



# WHAT WE BELIEVE

At Stonehill Church, we believe God is the one who grows His Church, adding to our numbers according to His will (Acts 2:47). Our goal is to glorify Christ in all we do. **As a diverse church family**, we seek unity around the **essential truths of salvation** while allowing for differing views on secondary issues. Jesus said the world would know us by our love and unity (John 13:35; 17:21–22). These Statements of Faith outline our core, non-negotiable beliefs.

## THE WORD OF GOD

**We believe the Bible is the very Word of God**, inspired down to its every word (2 Timothy 3:16–17). It is without error and stands as our highest authority for faith and life. We affirm that all sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments (John 5:46–47) were written by human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). Scripture alone is fully authoritative and the only reliable foundation for our beliefs and way of living.

## THE GOSPEL

**We believe the gospel is the heart of the Bible, the foundation of our faith, and the power of the Christian life. It is the good news that though we were spiritually dead in sin** (Ephesians 2:1), God, in His love, sent Jesus to live the perfect life we couldn't (Acts 2:22), die in our place, bearing our penalty (Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21), and rise again, conquering death and offering new life through His Spirit to all who believe (1 Corinthians 15:3–8; Acts 2:38–39).

## TRIUNE GOD

We believe God is self-existent, needing nothing outside Himself. He is eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, and present everywhere (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 90:2; 139:1–10; Isaiah 45:18). **God has always existed as one being in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each fully divine, co-equal, and united** (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14). The Trinity is perfectly unified in essence and purpose, with distinct roles (Genesis 1:26; John 1:1; Colossians 1:15). All things are possible with God (Matthew 19:26), who sovereignly rules creation with infinite wisdom and power (Job 38–40).

## GOD THE FATHER

**We believe God the Father is fully divine and carries out a distinct role within the Trinity.** He is the Father of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 9:6; John 20:17) and remains fully united with the Son and Spirit as the one true God. As a loving and sovereign Father (Deuteronomy 32:6; Isaiah 63:16), He adopts all who trust in Christ, giving them the right to call Him “Father” (Romans 8:14–17; Galatians 4:6).

## GOD THE SON-JESUS CHRIST

**We believe in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who became fully human without ceasing to be fully God** (John 1:1, 14; 3:16). Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:35), He lived a sinless life and demonstrated divine power through miracles. He redeemed us by taking our place on the cross, offering Himself as a substitutionary sacrifice, crucified, buried, and physically dead (1 John 2:2). Through His death and resurrection, He secured eternal life for all who believe (John 14:6).

## **GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, eternally united with the Father and the Son, fully sharing in the divine nature.** He is a person, not a force, who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Genesis 1:2; John 16:7–13). The Spirit draws the lost to faith, unites them with Christ, and at salvation, baptizes believers into His body, seals them, and gives new spiritual life (John 14:26; Romans 8:9–11). He equips believers with gifts, empowers them for ministry, and shapes them into the likeness of Christ (Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–13).

## **MAN AND SIN**

We believe God created humanity—male and female—in His image as the pinnacle of creation (Genesis 1:27–28). **Yet, through willful rebellion, mankind fell into sin, bringing death and condemnation to all** (Genesis 3:1–6; Romans 5:12). As a result, we face both physical and spiritual death and are unable to return to God apart from Jesus Christ (John 6:44; Ephesians 2:1–5).

All have sinned and fall short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23), and sin separates us from Him (Isaiah 59:2). Through Christ’s death and resurrection we are forgiven and reconciled to God (Colossians 1:21–22). Though our sinful nature remains until we are glorified (Romans 7:18–25; Philippians 1:6), **in Christ and by the Spirit’s power we are no longer slaves to sin but are enabled to walk in new life** (Romans 6:6–7; Galatians 5:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

## **SALVATION**

We believe salvation is a sovereign gift of God, received through personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (John 6:44; Titus 3:5). **Only through Christ’s death and resurrection was sin fully paid for, satisfying God’s justice** (Romans 3:23–25; Colossians 2:13–15; 1 Peter 2:24). Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from works and entirely for God’s glory (Ephesians 2:8–9; 2 Timothy 1:9).

**We affirm Jesus is the only way to salvation, and no one can be saved apart from personal trust in Him** (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9–10). Eternal life begins the moment someone believes (John 5:24; 1 John 5:11–13). While salvation is by grace, it produces a transformed life, imperfect but surrendered, marked by obedience, baptism (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38), and fruit through the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–25; James 2:17).

We believe infants and young children, not yet able to understand sin or their need for Christ, rest under God’s gracious care until an age of accountability known only to Him (Deuteronomy 29:29; 2 Samuel 12:23).

**All who are truly saved are made new by the Holy Spirit, declared righteous before God, and eternally secure in Christ** (John 10:27–30; Romans 8:38–39).

## **THE CHURCH**

We believe the universal Church is the Body of Christ, with Jesus as its supreme and authoritative Head (Ephesians 1:22–23; Colossians 1:18). **It is made up of all who have placed their faith in Him for salvation.** The local church is a community of believers who gather for teaching, worship, prayer, and fellowship (Acts 2:42–46; Hebrews 10:24–25), observing baptism and communion.

**In the local church, believers use their spiritual gifts to serve one another** (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:6–8) and to help fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:8). Wherever God’s people gather in obedience to these purposes, a local church is formed and led by a plurality of elders, pastor, and a staff team who shepherd and oversee the flock (Acts 14:23; 1 Peter 5:1–4).

## BAPTISM

Water baptism is the immersion of a believer in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:13–17; Acts 8:35–39). **It is a public declaration of faith, symbolizing identification with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection** (Romans 6:3–6; Colossians 2:12). Baptism is a biblical command that follows belief and surrender to Christ. It does not justify a person before God (Ephesians 2:8–9; Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12) but is a fruit of salvation. **We believe that if someone is truly a follower of Jesus, they will be obedient to His command to be baptized.**

While we encourage child dedication—an opportunity for parents to commit to raising their children according to God’s Word (Deuteronomy 6:6–7; Proverbs 22:6) **we believe baptism is reserved for those who can personally express their faith, understand its meaning, and have professed Jesus as their Savior** (Romans 10:9–10). In Scripture, baptism always follows belief and surrender to Christ, as seen in Acts 2:41, Acts 8:12, and Acts 16:31–33. It is a step of obedience and public declaration that comes after salvation, not before (Ephesians 2:8–9; Colossians 2:12).

## COMMUNION

We believe the Lord’s Supper is a regular remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice—His body given and His blood shed for our redemption (1 Corinthians 10:16; Luke 22:19–20). At Stonehill, we typically observe it once a month. **In the Lord’s Supper, we affirm that Christ is truly present, not in the elements themselves, but spiritually present to believers who receive by faith** (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:27–29; John 6:53–56, 63; Matthew 18:20). This ordinance is a sacred privilege for every believer, practiced in anticipation of Christ’s return and always preceded by sincere self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:23–29).

## MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY

**We believe God alone has ultimate authority over marriage, gender, and sexuality.** According to Scripture, He creates each person as male or female, two distinct yet complementary genders that together reflect His image (Genesis 1:26–27; Psalm 139). It is inconsistent with God’s design to alter or reject one’s biological sex.

**Marriage, as instituted by God, is a sacred covenant between one man and one woman, intended to be exclusive, complementary, and lifelong** (Genesis 2:18–25; Matthew 19:1–9). It reflects the covenant between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:31–33) and is the only context for sexual intimacy. Any sexual expression outside this biblical design—such as lust, adultery, pornography, homosexuality, premarital sex, bisexuality, transgender practices, or polygamy—does not align with God’s intent (Romans 1:18–32; 1 Corinthians 6:9–20; Hebrews 13:4).

**We affirm that neither government, church, nor individuals can redefine what God has established.** Therefore, unions that do not conform to biblical marriage are not recognized as marriage by our church. We also recognize that some are not physically attracted to the opposite sex or choose to remain unmarried. We believe these brothers and sisters are fully supported and encouraged by Scripture to embrace celibacy and devotion to Christ (1 Corinthians 7:1-8, 32-38; Matthew 19:4-12; Isaiah 56:3-5).

**Above all, we believe that every person bears the sacred image of God and must be treated with compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful or harassing attitudes toward any individual are to be repudiated.** We also believe God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10).

**Finally, we believe generosity, humility, and purity in these areas provide a powerful witness to the watching world (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22).** For this reason, all who serve or work in our church are expected to uphold this biblical vision of marriage, gender, and sexuality as a testimony to Christ and His Word.

## **LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH**

We believe Christ is the head of the Church, His body (Ephesians 5:23–25), and He leads it through qualified elders. **Each local church is to be led by a plurality of elders, who oversee the church's spiritual health, direction, and teaching (Acts 14:23; 20:26–31; 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9).**

At Stonehill, elders provide overall spiritual leadership and work in close partnership with the Lead Pastor (who also serves as an elder) and the staff Pastors and team to lead the church's ministry and operations. They serve with humility and accountability, seeking God's will through prayer, Scripture, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 5:1–4; Acts 13:1–3).

**Stonehill also has a Leadership Team, similar to biblical deacons,** made up of qualified individuals who help lead in areas such as finance, facilities, human resources, and other logistical functions.

## **PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER**

**We believe that through Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, every believer has direct access to God (Hebrews 4:14–16; 10:19–22).** Because of His sacrifice, the veil has been torn, and we no longer need a human priest or pastor to mediate on our behalf. In Christ, every believer can come freely and confidently before God.

It is God's design that all followers of Jesus participate in the priesthood of believers, each using their spiritual gifts to serve, strengthen the Church, and carry out His mission in the world (1 Peter 2:5, 9; 4:10–11; Ephesians 4:11–13; Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–30). In this way, every believer plays an essential role in the life and ministry of the Church.

## **SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

**We believe the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to every believer according to His sovereign will, for building up the Body of Christ and advancing God's mission (1 Corinthians 12:4–11; Romans 12:4–8; 1 Peter 4:10–11).** These diverse gifts equip believers to serve in love, strengthen the Church, and glorify God (Ephesians 4:11–13; 1 Corinthians 14:12).

**Each believer has a vital role in the Church and is called to discover, develop, and use their gifts under the Spirit's guidance** (1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Timothy 4:14). Gifts are to be exercised with humility, unity, and love, always in line with Scripture and Christ's character (1 Corinthians 13:1–7; Romans 12:9–10).

**We believe the Spirit continues to work today, but emphasize that the fruit of the Spirit is the clearest sign of maturity** (Galatians 5:22–23). Within our church, there could be differing views on whether all “extraordinary” gifts continue today. We affirm that faithful Christians can disagree on this and remain united. Above all, the Spirit will never act contrary to Scripture. All gifts must be practiced in an orderly, edifying way for the Church's growth and the gospel's advancement (1 Corinthians 14:26, 40).

## **STEWARDSHIP AND GENEROSITY**

**We believe our time, talents, and treasures are to be joyfully and generously offered to God in response to His grace, mercy, and love** (Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 9:7). While giving a tenth (a “tithe”) is a wise and biblical goal for supporting the local church, local community and global outreach (Leviticus 27:30; Malachi 3:10; Matthew 23:23), we believe God cares more about the posture of our hearts than a specific percentage (Mark 12:41–44; 2 Corinthians 9:6–8). When God truly has a Christian's heart, faithful and obedient giving will naturally follow.

Offerings beyond the tithe are expressions of gratitude that may support other ministries as the Lord leads (2 Corinthians 8:1–5). Generosity and faithful stewardship are signs of spiritual maturity and essential to advancing Christ's mission (Acts 4:32–35; 2 Corinthians 9:11–15). Above all, our giving should flow from a heart that loves God first, recognizing that everything we have belongs to Him (Psalm 24:1; 2 Samuel 24:24; Luke 11:42).

## **DIVINE CREATION**

**We believe God is the sovereign Creator of all things, who by His powerful Word spoke the heavens, the earth, and all life into existence** (Genesis 1:1–31; Exodus 20:11; Hebrews 11:3). All creation was made through Him and for Him, declaring His glory and revealing His eternal power and divine nature (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20; Colossians 1:16).

We reject evolution as the origin of life and affirm that God directly created all living things according to their kinds, as taught in Scripture (Genesis 1:11–25; Mark 10:6). Humanity, uniquely made in God's image, reflects His character and was given stewardship over the earth (Genesis 1:26–28; Psalm 8:3–6).

God continues to sustain all things by His mighty hand, and all creation exists to glorify Him (Nehemiah 9:6; Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 4:11). While many of us hold to a six-day creation view, we recognize that faithful Christians may differ on the timing and method. Such differences need not hinder our unity in Christ.

## **HEAVEN AND HELL**

**We believe that at death, the souls of all who trust in Jesus are immediately with the Lord** (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23), where they remain in joyful fellowship until the resurrection. When Christ returns for His Church, their souls will be united with glorified, incorruptible bodies to dwell with Him forever (1 Corinthians 15:35–54; Philippians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). Ultimately, believers will live eternally with God in the new heaven and new earth, free from sin, sorrow, and death (Revelation 21:1–4; 2 Peter 3:13).

**In contrast, the souls of unbelievers go to Hades until the final judgment.** At the Great White Throne, they will be resurrected, judged, and cast into the Lake of Fire—enduring eternal separation from God, not annihilation, but everlasting punishment under His righteous judgment (Matthew 25:41–46; Luke 16:19–26; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9; Revelation 20:11–15).

## **ETERNITY**

**We believe in the personal and imminent return of Jesus Christ** (John 14:1–3; Acts 1:11). At Stonehill, we affirm that Jesus will come again as He promised, though faithful Christians may differ on the details of His return. Some believe in the rapture before the tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18), while others believe He will return once for all believers. We extend grace in these areas, holding fast to the certain hope of Christ’s coming. Scripture also points to a future time of tribulation and final judgment, followed by the creation of a new heaven and new earth where righteousness dwells (Revelation 21:1–5). Above all, we live with watchfulness, hope, and eager anticipation of His return (Matthew 24:42–44).

## **SANCTITY OF LIFE**

**We believe all human life is sacred, having been wonderfully created by God in His image** (Genesis 1:26–28). Scripture teaches that God intimately forms each person in the womb, knowing them before birth (Psalm 139:13–16; Jeremiah 1:5). Therefore, every human life—unborn, elderly, disabled, or otherwise—is of immeasurable worth and dignity (Psalm 8:4–5; Proverbs 31:8–9).

God alone is the Author of life and the One who numbers our days (Job 14:5; Acts 17:25). We are called to uphold and protect the value of life from conception to natural death (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 30:19). In light of these truths, we believe abortion and euthanasia violate the sanctity of life and are contrary to God’s will (Proverbs 6:16–17).