antioch.

Sanctity of Life

At Antioch we believe that God alone is the giver of life and that practices such as abortion, euthanasia, suicide, murder, child abuse, spousal abuse, or any other types of malicious violence against another human being are completely contradictory to the teachings of the Bible. They have no place in the life of a Christian and should never be participated in by anyone who is a Child of God (Genesis 2:7; Psalms 139:13-16; Isaiah 44:24; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:31-44). God alone is the giver of life; therefore, He alone should be the one to decide when that life should end (Job 14:5; Hebrews 9:27).

Nevertheless, we do not believe that disconnecting “life support” equipment from a loved one is “taking their life” or is in any way an act of euthanasia. Whether our loved one lives or dies is solely in the hands of God and not in the power of the machines to which they are connected.

Biblically, suicide is murdering one’s own self and we are strongly opposed to it as an option for dealing with or “ending one’s troubles.” Yet, no surviving human being is capable of definitively knowing the heart of any person in the last few moments of consciousness that accompany suicide. Therefore, it is neither our right nor our privilege to be presumptuous on this side of eternity and speculate about the eternal destination of one who was so overwrought as to end their own life. We believe that they are in the hands of a just God who will do what is right, just, and true.

Furthermore, we maintain that it is impossible to truly believe that the Bible is the Word of God and the final authority in our lives and support in any way the taking of life before God’s time. Because we believe that the Creator God is the only one capable of causing egg and sperm to come together in fertilization and thus causing life to come into existence, we do not believe that anyone has the right to voluntarily instigate the extinguishing of the lives of the only truly innocent humans in existence, i.e., those humans still in the womb.

The Bible definitively declares that God knows us in the womb. It specifically states that He knew Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25:21-23; Romans 9:6-13) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4-5) while they were still in the womb. Furthermore, the babe that would be named John the Baptist at birth “leaped in her [his mother Elizabeth’s] womb” when Mary who was pregnant with Jesus greeted her (Luke 1:38-44). Finally, Psalms 106:36-40 is only one of several texts in Scripture where the Lord God emphatically pronounced judgement upon those who shed innocent blood.

While we acknowledge the tragedies of pregnancy through rape and incest, we strongly encourage giving the child up for adoption rather than ending the life of an innocent child. In this case, the child is just as much a victim as the woman who has suffered such abuse. The tragedy of this horrific situation is only exacerbated by ending the life of the child. We do not believe that giving a child up for adoption is sin.

While we strongly oppose the taking of life, we do believe in the efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ to forgive, cleanse, and heal the hearts of those who participated in the taking of any life as an act of their unbelief.

We believe that Almighty God is the author of life and that life begins at conception. As such, we believe that He alone is ultimately responsible when a new life is brought into existence, whether naturally or with the help of the medical profession.

Therefore, we do not believe it is wrong for married couples struggling to conceive to receive ethical fertility treatments. Having said that, we also believe that medical technology has developed to a point where doctors and patients are able to make some unethical choices in their pursuit of pregnancy, which would include destroying implantable embryos once the couple has had the number of children they want or because they want a different gender of embryo than the one they have available for implantation. We do not support the purposeful destruction of implantable embryos for any reason. In the event the original couple became unable or unwilling to carry another pregnancy, because we support adoption, we also are not opposed to the donation of any implantable embryos to another infertile, married couple.

Sanctity of Life and Serving in the Military or Police

Regarding the Sanctity of Life and the matter of military service and/or self-defense, the most accurate reading of both the Hebrew and the Greek words that are most often translated as “thou shalt not kill,” is actually “thou shalt do no murder” (Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:21). While we acknowledge that God is the author of life and has the ultimate authority over all his creation, we do not imply that we believe it is wrong for our members to participate in military service to our country or in law enforcement, even though to do so could possibly result in that member participating in the killing of another human being. We leave it to the individual conscience of each member to decide if they can serve in a capacity that could involve the taking of another human life. Moreover, we do not believe it is wrong for a person to kill another in self-defense or in defense of others. The criminal law exonerates a person who kills under those circumstances and we do not disagree with that position. Furthermore, we do not oppose the imposition of the death penalty as exercised by the State in appropriate cases and with appropriate legal safeguards.

While we honor the decision of every person who decides voluntarily to join the U.S. Military, we do not support a mandatory draft of women involuntarily into military service. Women are in the unique position of being able to become pregnant and therefore should never be forced against their will to be on the front lines of battle with a company of men.

Finally, we respect and support the right of any of our members to conscientiously object to serving in any capacity in the military that would result in them directly or personally taking another life. We believe in serving our country; so, therefore, we believe that those who object to taking another life can serve in another capacity that allows for that conviction.

Marriage

After God created Adam He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him"; God then created the woman (Genesis 2:18). Furthermore, it was God that brought man and woman together (Genesis 2:22). Therefore, we at Antioch believe that the institution of marriage was conceived, initiated, and established by God Himself; and is therefore, we believe, the oldest of all human institutions (Genesis 2:18-24). As the One who brought marriage about, God is the only one who has the right to define what marriage is and is not.

As separate acts of creation, God made the two genders of humanity distinctly male and female; and consequently, successively, and exclusively God has made each individual distinctly either male or female. As a result, we believe that each individual is born either male or female by God's decision alone. Therefore, Biblical marriage has been ordained by God to be between a biological man and a biological woman as He specifically created them to be. Furthermore, we believe that all "gender confusion" that an individual may experience is a product of post-birth influences and experiences and are not produced by God at all, but by society. Therefore, we believe that every individual must submit to the choice of the Creator and live as the gender that He created them to be.

The Apostle Paul taught that the state of marriage between a husband and wife is God's example to us of the relationship He desires with His Bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:22-33). As such, it is not possible for any type of "marriage" that is not between one biological man and one biological woman to fulfill the instructions and typology of these Scriptures.

Since one specific purpose of marriage is the continuation of the human race through God-ordained, orderly procreation; any "marriage" that is not potentially capable of producing offspring through its own natural procreative intimacy of that union does not constitute and fulfill God's ultimate plan for marriage. Of course, this premise is dependent upon both the biological male and the biological female being healthy enough to procreate. Yet, even in the possible situation that one or more of the mates in a Biblical marriage is not healthy; in principle they still fulfill God's purpose, since the Lord has on many occasions testified to His own creative ability by giving children to unions where medical science said that it was impossible. (See Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Rachel, Hannah, and John the Baptist's mother Elizabeth.)

Furthermore, we believe that single believers should not seek to become "unequally yoked" together with (married to) unbelievers (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14). When seeking for a mate, believers should seek out and marry only someone who is of "like precious faith."

Under God's divine order, the husband is to be the head of his household and the wife is to be subject to him (Ephesians 5:23-24; 1 Corinthians 11:3). The husband is commanded to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, and the wife is commanded to "reverence" (respect) her husband (Ephesians 5:25,33). The husband ought to "rule" (lead, oversee) his home well, having his children under subjection with all gravity (1 Timothy 3:4). However, we do not believe that God intended for the husband to be a

dictator or tyrant over his wife; they are one flesh. The teachings of Paul in Ephesians 5 give very clear directions and parameters for the husband's exercising of his authority within the marriage.

Divorce

Since God alone is the author of marriage, He established it to be a sacred, lifetime commitment and relationship between one man and one woman; and, furthermore, Jesus declared that what "God hath joined together let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9). However, as a concession to human limitations, Jesus permitted divorce on one basis only: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery" (Matthew 5:32, 19:9). When the sin of fornication has been committed by one spouse, the innocent party may be free to remarry as is the case in the death of a spouse, but "only in the Lord," (1 Corinthians 7:39).

The Scripture condemns all "immoral" (as exclusively Biblically defined) sexual activity, both in and out of marriage. This includes, but is not limited to adultery, pre-marital sex, oral sex or sodomy between un-married partners, homosexuality, lesbianism, incest, pedophilia, or any other form or type of sexual activity other than that which God has expressly ordained (Genesis 1:27; 2:18, 21-24; Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-21). *Fornication* in the Greek New Testament is a general term that is defined to include, but is not limited to adultery, pre-marital sex, incest, homosexuality, lesbianism, pedophilia, etc. It must be noted that these are all "acts" not "thoughts." We are all admonished to "flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18). It is possible to experience any one of these as thoughts/feelings or "lusts," but they are not sin until lust "conceives" and then "births" sinful actions (James 1:12-15). In light of these and other Scriptures, we believe that sin is an act and not a thought or feeling.

While it is very negative to one's spiritual relationship with God to indulge in habitual thoughts and feelings about any of the activities listed above, lusts still are not actually sin until they are acted upon. However, Paul taught in Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Furthermore, Jesus taught in Mark 7:20-23, "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

In consideration of both Jesus' and Paul's teachings, we must conclude that the great concern about excusing the entertaining of habitual thoughts and feelings about the above such sinful things "because it is not sin" lies in the imminent danger that comes from them actually becoming habitual. These habits will inevitably become actions produced by these un-Biblical, mental "strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:3-6). Stated again; by default, entertained and unrestrained lusts will ultimately result in some

type of action which is in fact Biblical sin. To take callous advantage of God's abundant mercy by habitually entertaining these spiritually dangerous thoughts and feelings is a prelude to great spiritual devastation.

Any type of *fornication* as defined above as an act is considered to be Biblical grounds for divorce. However, "looking on" the opposite sex "to lust after them" (Matthew 5:28) (including but not limited to any use of pornography or participating in voyeurism, "phone sex," etc.) is NOT Biblical grounds for divorce. This "lusting" is a heart issue between the individual and God; and, while it is certainly to be viewed as very negative in the sight of God and does in fact dishonor ones relationship with ones spouse, it does not provide Biblical grounds for the dissolution of a marriage. Likewise, establishing an "emotional attachment" with someone who is not one's mate yet where no type of fornication is involved is also NOT grounds for divorce. While this type of relationship is not only very detrimental to the health of a marriage and is also most displeasing to God and therefore spiritually debilitating to all involved, it cannot be classified as "Biblical fornication." Again, these problems are heart issues and are not yet acts of sin as defined Biblically.

In his teachings, Paul did allow for a husband and wife to live separately as long as they remain chaste/morally pure (1 Corinthians 7:1-16). This is especially true if either spouse backslides (leaves the faith) and leaves their mate. Nevertheless, it must be noted here that a believer in this situation who has an emotional relationship with a person of the opposite sex that would be considered inappropriate when actively living with their spouse must also refrain from this same type of activity while living separately. The Bible teaches us to abstain from the very appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22) and to not give place, occasion, or opportunity to the enemy to tempt us (Ephesians 4:27). As long as one is "legally" married though living separately, the Scripture grants no license to act or live as if one is unmarried. Therefore, until a divorce is finalized, no relationship with an individual of the opposite sex should be engaged in that would be considered inappropriate to a married person regardless of the state of their marriage.

The Biblical conditions for re-marriage after divorce are predicated upon the unfaithfulness of the other mate to the marriage vows. This includes the period both before and after the separation and/or divorce. Again, since the Scripture provides for the two parties to live separately while still remaining faithful to their marriage vows, any violation of those vows; even though yet legally married, separated, or divorced, would constitute a breach of the vows and serve as grounds for the innocent party to remarry.

While we believe that the husband is Biblically appointed the head of the wife, we at Antioch do not believe that a spouse is obligated to live together with a mate who is abusive, particularly in cases of physical or sexual abuse. In cases of extreme physical or sexual abuse, for the safety of the spouse, we have agreed with the measure of divorce when absolutely necessary. However, remarriage would not be Biblically allowed unless the abusive spouse was known to have committed fornication and/or remarried first. In the case of repeated emotional and/or psychological abuse, the Senior Elder (Pastor) may agree with the need for separation, though not divorce in this case.

With all of this being said, we do not believe that anyone representing Antioch, The Apostolic Church has the right to suggest or instruct any member to divorce their spouse, neither is anyone authorized to exercise that liberty.

Sanctity of our Bodies and Parental Authority over Children

As a Church body, not only does Antioch believe in the Sanctity of Life, but we also believe in the Sanctity of our bodies as the Temples of God; and, as such, we have the right and the duty to protect the sanctity of the temple. We believe that we are not our own, but that we are God's (both body and spirit) because He purchased us out of sin with His blood. Therefore, we believe we should make responsible choices regarding the care and treatment of our physical bodies and those of our children.

We believe that children are a gift from God and that, according to the Word of God, parents are the ones who have the sole responsibility for the care and upbringing of their children. As such, parents have been given authority over their children in all matters concerning them, including but not limited to their medical care and treatment, their religious education, and their secular education. We cede none of this authority to the State for any reason or at any time. As Christian parents, we have a right and a duty to impart our Christian values to our children without interference from the State.

Corporal Chastisement

We believe that God has placed the responsibility for raising children in the hands of parents who are to teach, train, provide for, nurture, control, and love their children (Deuteronomy 6:7; Proverbs 22:6; 2 Corinthians 12:14; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 2:4).

The Word of God instructs parents to teach their children obedience and to correct them when necessary. This is to be done in love and not anger, yet with firm resolve. It is the Biblical responsibility of parents to teach their children to obey authority, beginning first with parental authority. By doing this, they ultimately teach them to obey God.

We believe that all verbal correction of the child should be done with love and not in a shaming or belittling fashion. Furthermore, we believe that corporal chastisement should be a last resort in every circumstance. The Lord teaches us His methods of correction, which always begin with the withholding of privilege. However, when all other methods fail to be effective, we support the Biblical right and obligation of parents to use spanking when correcting their children.

The Bible plainly teaches, "Whoever refuses to spank his son hates him, but whoever loves his son disciplines him from early on" (Proverbs 13:24, *God's Word Translation*). "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying (Proverbs 19:18, *King James Version*). "Foolishness is firmly attached to a child's heart. Spanking will remove it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15, *God's Word Translation*). "

Do not hesitate to discipline a child. If you spank him, he will not die. Spank him yourself, and you will save his soul from hell” (Proverbs 23:13-14, *God’s Word Translation*).

Finally, Paul admonishes us in Hebrews 12:5-11 (*King James Version*): “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

We strongly oppose abusing or intentionally injuring children in any way; however, when administered in a Biblical manner, we do not believe that corporal chastisement is damaging to a child and neither do we believe that it is “child abuse.” Corporal chastisement should never be administered when angry. The parent should never directly use their hand, foot, or any other part of their body to spank or discipline a child. Whatever the instrument is that is used to apply the corporal chastisement (i.e., a paint stirrer stick, etc.), it should never be anything that could permanently injure the child.

The Articles of Faith of Antioch, The Apostolic Church, Inc. affirms the obligation of the ministry to report all cases of known or suspected child abuse to the proper authorities as prescribed by law.

Public School Activities

We believe that school students should not attend, participate in, or engage in any school classes or school activities that teach or involve materials or actions contrary or counter to the Articles of Faith of Antioch, The Apostolic Church, Inc. and/or to their personal Christian convictions. This includes the wearing of physical education apparel which immodestly expose the body.

We disapprove of our children being forced, against their Christian convictions, to participate in co-educational classes which involve boys and girls being mixed together in swimming or any other mixed-gender athletics while clothed in attire which immodestly exposes the body according to Biblical principles and the Articles of Faith of Antioch, The Apostolic Church.

We disapprove of our school students being forced, against their Christian convictions, to participate in “health instruction” classes where sex education is taught co-educationally and/or films or lectures are given which promote amoral, unnatural, or un-Scriptural behavior.

We disapprove of school students from Antioch being forced, against their Christian convictions, to listen to those who would teach, promote, or advocate sexual activity of any kind other than that between husband and wife within the bonds of the marriage relationship as defined in these Articles of Faith.

We strongly disapprove of any counseling of our children that violates their beliefs based on these Articles of Faith, including but not limited to counseling to have an abortion without the direct knowledge of and involvement of the parents in the decision making process. We believe that the rights of parents over their minor-age children supercedes any governmental authority over those children.

We believe that any disparaging remarks or derogatory comments made by those in authority toward a child in any type of school environment that devalue or are against the religious beliefs of our children is religious discrimination and is a violation of our Constitutional rights. We do not believe that the participation of our children in any government funded educational environment gives any person who has authority or influence over our children the right to attempt to negatively influence the beliefs of our children. Any efforts made to discredit, humiliate, or demean our children for their beliefs will be acted upon to whatever extent necessary, including legal action, to assure that our children will be able to be educated without being harassed or persecuted according to our freedoms as provided by the Constitution of the United States of America.

Secret Societies, Etc.

We believe that the people of God should have no connection whatsoever with secret societies or any other organization or body wherein there is fellowship with unbelievers bound by an oath (James 5:12; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Furthermore, believers should not affiliate with any union, boycott, or organization which forces or binds any of its believers to belong to any organization, perform any duties contrary to conscience, or receive any mark without the right to affirm or reject the same.

The Right of Conscience

Because our bodies are the Temples of God, we support the right of our members to be allowed the freedom of their own conscience to decide what medical treatment is best for themselves and/or their children when faced with any proposed medical intervention. We believe that all individuals have the right to informed consent. No government body or health care professional has the power to force any adult to inject himself or herself with any drug or vaccine against their will or conscience. No government body or health care professional has the power to force any parent to permit their children to be injected with any drug or vaccine against their will or conscience. If any member of Antioch has a good-faith belief that any particular medical intervention either is unethically created or causes risk of harm to the body that outweighs the benefits to the body, we support their right because of conscience to

have the unequivocal right and responsibility to reject that proposed intervention for themselves and for their minor children. Our bodies and our children's bodies do not belong to the State, but to God alone. Our children are given to us by God and He expects us to raise and protect them. Biblically, it is the parents' sole responsibility before God to make these decisions. Because it has been stated in these Articles of Faith that members of Antioch have the right to have their own convictions of conscience, the fact that some members of Antioch have different convictions as stated in this section in no way voids the rights of those whose conscience demands that they exercise their rights as itemized herein. The declarations made in this section are presented as precepts and/or principles of the Articles of Faith of Antioch, The Apostolic Church, Inc. and are intended to uphold and defend the beliefs of those legitimate members of Antioch who are covered by said Articles of Faith.