



Statement of Faith

Montebello Christian Fellowship

God

We believe that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

God the Father

We believe that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9). As the only absolute and all-powerful Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither the author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6); He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

God the Son

We believe Jesus Christ is the true God and the true man (Philippians 2:6-11). He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary (Luke 1:34-38). He died upon the cross, the Just for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18) as a substitutionary sacrifice, (Hebrews 2:9) and all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood (Romans 5:9). He arose from the dead according to the Scriptures (Acts 2:23-24). He is now at the right hand of Majesty on high as our great High Priest (Hebrews 8:1). He will come again to establish His kingdom, righteousness and peace (Matthew 26:64).

God the Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).

The Bible

We believe that the 66 books of the Bible are the revealed Word of God, and that they were inspired by God as God used men as instruments to write the original autographs to convey His message to the world (2 Peter 1:21). Since every word of Holy Scriptures are the inspired word of God (2 Timothy 3:16), the Scriptures in its original documents are infallible and inerrant. The Bible is the sufficient, final authority for the Christian's faith and practice of the faith (1 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). When the Bible speaks, God speaks.

Man

We believe that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9). We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence; incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death; became subject to the wrath of God; and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost.

Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8). We teach that because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

Salvation

We believe God sent His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man to come to earth and live amongst mankind. In that life, He lived a perfectly righteous life and was crucified on the cross. Christ took the wrath of God on behalf of those who would believe in Him, so that in exchange they would receive Christ's righteousness and not be condemned for their sins. Salvation is all by God's grace on the basis of the person and work of Jesus Christ and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19). The only contribution a believer gives to his salvation is his sin that is in need of cleansing and forgiveness. A person must repent of his sins by turning away from them and embracing Jesus Christ as Lord. He must and believe and fully trust in the finished work of Christ, and love the Lord as the greatest and supreme joy of the universe.

The Church

We believe the church is the people of God who have been bought and purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and are baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). The universal church, the body of Christ (1 Cor 12), manifests itself locally through lives of committed believers who regularly gather in a Gospel community to serve one another and practice the ordinances (Heb 10:24-25). This community cares for the spiritual health of one another (Gal 6:1-5; 1 Thess 5:12-14), practices the spiritual disciplines, exercises their spiritual gifts (1 Cor 14:12), participates in discipleship (Matt 28:19-20; 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 2), and respects its church leadership (Heb 13:17).

Biblical Eldership

We believe that biblically, the focal point of all church leadership is the elder. An elder is one of a plurality of biblically qualified men who jointly shepherd and oversee a local body of believers. The word translated "elder" is used nearly twenty times in Acts and the epistles in reference to this unique group of leaders who have responsibility for overseeing the people of God.

The consistent pattern throughout the New Testament is that each local body of believers is shepherded by a plurality of God-ordained elders. Simply stated, this is the only pattern for church leadership given in the New Testament. Nowhere in Scripture does one find a local assembly ruled by majority opinion or by a single pastor. Note the following:

(1) Presbyter (translated "elder") and episkopos (translated "overseer") were apparently the same individual. That is to say, the two terms were synonymous.

(2) The leadership of the church from the earliest period always had elders, even if it did not have deacons. Young churches only had elders; more mature churches had both elders and deacons (Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Tim 3:1-13).

(3) Elder and pastor are not the same thing in the NT. "Elder" refers to the office one holds by virtue of appointment or election; "pastor" is a spiritual gift that one is given by the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:7-11). One can have the gift of pastor without being an elder; and one can hold the office of elder without having the gift of pastor.

(4) For elders, the one qualification that is other than moral is the ability to teach. Note 1 Tim 3:2 ("able to teach" [didaktikos]). Titus 1:9 expands on this: "he must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it."

Deacons and Deaconesses

Based on the New Testament, the role of the deacon is mainly to be a "servant." Deacons have a crucial role in the life and the health of the local church, but their role is different from that of an elder. The biblical role of deacons is to take care of the physical and logistical needs of the church (Acts 6:2), so that the elders can concentrate on their primary calling ("prayer and the ministry of the word," Acts 6:4).

Discipleship

We believe that biblically that there is no distinction between embracing God's grace as a forgiven sinner and following Jesus as the primary shaping influence over our life. Christian and disciple are interchangeable as we read in Acts 11:26.

"A disciple is someone who believes in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, intentionally learns from Him, and strives to live more like Him. Discipleship means intentionally helping people learn from and live more like Christ by praying with them, spending time together in His Word, walking alongside them in everyday life, and equipping them to do the same with others. God is transforming lives through these spiritual generations" (The Navigators).

The Ordinances

We believe the two ordinances to be practiced in the church are water baptism and the Lord's Supper.

We believe baptism is an act of obedience that is the first act of obedience of the new believer. Though it is not a prerequisite for salvation, it is a picture of it. The Scriptures teach that it is a command to be obeyed (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 2:38). The purpose of baptism includes the following: it is a symbol of salvation (Rom 6:1-11; Titus 3:5); it identifies a person with the God of the Bible (Matt 29:19-20; Acts 2:38; 8:18; 22:16); it identifies an individual with the church family (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 4:5) and it encourages the church body (1 Cor 1:13; Acts 10).

The participants of baptism are those who have called upon the Lord for salvation and are professing believers in Christ. The mode of baptism taught in Scripture is that of immersion (Acts 8:38; cf. Mark 1:10).

We believe the Lord's Supper is an act of worship that is to be regularly practiced (Matt 26:26-35; 1 Cor 11:26). It commemorates work of Christ on the cross and is a proclamation of His future return (1 Cor 11:23-26). The Communion elements are only representations of the body and the blood; no change in substance occurs in the elements during Communion. Participants are to examine their lives as they participate in an act of integrity (1 Cor 11:27-32). This includes confessing sin, being at peace with their brothers and sisters, and being unified with the local church (1 Cor 11:17-22, 33).

End Times

We believe in that "Blessed Hope," the personal, imminent, pre-tribulation, and premillennial coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His redeemed ones; and in His subsequent return to earth, with His saints, to establish His Millennial Kingdom (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Revelation 3:10).

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46; John 5:28-29; 11:25-26; Revelation 20:5-6, 12-13).

We believe that the souls of the redeemed are, at death absent from the body and present with the Lord, where in conscious bliss they await the first resurrection, when spirit, soul and body are reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord (Luke 23:43; Revelation 20:4-6; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

We believe the souls of the unbelievers remain, after death, in conscious misery until the second resurrection, when with soul and body reunited they shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment, and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment (Luke 16:10-26; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Jude 6, 7; Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 20:11-15).

Marriage

We believe that sexuality is a gift from God and basic to human identity as well as a matter of behavioral expression. We hold that the full behavioral expression of sexuality is to take place within the context of a marriage covenant between a man and a woman and that individuals remain celibate outside of the bond of marriage.

Foundational principles from the Bible on human sexual relationships are as follows:

1. Humans, being created in the image of God, are inherently relational beings (Genesis 1:26).
2. The inherent relational nature of humankind is expressed in a variety of contexts including family, marriage, work, and for Christians, the body of Christ (Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Corinthians 12:14).
3. Humans were created male and female and expressly blessed by God to be fruitful and multiply and to exercise dominion over the earth. We affirm that gender is determined by our biological sex. God who made male and female in His image graciously provides our sexual identity at our conception. (Genesis 1:26-31; Genesis 2:24,25; 1 Corinthians 7:1-9; Matthew 19:4,5; Psalm 51)
4. Sexual union is intended by God to take place only within the marriage covenant between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:18, 21-24; Hebrews 13:4), which Jesus reaffirms (Matthew 19:4-6).
5. The New Testament teaches that followers of Christ are to remain celibate outside the bond of marriage. In sexual union, both body and soul are deeply impacted. A person who engages in sexual unions outside the bond of marriage sins against his or her own body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-20).
6. The sexual union within the marriage covenant between a man and a woman has been designed by God to bring them together as “one flesh,” creating a solid foundation on which to build a family (Genesis 2:18-24; Ephesians 5:31).

Creation

We believe that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9). We teach that God’s intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God’s fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God’s purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

Sanctity of life

We believe that the Bible is clear in its teaching on the sanctity of human life (Gen 1:26, 28). Life begins at conception. We abhor the destruction of innocent life through abortion-on-demand (Job 31:15; Psalm 82:3-4; 127:3; 139:13-16).

This understanding of human worth begins with the recognition that conception marks the start of human life and full personhood. Each person possesses a right to life and protection from harm. We uphold the value God has given to humanity by protecting the worth of persons from their beginnings until their final breaths. We are opposed to the taking of innocent life, from abortion to euthanasia. Seeing human life as a seamless tapestry, we affirm the personhood and dignity of all persons.

