Central Christian Church Membership Agreement and Statement of Faith

The Central Christian Church Membership Agreement is born out of our love for the church body and its individual members as we seek to praise and glorify God through the teaching of and obedience to God's Word.
This document serves three purposes:

- To clarify the core of our biblical beliefs and practices for both the elders and the individual members of Central's church body.
- To establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for the Central Christian Church body as we exalt Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- To serve as a tool for reflection and growth as we seek to equip and encourage one another toward spiritual maturity.

What is the Church?

The Church universal (i.e., all believers, everywhere) is how God is now choosing to fulfill His purposes in the world (2 Cor. 5:17–20).
In light of this reality, the opportunity to join a local church body is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement. It is also a sacred call to be involved in the redemptive work of our sovereign God to push back the darkness of a fallen world through the power of the Holy Spirit with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (Eph. 2:19), the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2, 9) and the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–31). 1 Corinthians 12 speaks of many members within the same body. Just as a human body relies upon mutual dependence of individual members for proper functioning, so the body of Christ requires sacrificial and responsible service by its individual members. As the Scriptures say, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Cor. 12:21). Likewise, a member of the church cannot say to another member that he or she is unnecessary. We all have gifts that differ according to the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:3–8). Contrary to the individualistic beliefs of our culture, we need each other.

Membership at Central is participation in a family, a microcosm of the universal household of God. All members are united to Christ and thus to each other. Unity within the church is expressed in love for God and a love for others, both those within the family and those who are not. Because of

the identification of Christ with His church, Christians have been given the call to display His gospel in a manner which is worthy of Him with all humility, gentleness, patience and love within the bond of peace (Eph.4:13).

What is the historical background of Central Christian Church?

Approximately 200 years ago, in the face of extreme religious division in America and Europe, there was a call to unity based on restoring original Biblical Christianity. This "Restoration Movement" as it came to be known, was founded on the belief that the Scriptures, the New Testament in particular, provided God's complete and conclusive word for faith and practice for Christ followers. There was no need for human creeds, denominational councils, or human authorities. Each local church, autonomously led by its elders, read and studied the Scriptures and humbly sought to implement its teachings. In 1922 Central Christian Church was founded as a descendant of this movement. We subscribe to the Restoration Movement motto: "no creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no law but love, no name but the divine."

Statement of Faith

The basic doctrines within this Statement of Faith represent what we believe to be core elements of biblical teaching. We expect all members of Central Christian Church to affirm these doctrines. As we are committed to the preservation of unity within the body of Christ to effectively accomplish the Lord's work within it, we will also strongly discourage divisiveness on non-salvation issues.

Doctrine of God

We believe in one God eternally existing as one essence and three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Each person is fully, equally and eternally God, yet there is only one God. Each person has precisely the same nature and attributes and is worthy of precisely the same worship, honor and praise. The entire Christian faith is bound together with the confession of God's Trinitarian nature (Matt. 28:18–20).

We believe in God the Father, the Creator and Sustainer of heaven and earth. (Rev. 4:11) He is unchanging (James 1:17), eternal (Ps. 90:2), all-powerful (Jude 24), and good (Ps. 86:5).

We believe in the Son, God from God, who in history assumed to Himself a human nature for the sake of our salvation (John 1:14; Heb. 1:3). He is fully

God and fully man. Through Him, all things came into being and were created. He was before all things, and in Him, all things hold together by the power of His word (Col.1:15–20). He suffered, died a substitutionary sacrifice, the just for the unjust (Heb. 2:9), was buried, resurrected, ascended and sits at the right hand of the Father until He returns for the final judgment of the unrighteous and establishment of His righteous eternal Kingdom. (Phil 2:6-11, Matt. 25:46).

We believe in the Holy Spirit who is sent by the Father and Son to give new life (John 15:26–27). The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth and dwells within the regenerate and is the guarantee of our inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:13–14). The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son who, in turn, came to glorify the Father. He will lead us in all Truth (John 16:13), be our Helper/Advocate (John 14:16), convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8) and give us power to be witnesses for Christ Jesus (Acts 1:8). He is to be respected, honored and worshiped as God, the third person of the Trinity.

The triune God, Father, Son and Spirit, is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible. As the immortal and eternal Creator, He sovereignly rules over all His creation (Ps. 24:1).

Doctrine of Revelation

God has revealed Himself to us in His Son, the incarnate Word (Heb. 1:1–2), in Scripture, the inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:16), and in creation (Ps. 8; Rom. 1:20)

We believe that **Jesus** Christ, the Son of God, is the perfect revelation of who God is. Jesus Christ is the "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), "the exact imprint of his nature" (Heb. 1:3) and a perfect reflection of God the Father (John 5:19).

We believe that **Scripture**, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, are the inspired Word of God and are therefore without error in their original writings. These 66 books alone constitute the complete, authoritative, and verbally inspired Word of God and are useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that we may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16). The Scripture is sufficient for all that God requires of us and as God's pledge, can be trusted in all that it promises (Is. 40:6–8). As God's people hear, believe and obey the Word, they are increasingly equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel (Rom. 10:14–17). This view of Scripture shapes our practice in

community service, children's ministry, youth ministry, worship, and sermons delivered.

God **created** the whole world from nothing (Gen. 1:1–2; Ps. 24:1). God's creative work is the overflow of the love present within the Trinitarian fellowship. Creation, according to the design of God, was good (Gen. 1:3–31). God doesn't let the world exist; He makes the world exist. He upholds the universe by the power of His word, and He holds the world together in Himself (Col. 1:17), and for His glory (Ps. 108:5).

Doctrine of Humanity

We believe that all humanity is created in the image of God and possesses intrinsic dignity and worth.

God made humanity—male and female—in His own image (Gen. 1:27–30). Set apart as His image bearers, every human being is sacred. All men and all women, bearing the image of God, are meant to represent God in His creation (1 Cor. 10:31). God declares the created order to be very good, distinguishing men and women as His agents to care for, manage and govern over it. They enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union in the covenant of marriage that establishes the only God-ordained pattern of sexual relations for men and women. (Gen. 2:24) In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways.

Central Eldership

Men and women are equal in essence, dignity and value but are distinct by divine design. As part of God's good, created order, men and women are to have different yet complementary roles and responsibilities in the home and church. As it relates to the church, men and women are both expected to lead; however, the office of elder is reserved for qualified men (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1; Acts 6:3).

Doctrine of Sin

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and declared them, "very good". (Gen. 1:31) We believe that sin has fractured all things, leaving the world in desperate need for salvation.

Through the temptation of Satan, humanity transgressed the command of God and fell from their original holiness and righteousness (Gen. 3). Now the entire human race inherits a corrupt nature that is opposed to God and His law (Rom. 3:9–20). Therefore, all humans are under condemnation. This depravity is radical and pervasive. It extends to the mind, will, body and affections. Unregenerate humanity lives under the dominion of sin and Satan (Eph. 2:1–3). He is at enmity with God, hostile toward and hateful of God.

Doctrine of Salvation

We believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Only through Jesus can we have a saving relationship with God. (John 14:6)

We believe that due to the universal punishment of death because of sin, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless born again (John 3:5–8); that salvation is only by grace through faith in the perfect substitutionary shed blood payment of Jesus Christ on our behalf; and that all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ through faith are declared righteous by God and become children of God (Heb. 10:19–25).

We believe the Scriptures teach that regeneration, or the new birth, is that act of God by which the Holy Spirit imparts a new nature and a new spiritual life, not previously possessed, and the person becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus, made perfect forever (justification) by one sacrifice and also in the process of being made holy (sanctification) (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:17; Heb. 10:14).

Believer's baptism

Water baptism by immersion is only intended for those who believe. In obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the Church, oneself and the world, believers are baptized by water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matt 28:19) Water baptism is a visual demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that a former way of life has been put to death and vividly depicts the release from the mastery of Satan, sin and death. It is a membership requirement that you have been baptized by immersion, but that doesn't have to have been done at Central-just in the name of the one true God (p.11).

Eternal Security

Central Christian Church has members who come from a Calvinistic background and members who come from an Arminian background and do not allow the subject of eternal security to divide them. The subject of eternal security itself is not a salvational issue; therefore, we do not make it or allow it to become one. We all affirm that salvation is made available solely through the willing sacrifice of Jesus Christ who died for our sins and that He said that whoever believes in Him will be saved.

Christians are those who have been made perfect once and for all and yet are also in the process of being made holy. (Hebrews 10:14)

"God is sovereign, and man has responsibility to be faithful" is a phrase you are likely to hear often at Central.

Doctrine of the Church

We believe that the Church is the body of Christ sent into the world to shine forth the glory of God.

God, by His Word and Spirit, creates the Church, calling redeemed sinful humanity into the fellowship of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:12–31). By the same Word and Spirit, He guides and preserves that newly redeemed humanity. The Church is made up of those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ and have personally appropriated the gospel. (Eph. 1:3-14) The Church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The ministry of the Church is an extension of the ministry of Jesus in the power of the Spirit.

The ultimate mission of the Church is to bring glory to God by making disciples of Jesus (Matt. 28:18–20). The Church is called to make disciples through worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, fellowship, the exercise of our gifts and talents, and the proclamation of the gospel both in our community and throughout the world.

Lord's Supper

As with water baptism, the Lord's Supper is to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ. This ordinance symbolizes the giving of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood on our behalf and is observed weekly at Central as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. As we come to the table with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember

and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit
As individual members of one body in Christ, we do not all have the same function. We have been given varied gifts by God (Rom. 12:3-8) to serve one another as faithful stewards so that the body can be strengthened, and God glorified. (1 Pet. 4:10).

Because the usage and display of spiritual gifts are a non-salvation area, and to maintain our commitment to the edification of the entire church body, we will not have a place in our church where the gift of tongues or other "charismatic" gifts are encouraged.

Remember, for those who believe that all the gifts are present today, the Spirit of God does not work contrary to the Word of God.

These are rules for their use:

- If someone speaks in a tongue, it will be one at a time. 1 Corinthians 14:27,33,40
- There must be an interpreter. 1 Corinthians 14:28
- There must be one who discerns whether it comes from God. 1 John 4:1
- If it is a prayer language, there is a place to pray. Matthew 6:6
- All the gifts must be used to edify the church, not the individual. 1 Corinthians 14:4-5,26
- No one has all the gifts, but the church is to be a body. 1 Corinthians 12:27-30
- For those who believe prophecy is a gift active today, then the rules of a prophet apply. Deuteronomy 18:20-22

Doctrine of Resurrection and Consummation of the Kingdom of God

We believe that Jesus Christ is returning to the world in the future to judge the living and the dead. (John 5:27-29)

The consummation of all things includes the future, physical, visible, personal and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the glorification of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. Opinions on events and timing of what will occur at the second coming are many, but scripture is clear that no one will know when He is

coming, that it is *not* for us to know when, but that we are to "be ready." (Matt. 24; 1 Thess. 5)

Biblical obligations of the Central Christian Church Body

Elders to the Central Christian Church Body

As shepherds and overseers of a local church, elders are entrusted with protecting, leading, equipping and caring for the corporate church body and her individual members. The following describes responsibilities for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures.

We affirm:

- *to appoint fellow elders according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Pet. 5:1–4).*
- *to prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following of the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1–4).*
- *to care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth and love (Matt. 28:16–20; Eph. 4:15–16; Col. 1:28; James 5:14;1 Pet. 5:1–4).*
- *to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27–28; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:1–5; Titus 2:1).*
- *to equip the members of the church for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11–16).*
- *to be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:28–31; 1 Tim. 1:3–7; 1 John 4:1).*
- *to lovingly exercise discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined and the health of the church as a whole (Matt. 18:15–20; 1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1; James 5:19–20).*
- *to set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below (Phil. 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7–8; 1 Pet. 5:3).*

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Members to the Central Christian Church Body

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others (Col. 3:2-17). The Scriptures refer to this reality as "living by the Spirit" (Rom. 8). God transforms who He justifies and through the ongoing sanctification process He trains our new character to match our new nature. While we acknowledge, like the Apostle Paul, we will sometimes fail on our lifelong path to holiness (Rom. 7:15-20), this document functions primarily as an accessible yet non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith increasingly produces and the model to which we strive.

As a believer in Christ Jesus, it is my desire to: Love God with all my heart, soul, and mind, and to love others as myself.
As a member of Central Christian Church, it is my desire to:

- *to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Ps. 119; 2 Tim. 3:14–17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).*
- *to pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of spiritual disciplines (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 9:24– 27; Eph. 5:1–21; 1 Thess. 5:12–22).*
- *to follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church:*
  -by being baptized.
  -by regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through communion.
- *to regularly participate in the life of Central by attending weekly services, engaging in gospel-centered community and serving those within and outside of this church (Acts 2:42–47; Heb. 10:23–25; Titus 3:14).*
- *to steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful and voluntary (Matt. 25:14–30; Rom. 12:1–2; 2 Cor. 8–9; 1 Pet. 4:10–11).*
- *by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:13–16, 4:1–3). As a believer I will strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit.*

- *to refrain from such activities that the Scriptures would deem foolish (Rom. 14:14–23).*
- *to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another (1 Cor. 8:1–13).*
- *to submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:*
  -Following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another—the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
  -Receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Ps. 141:5; Matt. 18:15–20; 1 Cor. 5:9–13; Heb. 12:5–11).
- *to do the following when I sin:*
  -Confess my sin to God and to fellow believers if needed.
  -Repent and seek help to put my sin to death (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6–10).
- *to submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church (Eph. 4:1–3; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5).*

PLEASE COMPLETE A SEPARATE FORM FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL

1. Have you committed your life to Jesus Christ and accepted Him as your Lord and Savior?

YES NO

2. Have you been baptized by immersion? (Note: If you have not previously been baptized by immersion but desire to become a member of Central, circle "No" and we will contact you to arrange for your baptism.)

YES NO If yes, when/where? _____

3. I have read and understand the **Central Membership Statement of Faith** and desire to abide by its terms.

Please print your full name:

_____

Please sign:

_____

Today's Date: _____

Address:_____City:_____

Zip_____

Phone: ( ) _____

Email:_____

Date of Birth: _____

Wedding Anniversary:_____