



## STATEMENT OF FAITH

### MISSION

To inspire non-religious Houstonians to follow Jesus

### VISION

To become a multiplying, multi-site, Spirit-led, church-planting engine in Houston and beyond that reaches 5,000 people for Jesus over the next five years.

### VALUES

Because Jesus is the source of and reason for everything we do, our core values are all about reflecting Him. By God's grace, we will strive to embody:

#### *The Truth of Christ*

The Christian life is not about religion, philosophy, or self-help; it is about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He came to reveal God's perfect plan of salvation for all who have faith, and we understand His plans for us by studying the Bible, the true and inerrant revelation of God's will for creation.

#### *The Heart of Christ*

Selfless love is the greatest expression of God's character, and love will be a guiding principle for us. We will choose to love each person, regardless of his/her circumstances, with the love of Jesus, because all people are created in the image of God and hold immeasurable worth.

#### *The Mind of Christ*

Because we live in a post-Christendom culture, in which most people under 35 have very little experience with the Christian faith, and very little knowledge of the Bible, we are committed to presenting and defending life in Christ as a rational and approachable worldview. *Apologetics*, or the formulation and expression of reasonable, logical arguments in favor of the legitimacy of the Christian worldview, is essential to our mission. We will not only make a case for the efficacy and historical accuracy of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, but we will also graciously challenge skeptics, agnostics, and other non-religious people to compare their various secular worldviews to the worldview that is centered on Christ Jesus.

### *The Hands of Christ*

Jesus said, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must become a slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:27-28). To truly represent Jesus in the world, we will become servants for the sake of Christ. By our acts of service, we seek the restoration and reconciliation that God intends for all His children.

### *The Feet of Christ*

The Gospel of Jesus cannot be contained. The moment Christians choose to isolate themselves from the world is the moment the Gospel of Jesus becomes another man-made religion. Before his ascension into heaven, Jesus commanded his disciples to “Go, therefore, and make disciples in every nation” (Matthew 28:17). In Acts 1:7, Jesus said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” We will remain steadfast in our submission to the Spirit of God, and to go wherever He may send us to expand the kingdom.

### *The Cross of Christ*

Even when it hurts, and even if our kindness goes unnoticed, unappreciated, or unreciprocated, our posture toward the world and each other will be to love and serve without counting the cost. It is our great honor and pleasure to sacrifice our own comforts, conveniences, privileges, and resources for the sake of Christ and His kingdom. We will encourage one another to give sacrificially, out of passion instead of obligation. Sacrificial generosity isn't just about giving money, but also our time, passion, creative energy, and works of mercy.

## THE CORE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL

*Romans 5:8-10*

*“...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”*

The meaning of the word “gospel” in Greek is “good news.” Gospel is the message of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, a message that brings redemption and hope to the world. Through the gospel, believers find God’s redemption from sin and a new life in Christ.

## UNDERSTANDING SIN

*Romans 3:23*

*“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”*

- Sin is human rebellion against the will of God.

- Sin isolates us from God and each other.
- From the very beginning of creation, and in spite of sin, God refuses to give up on creation.
- Jesus is God's clearest, boldest attempt to bridge the chasm created by sin.
- Jesus' teachings reveal the heart of God to humanity, a God of love, mercy, and that wants to be in close relationship with us.
- By his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus makes it known that grace has defeated sin.
- By receiving the grace of God through Christ, human beings can be redeemed and set free from sin and death.
- Although it is a free gift, once grace is received we cannot remain the same. Grace draws us to repentance and renewal.
- As cultures inevitably change, so do human understandings of morality. Whenever there is doubt about contemporary social issues, we look to the Bible as the source of eternal Truth. One example of this is in regard to human sexuality and marriage, where we've seen tremendous cultural shifts in recent history. While we joyfully welcome, include, and involve everyone who wants to follow Jesus at The Story regardless of sexual orientation, we're also persuaded by Scripture to understand that God has reserved sexual intimacy for one man and one woman within the context of Christian marriage.

## UNDERSTANDING GRACE

Accepting God's grace through Christ is the first step every Christian takes in order to be in close relationship with God.

### *Prevenient Grace*

God's love is freely given to all people, and all we need to do is to accept it to be in relationship with him. God's grace is not dependent on human merit, but on God's abundant love for us. God's love is so great that He gave His only son for us, so that we could know true life.

### *Justifying Grace*

#### *Ephesians 4:22-24*

*You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Once we accept God's grace, we are called to repentance, to leave all the things that separate us from God behind, and to re-center our lives around God's will. This is a process through which we are made new; a process of rebirth into the new life that God has for us through Christ. We are called to 'bear witness with our spirit that we are children of God.'

### *Sanctifying Grace*

"Through God's sanctifying grace, we grow and mature in our ability to live as Jesus lived." When we pray, study the Scriptures, worship, and build community with other Christians, we understand more about the nature of God, and we learn to love and follow Him more faithfully. We also become mature Christians by practicing works of mercy following Jesus'

example, learning to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. This is a process of aligning our actions and behavior with God's will.

## OUR BELIEFS: WHAT IS CENTRAL TO OUR FAITH

We Believe in God

The Father (Luke 15, Love and Mercy)  
Almighty (Revelation 1:8, Holy and Eternal)  
Maker of Heaven and Earth (Genesis 1-2, Creator)

We Believe in Jesus Christ

His Only Son (John 3, the Uniqueness of Christ)  
Our Lord (Mark 8:34, surrender to Christ)  
Who Was Conceived By the Holy Spirit (John 10:30, Divinity of Christ)  
Born of the Virgin Mary (1:26-38, Humanity of Christ)  
Suffered Under Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27, a king who suffers)  
Was Crucified, Dead, and Buried (Matthew 27, taking the curse)  
On the Third Day He Rose from the Dead (Matthew 28, resurrection)  
He Ascended and Will Come Again to Judge the Living and the Dead  
(Matthew 16:27, return, judgment, reckoning)

We Believe in the Holy Spirit (John 14:26, Acts 2, the Advocate)

We Believe in the Church (Romans 12, the Body of Christ)

We Believe in the Communion of Saints (Romans 8:35-39, nothing can separate us)

We Believe in the Forgiveness of Sins (Matthew 6:14-15, forgive and be forgiven)

We Believe in the Resurrection of the Body (1 Corinthians 15:35-38, matter matters)

We Believe in Life Everlasting (John 3:16, eternal life in Christ)

## BASIC BELIEFS THAT INFORM OUR PURPOSE

- God created everything.
- God is love.
- Creation is essentially good, but broken by sin.
- God desires intimate relationships with human beings.
- God insists on giving humans the freedom to choose good or evil.
- We are all sinners in need of God's grace.
- Our rebellion against God's will (sin) separates us from God and isolates us from each other.
- In spite of sin, God refuses to give up on creation.
- Jesus is God's clearest, boldest attempt to bridge the chasm created by sin.
- Jesus' teachings reveal the heart of God.
- By his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus makes it known that grace has defeated sin.
- By receiving the grace of God through Christ, human beings can be redeemed and set free from sin and death.
- The Holy Spirit makes it possible to grow deeper in our Communion with God and each other.
- Baptism and Holy Communion stand out as the most important symbolic acts for the Church.
- The Church exists to proclaim the Good News of God's Kingdom come.
- To that end, the Church has sometimes fallen short, and we are sorry.

- We remain steadfast in our hope that Christ will come again to usher in the fullness of God's glorious vision for creation