

# Member Affirmation of Faith

Adapted from *The New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (1833, revised in 1853)

*Last Updated August 19, 2024*

The basic beliefs of Risen King Church in the Stillwater area are foundational to Christianity. Christians throughout the history of the church have summarized in brief, definitive statements what Scripture teaches in order to clarify what is true and to guard the church from error (cf. Titus 1:9). Such statements include the historic Christian orthodoxy in the [Apostles' Creed](#) (200s–300s), the [Nicene Creed](#) (revised in 381 at Constantinople), the [Chalcedonian Creed](#) (451), and the [Athanasian Creed](#) (300s–400s). Members of Risen King Church joyfully affirm this adapted version of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith. While this doctrinal statement does not exhaustively explain<sup>1</sup> what we believe, it highlights important teachings our church upholds. We believe ...

## 1. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible is God-breathed and was written by men who spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. It is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction. It has God<sup>2</sup> for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its content. It reveals the principles by which God will judge us. Therefore, it is—and will remain to the end of the world—the true center of

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note by Andy Naselli: This adapted version lightly updates some punctuation, spelling, capitalization, grammar, and archaic words to make the confession more readable. The footnotes below indicate and explain substantive updates. For the original version along with Scripture references that support each article, see [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> The original says, "The Holy Bible was written by people who were divinely inspired." The updated wording describes the *writing* (not the *writers*) as God-breathed because that is how 2 Timothy 3:16 uses the word θεόπνευστος (theopneustos): "All Scripture is *God-breathed*" (NIV) or "All Scripture is *breathed out by God*" (ESV). The Bible describes the writers as men who "spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:21).

Christian fellowship and the supreme standard for evaluating all<sup>3</sup> human conduct, creeds, and opinions.

## 2. The True God

There is one, and only one, true and living God—an infinite, intelligent Spirit. His name is Yahweh, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth. He is inexpressibly glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love. In the unity of the Godhead, there are three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are equal in every divine perfection, and they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

## 3. Mankind and the Fall<sup>4</sup>

God created humans in his own image, which is the basis for the sanctity of human life from embryo to elderly. God created humans as either male or female. God’s good design is a fixed matter of human biology, not individual choice. God instituted marriage to be between one man and one woman; God reserves the gift of sexual intimacy exclusively for marriage; and the marriage covenant is the only God-honoring relationship for procreation. Man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker. But by voluntary transgression, mankind fell from that holy and happy state. Consequently, all humans are now sinners, not by constraint but choice, being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil. Therefore, they are under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.

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<sup>3</sup> The original says, “the true center of Christian union.” The historical-cultural context of this statement is the rise of Socinians (Unitarians) and Campbellite churches in America. Both groups called for a union with other churches, and both groups did not believe that the Bible is “the supreme standard.”

<sup>4</sup> This section was originally titled “The Fall of Man.” The creeds of the early church do not explicitly affirm orthodox teaching on abortion, sex, and marriage because those matters were not contested issues among Christians at the time. But evil ideologies about abortion, sex, and marriage are prominent in our culture now, so we added the first paragraph here to be clear, concise, and evergreen while closing off loopholes to affirming heresy. It articulates in a positive way what all Christians have believed over the past two thousand years and that only recently some professing Christians have been contesting. This statement affirms that (1) God forbids abortion; (2) God forbids euthanasia; (3) God created only two sexes—male and female; (4) a person’s sex is based on whether God created that person as male or female; a person cannot choose to change from one sex to another sex; (5) so-called “marriage” between a man and a man or between a woman and a woman is not a marriage in God’s sight; (6) although God tolerates polygamy in the Old Testament, the ideal is that marriage is for one man and one woman; (7) procreation is a primary purpose for which God designed marriage (a husband and wife may still glorify God even if they are unable to have children); (8) God forbids sexual intercourse between a man and a woman who are not married to each other; (9) God forbids sexual intercourse between a man and a man; and (10) God forbids sexual intercourse between a woman and a woman.

#### **4. The Way of Salvation**

The salvation of sinners is wholly of grace through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God. By the appointment of the Father, he freely took upon himself our nature, yet without sin. He honored the divine law by his personal obedience, and by his death he made a full atonement for our sins. Having risen from the dead, he is now enthroned in heaven. Uniting in his wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, he is every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate, and all-sufficient Savior.

#### **5. Justification**

The great gospel blessing that Christ secures to those who believe in him is justification. Justification includes the pardon of sin and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness. It is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness that we have done but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood. By virtue of this faith, his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us by God. It brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and it secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

#### **6. The Freeness of Salvation**

The blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel. It is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a heartfelt, repentant, and obedient faith. What prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth is his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel, a<sup>5</sup> rejection that aggravates his condemnation.

#### **7. Grace in Regeneration**

In order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again. Regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind. It is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel. Its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith, and newness of life.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The original says, "Nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but ...." We updated the wording because some might interpret the original to affirm incompatibilism, which affirms a libertarian view of human freedom and rejects God's meticulous sovereignty in predestination. Cf. Andrew David Naselli, "Do We Have a Free Will?" chap. 6 in *Predestination: An Introduction*, Short Studies in Systematic Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2024), 79–109.

<sup>6</sup> Theologians have understood God's sovereignty in the context of two larger theological frameworks commonly called Arminianism and Calvinism. Arminianism affirms that God's sovereignty is general (i.e., God is in charge of everything, but he does not ordain everything, and Calvinism affirms that God's sovereignty is meticulous (i.e., God is in charge of everything, and he ordains everything—even sin). (See Naselli, *Predestination*, 10–17.) The New Hampshire Confession of Faith shares the perspective of a warm Calvinism (e.g., §§7, 9, 11), but it is not so explicit that it necessarily excludes

## 8. Repentance and Faith

Repentance and faith are sacred duties and also inseparable graces. They are worked in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God. Being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with genuine contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy. At the same time, we heartily receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and we rely on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

## 9. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the eternal purpose of God according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners. Being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it encompasses all the means in connection with the end. It is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness—infinately free, wise, holy, and unchangeable. It utterly excludes boasting, and it promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy. It encourages the use of means in the highest degree. It may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel. It is the foundation of Christian assurance. To ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

## 10. Progressive Sanctification<sup>7</sup>

Progressive sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness. It is a progressive work. It is begun in regeneration, and it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means—especially the word of God, self examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

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Arminians. For some of the historical background, see Michael A. G. Haykin, "[Baptists, A Confessional People](#)," *Christ Over All*, 4 March 2024. Risen King Church wants our Member Affirmation of Faith to affirm basically what all Christians since the early church affirm with only minimal distinctives. Ideally, the door into membership of Christ's universal church is as wide as the door into membership of Risen King Church.

<sup>7</sup> This section was originally titled "Sanctification." The adjective *progressive* distinguishes this from definitive or positional sanctification (which occurs simultaneously with conversion and justification) and from perfect, complete, or final sanctification (i.e., future glorification). There are three tenses of sanctification: (1) in the past God sets a Christian apart from sin's penalty and his old self in Adam; (2) in the present God is gradually setting a Christian apart from sin's power and practice (i.e., progressive sanctification); and (3) in the future God will set a Christian apart from sin's presence and possibility.

## 11. The Perseverance of Saints

All genuine believers endure to the end. Their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark that distinguishes them from superficial professors. A special providence watches over their welfare, and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

## 12. The Harmony of the Law and the Gospel

The law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of his moral government. It is holy, just, and good. The inability that the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin. To deliver them from that love and to restore them through a Mediator to genuine obedience to the holy law is one great end of the gospel. The local<sup>8</sup> church's means of grace share this great end.

## 13. A Gospel Church<sup>9</sup>

A local church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, connected by covenant<sup>10</sup> in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. They observe the ordinances of Christ, baptism and the Lord's Supper; they are governed by his laws; and they exercise the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his word. Their only scriptural officers are pastors (also called elders and overseers) and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

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<sup>8</sup> The original says, "a visible church." Cf. Andrew David Naselli, "1 Corinthians," in *Romans–Galatians*, vol. 10 of *ESV Expository Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 225: "Theologians traditionally distinguish at least four senses of 'church': (1) the *universal* church is the people of God throughout human history—past, present, and future; (2) the *invisible* church is all genuine believers currently alive on earth; (3) the *visible* church is professing believers currently alive on earth (we cannot see the invisible church infallibly, as God does, because what we see inevitably includes some people who wrongly claim to be believers); and (4) a *local* church is part of the visible church—like 'the church of God that is in Corinth.' In the NT, 'church' usually refers to local churches. And the term always refers to people who gather together—not to a church building."

<sup>9</sup> The original says, "a visible church." See the previous footnote.

<sup>10</sup> The original says, "Its only scriptural officers are Bishops or Pastors." Bishop is another term for overseer. For a Venn diagram that shows how Scripture refers to pastors, elders, and overseers interchangeably, see Colin Smothers, "[Pastor, Elder, and Overseer: A Baptist View](#)," *Anchored*, 13 May 2012.

## 14. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It publicly displays in a devout and beautiful emblem our faith in the<sup>11</sup> crucified, buried, and risen Savior and our union with him in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life. Baptism is a prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and the Lord's Supper. In the Lord's Supper, the members of the church by the sacred use of bread and wine<sup>12</sup> are to celebrate together the dying love of Christ, preceded always by self-examination.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The original says, "solemn." Some today might interpret *solemn* as not cheerful or smiling; *devout* emphasizes that baptism publicly displays that a believer is totally committed to following Christ.

<sup>12</sup> An exception to the prerequisite is that believers who were baptized as infants may covenant together with our church in membership if they understand their infant baptism in a way that does not contradict the gospel—namely, as the washing in water of a child of at least one believing parent in the triune name to signify that the child is included in God's covenant and people and is distinguished from the children of unbelievers. (This is the view of baptism in the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 74; Westminster Confession of Faith 25.2; 28.1–4; and Westminster Larger Catechism 166.) We added this provision to specify that our church practices open membership, a minority Baptist view. Our church's pastors do not affirm infant baptism and do not baptize infants, but our church respects this view of infant baptism; we do not treat all paedobaptists as unbelievers who are in unrepentant sin, nor do we regard all paedobaptist churches as false churches.

Cf. David Mathis, "[A Happy Baptist, Happy to Welcome Others: Strengthening Church Membership without Watering Down Immersion](#)," *The Gospel Coalition*, 6 March 2012 (see the resources linked at the bottom of the article); Joe Rigney, "[Do Infant Baptisms Count? Reconsidering Open Membership](#)," *Desiring God*, 27 July 2022. On the interpretational framework of Reformed covenant theology for infant baptism, see Kevin DeYoung, "[A Brief Defense of Infant Baptism](#)," *Clearly Reformed*, 12 March 2015; Douglas Wilson, "[Infant Baptism | Douglas Wilson \(Reformed Basics #15\)](#)," *Christ Church*, 24 June 2022. For an explanation and evaluation of that view by a Baptist theologian, see Stephen J. Wellum, "[Baptism and the Relationship between the Covenants](#)," in *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 97–161.

<sup>13</sup> The original says, "to commemorate together the dying love of Christ; preceded always by solemn self-examination." The update (1) changes "commemorate" to "celebrate" to emphasize that this is a *joyful* commemoration and (2) deletes "solemn" because some today might interpret *solemn* as a dirge-like atmosphere that is not cheerful or smiling. Cf. Naselli, "1 Corinthians," 327: "To examine oneself, however, does not mean that a celebrant should scrupulously detect whether he is guilty of any sin at all and then confess such sin in order to make himself worthy to celebrate the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper presupposes that no one is worthy. This is the whole point of the gospel. And this is why the Lord's Supper *celebrates* the good news. ... Churches who focus on introspection may create a super-solemn funeral atmosphere that makes people dread observing the Lord's Supper rather than eagerly look forward to it. Sin permeates us so deeply that it is impossible even to be aware of all our sins, let alone to confess each one. Suggesting that we not observe the Lord's Supper if we have any unconfessed sin in our lives turns the Table from happy to sad. But the Lord's Supper should be a happy occasion that celebrates the gospel.... There are at least three reasons to discourage someone from celebrating the Lord's Supper: that person is (1) not a Christian; (2) not a (baptized) church member; or (3) unrepentantly persisting in sin, especially by mistreating a fellow church member."

## 15. The Lord's Day<sup>14</sup>

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It commemorates Sunday as the day Jesus rose from the dead, and it is fitting that it be kept sacred to religious purposes by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public. Jesus's new covenant people have entered the Sabbath rest that Jesus secured and will fully enter that rest in the future.

## 16. Civil Government

Civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society. Magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed, except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience and the Prince of the kings of the earth.<sup>15</sup>

## 17. The Righteous and the Wicked

There is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked. Only those who are justified by faith in the name of the Lord Jesus and sanctified by the Spirit of our God are truly righteous in his esteem. All who continue in impenitence and unbelief are in his sight wicked and under the curse. This distinction holds among men both in and after death.

## 18. The World to Come

The end of the world is approaching. At the last day Christ will descend from heaven and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution. A solemn separation will then take place: the wicked will be condemned to endless punishment and the righteous to endless joy. This judgment will determine forever the final state of men in heaven or hell on principles of righteousness.

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<sup>14</sup> This section was originally titled "The Christian Sabbath." The original paragraph says, "The first day of the week is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath; and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public; and by preparation for that rest that remaineth for the people of God." The adapted version does not require that members define Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. Cf. Andrew David Naselli, "What Is a Biblical Theology of the Sabbath?" Question 26 in *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, by Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020), 257–65.

<sup>15</sup> This statement on civil government is broad enough to include both views 4 and 5 in the following taxonomy: Andrew David Naselli, "[What Is the Spectrum of Major Views on Political Theology? A Proposed Taxonomy of Seven Views on Religion and Government](#)," *Christ Over All*, 10 November 2023. Views 4 and 5 agree that civil government and the church have distinct functions and jurisdictions.

