

The Extra Mile Ministries

Our Statement of Faith

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. The Scriptures
2. God
3. Creation
4. The Fall of Man
5. Jesus Christ, the Son of God
6. The Way of Salvation
7. The Holy Spirit
8. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit
9. Gifts of the Spirit
10. Fruits of the Spirit
11. Angels
12. Spirits of Departed Saints
13. Satan and His Demons
14. Spiritual Warfare
15. Prayer
16. Divine Healing
17. Fellowship of Believers
18. Communion
19. The Church
20. The Great Commission
21. Consecration
22. Separation from the World
23. Persecution
24. Discipleship
25. Communal Living
26. Children and Their Care
27. The Sanctity of Life
28. Civil Government
29. Prophetic Considerations
30. **Conclusion**

1. The Scriptures:

We believe the Holy Bible to be the inspired Word of God, given to us by God our Creator to be a "lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path" (Psalm 119:105). We assert that the Scriptures are a sacred revelation, written by holy men of old who spake as they were moved by God's Holy Spirit; and that these writings are the divinely appointed standard and guide to our faith and practice. Holding fast this truth, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16), we strive to study, memorize and obey it, that we may grow in faith, wisdom and spiritual strength through our knowledge of and adherence to its tenets.

God's Word as revealed in the Holy Bible is the basis and cornerstone of all our beliefs and

foundation of the instruction we give our children, and its truth is the basis of the witness we give to others. We come to the Bible not merely as a source of knowledge, which indeed it is, but much more importantly, through a prayerful reading of its pages we are able to "partake of the Divine Nature" (2 Peter 1:4), to commune with Jesus, Who is Himself the living Word. "The Words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). (See also Matthew 24:35; Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19-21; John 8:31,32; 1 John 2:5; Romans 10:17; Psalm 119:99,100; Jeremiah 15:16; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15; 4:2; John 1:1,14.)

2. God:

We affirm our belief in the one true eternal God, the all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present invisible Spirit of Love, Who is the Creator and Supreme Ruler of the Universe and all things therein. We believe in the unity of the Godhead, that there are three distinguishable but inseparable Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (See Isaiah 43:10,11; John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 John 4:8; 5:7.)

3. Creation:

We believe the Biblical account of Creation as outlined in the Book of Genesis, that it is to be accepted literally, and not allegorically or figuratively; that God, not chaos, created the Heavens and the Earth. We also believe that on the sixth day of Creation, God formed Man in His Own image and after His Own likeness, and breathed into him the breath of life; thus Man became a living soul by divine Creation, not by random evolution. We also believe that God's visible creation provides clear testimony of His invisible existence. As our Creator, God deserves thanksgiving, reverence and obedience from us, His creations. (See Genesis 1:1; Romans 1:20; Psalm 33:6-9; Jeremiah 32:17.)

4. The Fall of Man:

We believe that Man was created innocent by his Maker, but through the temptation of Satan he voluntarily transgressed and fell from his sinless and happy state, in consequence of which all Mankind are now sinners, and are absolutely unable to attain to righteousness without the saving power of Jesus Christ. (See Genesis Chapter 3; Romans 5:12-21.)

5. Jesus Christ, the Son of God:

We believe in the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, Who was miraculous in His divine conception and birth of the Virgin Mary, was sinless throughout His life, and made a full and vicarious atonement for the sins of the world by His death--the substitutionary sacrifice and death of the Just for the unjust. We affirm that Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God and Man, Who gave Himself as the only ransom for sinners. We believe in His physical resurrection and His bodily ascension into Heaven, His perpetual intercession for His people, and His soon coming personal visible return to the world in power and great glory, to set up His Kingdom and to judge the living and the dead. (See 1 Timothy 3:16; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 4:14,15; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24,25; Romans 1:3,4; Matthew 28:18; Acts 1:9-11.)

6. The Way of Salvation:

We believe that all men by nature are sinners, but that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). We believe therefore, that all persons who personally accept God's pardon for sin through Jesus Christ will be forgiven of sin, reconciled to God, and will forever live in God's presence.

We believe that the Salvation of Mankind is wholly by grace [God's love and mercy], through the mediatorial ministry of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who, in infinite love for the lost, voluntarily

away our sins.

We steadfastly adhere to the following Scriptural truths regarding Salvation:

a) All Mankind are sinners, and in dire need of a Saviour. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Romans 6:23). (See also Romans 3:10; 1 John 1:8.)

b) Salvation is only by grace; and no one, by virtue of any goodness or mere work of their own, can become a child of God. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

c) Salvation can only be acquired through Jesus Christ. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). (See also Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:12.)

d) We are saved by believing on and personally receiving Jesus Christ into our hearts and lives, thus becoming spiritually regenerated or "born again". "As many as received Him [Jesus], to them gave He power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on His Name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of Man, but of God" (John 1:12,13). "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God . . . That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:3,6,7). (See also John 11:25,26.)

e) Once saved, the believer shall be kept saved forever. We believe it is the privilege of all who are born again of the Spirit through faith in Christ, to be fully assured of their Salvation from the very day that they receive Him as their Saviour. Just as the believer is saved by grace, so is he sustained by grace; "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto Salvation" (1 Peter 1:5). "The gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23), and that which is eternal cannot be terminated; thus the one who has been cleansed and redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb has been purchased and eternally adopted by God, and therefore cannot be lost. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28). "He that believeth on the Son hath [now possesses] everlasting life" (John 3:36).

(Although we firmly believe that the soul which God has saved and granted His free gift of eternal life can never be lost, this is not a licence for sin to the believer. Because God is a holy and righteous Father Who cannot overlook the sins of His children, if they persistently sin, He will chasten and correct them. "For whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth . . . for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" [Hebrews 12:6,7])

7. The Holy Spirit:

We believe that the Holy Spirit came forth from the Father to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement" (John 16:8). We hold the Holy Spirit to be the executive power of God by which believers are born again, taught, instructed, inspired and empowered for their God-given mission; and that every believer should be filled therewith. "Be ye filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). The Holy Spirit is also known as "the Comforter", Who--like a mother--loves, nurtures and comforts the born-again child of God. (See also John 3:5-8; 14:15-18, 26; 15:26; 16:7-11; 7:38,39; Acts 1:8.)

We believe that the baptism or complete filling of the Holy Spirit is a baptism of Love, "for God is Love" (I John 4:8), and that it may be freely obtained by all believers who simply ask God for it, and that it is often given after the Scriptural "laying on of hands" of other believers. The primary purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to empower the believer to witness the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8). Other ministrations of the Holy Spirit are to guide the believer into all truth, to comfort the believer, to bring all things that Jesus has said to the believer's remembrance, and to assist the believer in prayer. (See Luke 11:9-13; Acts 8:15-17; Acts 1:8; Luke 4:18; Galatians 5:22,23; John 14:16,26; Romans 8:26,27.)

9. Gifts of the Spirit:

We believe that it is the privilege of the Spirit-baptised believer to enjoy the benefits of the various spiritual gifts outlined in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. We believe that God gives different gifts to different people, according to their specific ministry and His particular plan for them. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

We hold all of these to be gifts which are freely bestowed by the Heavenly Father upon His children, to be used and freely exercised in the congregation by both male and female members, that the Body of believers may be strengthened, encouraged and edified thereby. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matthew 7:11.) (See also Joel 2:28,29; Acts 2:17,18.)

10. Fruits of the Spirit:

We believe that Christians who are filled with the Holy Ghost should manifest the fruits of the Spirit as detailed in Scripture: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. (See Galatians 5:22,23; Ephesians 5:9; James 3:17, 18.)

11. Angels:

We believe that God created an innumerable company of sinless spiritual beings known as angels (a word which literally means "messengers"). Angels are powerful immortal beings whom the Lord has assigned to watch over Man, especially to protect and to minister to God's people. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of Salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14). Although angels are usually invisible, they can materialise and appear in human form, and even walk amongst men without our being aware of it, which is why God's Word tells us, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2). (See also Psalm 34:7; 91:11,12; 2 Kings 6:15-18; Genesis 19:1-2; Judges 6:11-22; 13:2-21.)

12. Spirits of Departed Saints:

We believe that in addition to angelic ministering spirits, God on occasion also uses the spirits of departed saints to minister and deliver messages to His people. Scriptural evidence of this is found in the account of the spirits of the departed prophets, Moses and Elijah, appearing and conferring with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration; the appearance of the departed prophet Samuel's spirit to King Saul; and Saint John's account in the Book of Revelation of his conversation with a Heavenly messenger sent by God to reveal to him mysteries of the future:

which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, `See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God" (Revelation 22:8,9). (See also Luke 9:28-33; 1 Samuel 28:13-20; Revelation 19:10; Hebrews 12:1, 22-24.)

13. Satan and His Demons:

We believe that one of the angels, "Lucifer, son of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12), who was the mightiest of the archangels, through pride, jealousy and ambition, sinned and fell, and thereby became Satan [the Devil], the infernal foe of all righteousness. A great company of angels followed him in his immoral fall, and thus became demons, evil spirits which are presently active as his agents and associates in the execution of his malignant and God-defying purposes. We believe that Satan is the original perpetrator of sin, and that he, through subtlety, tempted and led our first parents, Adam and Eve, into transgression and their fall from their sinless state; thereby subjecting them and their posterity to his own power, which can only be broken and defeated by the power of God. Satan's evil spirits are now in possession of many, and are largely responsible for the rampant rage of crime and wickedness presently flooding the world.

We hold Satan to be the open and avowed enemy of God and Man, who, as a usurper, now rules as the unholy "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). He will be absolutely defeated at the Second Coming of Christ in the Battle of Armageddon, at which time he will be bound and cast into the Bottomless Pit for a thousand years, after which he will be loosed "for a little season" to again "deceive the nations" (Revelation 20:1-3, 8). He will afterwards be "cast into the Lake of Fire where he shall be tormented day and night forever and ever [through ages of the ages]" (Revelation 20:1-3, 10). (See also Isaiah 14:12-15; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:7-9.)

14. Spiritual Warfare:

We believe that we are engaged in a relentless spiritual warfare; that as we strive to obey God's commands and preach the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ to all whom we can, to "open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18), that our adversary, the Devil, does all that he possibly can to try to thwart our efforts. Thus we are in the midst of a great war in which God's Heavenly forces are aiding, supporting and encouraging our efforts, and Satan and his demons are struggling to hinder and halt us. "For we wrestle [contend] not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Soldiers in the Lord's Army must therefore "put on the whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6:11), and learn to skillfully wield the powerful spiritual weapons which God has entrusted us with, particularly the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17); for "the Word of God is quick [alive], and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [physical], but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:3,4). No matter how much trouble Satan and his demonic minions may cause us, we are confident of victory, because God's Word has promised us, "Greater is He [Jesus] that is in you than he [the Devil] that is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

15. Prayer:

We believe that prayer is the vital communication between every child of God and his or her Heavenly Father. Far from merely being a religious ritual or spiritual exercise, prayer is the means by which we enjoy sweet, intimate personal communion with the Lord. By prayer, we declare our love for God, and our dependence on Him and our submission to Him, and our desire to

take time for personal private prayer daily, as well as to join the other members of their community in united prayer. In His Word, God promises to hear prayer and bless those who diligently seek Him, thus "men ought always to pray" (Luke 18:1). (See also Jeremiah 33:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Hebrews 11:6; James 5:16; 1 Samuel 12:23; 1 Chronicles 16:11; Ephesians 6:18.)

16. Divine Healing:

We believe that healing diseased and afflicted bodies was a major part of our Lord's ministry while He personally ministered on Earth, and that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8); that He still desires to restore health to the afflicted who come to Him in faith. Through Christ's suffering and atoning sacrifice on the Cross, God has made provision not only for the salvation of the soul of Man, but also for the healing of his physical infirmities, for "with His stripes [wounds] we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Divine healing is a privilege available to all who believe.

We do not consider a person's faith for healing as a test of fellowship or spirituality or a requirement for fellowship, but as a personal matter between the individual and God. We consider the Scriptural provision for healing a great blessing for those who can exercise the faith to partake of it, but in no wise condemn or hinder those who seek after medical alternatives for their afflictions. Regarding any such personal issues, our prescribed Scriptural outlook is, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29). (See also Matthew 4:23,24; 10:1; Mark 16:17,18; 1 Peter 2:24; Matthew 8:16-17; Psalm 103:3.)

17. Fellowship of Believers:

We believe that great spiritual benefit is to be derived from fellowshiping with other like-minded believers. Therefore, members of our communities are encouraged to not only take time for private prayer, Scripture reading and personal devotions, but for united prayer, united readings of God's Word, as well as united devotions and fellowship meetings, preferably on a daily basis. Scripture exhorts us to "not forsake the assembling of yourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25), thus we endeavour to follow the example of the Early Church, whose members "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Such times of united fellowship are not a drudgery or burden; they are enjoyable occasions in which we come together with the Lord for a time of spiritual refreshment, a time in which those participating are strengthened, encouraged, inspired, edified, instructed and commissioned by the Lord. "For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). And "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:7). (See also Hebrews 10:25; Psalm 133:1-3.)

18. The Lord's Supper, or Communion:

We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ as a means for us to commemorate His death on the Cross for our sins, and that partaking of its elements is a profession of the believer's faith. The Supper consists of bread which is broken, representing how Jesus' body was broken for the healing of our bodies; and wine, which represents how Christ's Blood was shed for the remission of our sins. Scripture enjoins believers to periodically partake of the Lord's Supper, until Christ's Return, therefore it is the privilege of all who have spiritual union with Him to commemorate His sacrifice on Calvary "till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Partaking of the Lord's Supper in faith, recognising that His body was broken for our healing, can also be efficacious in the healing of the body, for "with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). (See also Matthew 26:26-28; John 6:51; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30.)

19. The Church:

We believe that the Church is the Body of Christ, and not merely an ecclesiastical institution or organisation; and certainly not a mere religious edifice or place of worship, as many presume, for

they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). We believe the Church is a spiritual entity composed of all born-again persons, irrespective of their affiliation with Christian organisations or denominations. (See Ephesians 1:22,23; 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14.)

20. The Great Commission:

We believe the Great Commission which our Lord has given to His Church is to evangelise the world, to "go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). It is our conviction that this is the great mission of the Church and the explicit message of our Lord Jesus Christ to those whom He has saved; in fact, it was His final injunction to His followers before His ascension. We believe that this should be the born-again believer's primary purpose in life; to make Christ's love known to the whole world, and to seek to win others into God's Heavenly Kingdom. Whether or not the believer has received a formal ordination into the Gospel ministry from a denomination or institution is irrelevant, for we believe all Christians are ordained by God to preach His Gospel and win others to Christ, thereby bearing everlasting fruit for His Kingdom. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit" (John 15:16). (See also Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Peter 3:15; Proverbs 14:25; Acts 26:18; 1 Corinthians 9:16.)

21. Consecration:

We believe that the Christian's life should be a life that is consecrated to the Lord, that is, a life which is utterly given and devoted to Him; not merely to do things for Him, nor to become something great in our own eyes, or in the eyes of others, but to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service" (Romans 12:1), so that He may work through us and in us, "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). We consecrate ourselves to the Lord because we love Him because He first loved us, and we delight to belong to Him. (See Galatians 2:20; 1 John 4:19; Psalm 40:8.)

Knowing that Jesus has bought and purchased us with His Own blood, we recognise that our lives are no longer our own, but His. Therefore, we believe that we should "no longer live the rest of our time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1 Peter 4:2). Because our bodies belong to the Lord, and are the temples in which His Holy Spirit dwells, we do not believe in abusing them with drugs, alcohol, tobacco or other harmful and unnatural substances. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. For ye are bought with a price: Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 6:20).

We also believe that the life of the consecrated Christian should be a visible sample of the Lord's nature, "that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:10). Our Lord has enjoined us to "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Thus, we consider that the degree to which a believer's conduct and behaviour outwardly reflect the life and love of Christ to others, is a significant indicator of his or her inward consecration to God. (See Philippians 2:15; 1 Peter 2:12; 1 John 3:18.)

22. Separation from the World:

We believe that the consecrated Christian is called by God to "be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). We also adhere to the Scriptural admonition to "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world: the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:15,16). We take this to mean that the believer should not only avoid the un-Christian pursuits

thinking as well. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psalm 1:1).

However, while we believe that Scripture bids God's people to "come out from among them [unbelievers] and be ye separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17), we do not feel that this separation of the believer should be dictated by the sanctimonious or legalistic mores and morals of Man, but should rather be according to Biblical precedents and the leadings of the Holy Spirit, and according to the needs of those around us. When Jesus walked the earth, He freely ministered and reached out to those who were ostracised from the religious community of His day.--A course of action which brought upon Him the contempt and condemnation of His self-righteous pharisaical enemies, who derided Him for being "a friend of publicans and sinners" (Matthew 9:10-14; 11:19). Although we are "not of the world" (John 17:16), we are nevertheless in the world, where we should endeavour to live a godly life that reaches out to others, and follows the footsteps of Him Who came to this world to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). (See also Ephesians 5:11,12; James 4:4; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17.)

23. Persecution for Righteousness' Sake:

We believe that Christians who actively witness and live for Jesus Christ will receive persecution. Scripture clearly states that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus virtually promised that all those who fully commit themselves to Him will be persecuted: "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time . . . with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29,30).

Although we strive to obey the Scriptural admonitions, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18), and "agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison" (Matthew 5:25), we realise that it is inevitable that some of those who reject the Lord's message which we carry will likewise reject the messengers who endeavour to bring it to them.

Knowing that the perfect and sinless Son of God was maligned, rejected, despised, and violently persecuted and crucified by a world that refused His truth and His love, we most soberly take to heart His warnings that "the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub [the Devil], how much more shall they call them of His household?" (Matthew 10:24,25). "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you . . . But all these things will they do unto you for My Name's sake because they know not Him that sent Me" (John 15:18-21).

We know that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28), including persecution. It is often a "blessing in disguise" which God uses for our benefit, to "try and test us" (1 Peter 4:12-14; Daniel 11:35); to disperse us into other areas that need our message, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another" (Matthew 10:23; Acts 8:1); and to stir up interest in us and our message, "as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against" (Acts 28:22; Psalm 76:10). We therefore take heart from Jesus' words, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:11,12). (See also Philippians 1:29; Luke 6:26; John 16:1,2; Acts 7:51,52.)

We believe that it is a high privilege for a believer to affirmatively respond to Christ's challenge to follow Him as a full-time disciple. We also believe that Jesus' call to such full-time service remains essentially unchanged from that which He issued to the fishermen on the shores of Galilee long ago, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). As was the case with the first Apostles and disciples, so we believe it is today; that the Lord has called us to wholly commit ourselves to Him, to follow His teachings and His example, fully devoting our lives to Him out of love and gratitude for His sacrifice for us. (See John 12:26; 13:15.)

It is our conviction from Holy Scripture that such discipleship entails:

a) Utter devotion and dedication to Jesus Christ, not merely "in word; neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). Discipleship requires laying aside one's own personal will and wishes in order to embrace God's divine will as revealed in His written Word. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: But whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23,24).

On the one hand, the price to be paid in terms of self-sacrifice is so dear that we urge anyone who would consider heeding God's call to discipleship to most solemnly "count the cost" before endeavouring to embark on such a path. On the other hand, when we "consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself" (Hebrews 12:3), and realise the immeasurable sacrifice and suffering that Christ endured to bring us Salvation, how can we give Him less than our all? (See Luke 14:25-33; Philippians 3:7,8.)

b) A commitment to win others to Christ ["bear fruit"], and to teach and train others to follow Jesus as His disciples. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples" (John 15:8). "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19,20).

c) A renouncement and forsaking of the vain pursuit of material wealth, as well as all other worldly and materialistic ambitions and endeavours. "No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:4). The disciple is exhorted to "set your affection on things above, not on things on the Earth" (Colossians 3:2). Christ plainly set forth the rigorous terms of discipleship when He said, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33). (See also Matthew 6:19-34; Mark 10:21; Hebrews 11:13.)

d) Making God's revealed will absolutely paramount in one's life, even when compliance with Scriptural injunction may conflict with the desires and designs of family, friends and loved ones. "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). [The usage of the word hate here is understood to mean "in the sense of indifference to or relative disregard for in comparison with one's attitude towards God."--The Amplified Bible, Zondervan.] (See also Matthew 10:34-38; 12:48-50; Luke 9:59-62.)

(The dictionary definition of "disciple" is "one who believes and follows the teachings of a master, and assists in the spreading of such teachings." Although it seems evident from the Gospel account that the ideal of discipleship is the course taken by the twelve Apostles who renounced all worldly pursuits for the privilege of being able to follow and live with the Master full-time, we acknowledge that there are varying degrees and levels of "following the teachings." We feel called to follow what we consider the ideal pattern of discipleship, that of the original Twelve. However, we recognise that pursuing this course is not possible for everyone. Scripture shows that besides the Twelve, there were others who obviously did not follow and live with Jesus full-

Jesus, howbeit secretly, for fear of the Jews" [John 19:38]. We believe that the degree to which one commits his or her life to Christ is a matter of personal faith and conviction.)

25. Cooperative Communal Living:

We believe that the New Testament's account of the pristine lifestyle of the Early Church offers us not only an historical narrative, but an exemplary pattern and model which God intended succeeding generations of believers to follow. The first Church's unselfish, cooperative lifestyle, in which "all that believed were together, and had all things in common" (Acts 2:44), not only proved to be exceptionally beneficial for the fledgling movement in terms of practical and economic concerns, but even more importantly, the close fellowship and spiritual unity fostered by such a lifestyle provided the early disciples with a needed spiritual haven of respite from the interminable hostilities of their religious enemies and the glaring idolatry of pagan Rome. Likewise, we today have found both the practical and spiritual benefits of cooperative communal living to be extremely advantageous in helping us achieve our goal of reaching all whom we can with the Gospel of Christ. (See also Mark 10:29,30; Acts 2:44,45; 4:34,35; Psalm 133:1.)

26. Children and Their Care:

We believe that children are a wonderful gift of God with which He blesses and entrusts us, for "Lo, children are an heritage from the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is His reward" (Psalm 127:3). Therefore, it is our conviction that the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of children should be amply and competently met. We consider the care of the little ones God has given us to be a primary responsibility and a fundamental component of our daily lives and service to God, for which reason all members of our communities are encouraged to do their utmost to ensure that their children are reared in as healthy, loving, secure and godly an environment as is possible.

We believe that the training children receive in their early formative years will guide them all through life; that if we "train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). The Apostle, Saint John, expressed perfectly the sentiments every Christian parent should have in this regard: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). For this reason we strive to impart to our children a deep appreciation, respect and love for God and His Word, and the sacred principles contained therein, "bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). (See also Psalm 127:3-5; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:15; Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:6,7; Psalm 34:11; 1 Samuel 1:28.)

27. The Sanctity of Life:

We believe that human life is sacred, and it is the right of each person to be treated as an individual created in the image of God. Scripture makes it clear that God esteems the unborn as a person with an identity, not merely as a mass of foetal tissue. The Lord said to the prophet Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). The Psalmist David prayed, "My substance was not hid from Thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect [not fully formed]; and in Thy book all my members [body parts] were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" (Psalm 139:15,16). Modern fetology makes it undeniably evident that human life begins at conception, which means that the developing child deserves all the protection and safeguards that any of us enjoy. For all of these reasons, we are diametrically opposed to abortion. (See Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Psalm 139:14-16; Jeremiah 2:34,35; Acts 7:19.)

28. Civil Government and Religious Liberty:

Although we believe that we are "strangers and pilgrims on the Earth" (Hebrews 11:13), we also accept the Scripture's teaching that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interest and

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (1 Peter 2:13; Romans 1:1).

Therefore, magistrates are to be prayed for, and the laws and ordinances of the land are to be conscientiously honoured and obeyed; the only exception to this being in matters of faith, where obedience to a law of Man would mean disobedience to the Law of God. Our precedent for this position is taken from the Book of Acts, when the Apostles Peter and John were forbidden by the Sanhedrin to witness their faith in Jesus to others. (The Sanhedrin was the powerful Jewish tribunal which exercised both civil and criminal jurisdiction throughout the district of Judea from the time of Christ until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.) "And they [the Sanhedrin] commanded them [Peter and John] not to speak at all nor teach in the Name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, `Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard'" (Acts 4:18-20).

Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords; and in any such cases where the laws or ordinances of Man would violate our faith or duty to witness our faith to others, our stance is the same as the Apostles, that "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). (See also Romans 12:18; 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:17; Matthew 22:21; 23:10; Proverbs 8:15,16; Revelation 19:16.)

29. Eschatological or Prophetic Considerations:

(While we hold the following doctrines and teachings to be true and sound, they differ from the aforementioned beliefs in that they are not addressing dogma based on evident and clear-cut statements by our Lord, but are dealing with the rather more mysterious subject of Biblical prophecies, which, for the most part, are yet to be fulfilled. Therefore, as we recognise that these eschatological positions are considerably more open to interpretation than the previous statements, we do not call for the same degree of adherence to these teachings as to the more evident tenets covered earlier.)

We believe that we are now living in the time period known in Scripture as the "Last Days" or the "Time of the End", that is, the era which immediately precedes the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, when "the kingdoms of this world are [to] become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15). In brief, a careful analysis of Biblical prophecy has led us to embrace the following beliefs:

a) Prophecy Fulfilled: Many Biblical prophecies and "signs of the times" that specifically predict world conditions prior to Christ's Second Coming have unerringly been fulfilled within our generation, confirming that we are indeed living in the Last Days. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37), for "evil men and seducers shall wax [grow] worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). (See also Matthew 16:3; Matthew 24; 2 Timothy 3:1-7.)

b) The Antichrist: Seven years before Jesus' Return, a powerful world leader known in Scripture as the "Beast", "Man of Sin", "Son of Perdition" or "Antichrist", will surreptitiously rise to power, gaining sufficient influence to "confirm a covenant" [peace treaty] (Daniel 9:27) with the primary antagonists in the Mideast, focusing on the centre of the crisis, Jerusalem. The ratification of this covenant will in all likelihood result in the internationalisation of the city, with the Jews gaining free access to the Temple Mount, where they will restore their temple and resume animal sacrifices for the first time in nearly two millenniums. (See 1 John 2:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, 9; Revelation 13:4,7.)

c) Great Tribulation: Three-and-a-half years after this peace initiative, the Satan-possessed Antichrist will break the covenant, abolish Jewish temple worship, declare that he alone is God,

system, whereby none will be legally permitted to buy or sell essential goods, except those who bear this demagogue's mark or number, the "Mark of the Beast", in their right hand or forehead. These events will plunge the entire world into an unprecedented time of social chaos and religious persecution known in the Bible as the "Great Tribulation" (Matthew 24:21). Despite all the demonic fury that the oppressive Antichrist regime will muster against the Church, countless Christians will survive the Beast's onslaughts, boldly preaching the Gospel of Salvation until the Lord's Return. (See Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Matthew 24:15,21; Revelation 11:3-6; 13:7; 12:11.)

d) The Second Coming of Christ: The three-and-a-half-year period of Great Tribulation will be climaxed by the return of Jesus Christ to the Earth; "Immediately after the Tribulation of those days . . . shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the Earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:29,30). All of the born-again believers will then be supernaturally delivered from their cruel persecutors by means of the Rapture, the miraculous event whereby their bodies will be gloriously translated and made like Jesus' Own resurrection body, as they rise to meet the Lord in the air.

At this time, the deceased saved of all ages, whose spirits have been with the Lord in Heaven, will be reunited with their new glorified bodies which will be resurrected from their graves. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). (See also Matthew 24:29,30; Revelation 1:7; 1 Corinthians 15:51,52; Philippians 3:20,21.)

e) The Marriage Supper, the Wrath of God, and the Battle of Armageddon: Following their Rapture and Resurrection, the saved will partake of the glorious "Marriage Supper of the Lamb" in Heaven, and appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ for rewards of service rendered on Earth. Meanwhile, God's angels of judgement will pour out His plagues and wrath upon the Antichrist and his followers, culminating in the Battle of Armageddon, when Jesus and the hosts of Heaven return to utterly defeat and destroy the Satanic Antichrist and his evil hordes. (See Revelation 7:9,13-17; chapter 19; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Daniel 12:2,3; Revelation 14:9,10; 16:1-21.)

f) Christ's Millennial Reign: Jesus Christ and His victorious Heavenly forces will then occupy and assume absolute control of the entire world, ruling and reigning over the survivors of Armageddon, and establishing the Kingdom of God on Earth. Justice, equity and true righteousness will at last prevail; Satan will be imprisoned in the Bottomless Pit, all of Man's cruel and senseless wars will cease, and the Earth will be restored to its original paradisiacal state. This period will last for one thousand years, thus it is known as The Millennium. (See Daniel 2:44; Revelation 20:1-4,6; 5:10; Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:6-9; Psalm 46:9; Jeremiah 31:34.)

g) The Battle of Gog and Magog/The New Heavens and the New Earth: After the thousand years of the Millennial era have expired, Satan will be released from his prison for "a little season" (Revelation 20:3,7), to deceive those survivors of Armageddon who have refused to willingly submit to the Lordship of Christ and His reign of righteousness. These unregenerate rebels will again follow Satan, uniting in a futile insurrection which will culminate in the cataclysmic "Battle of Gog and Magog", in which God sends a supernatural flood of fire upon them. So vehement will be this conflagration, that the entire surface of the Earth will be melted, the seas will be vaporised and the atmospheric heavens will vanish. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the Earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). God will then recreate the purged surface of the planet into a beautiful New Earth, with fresh new unpolluted atmospheric heavens. (See Revelation 20:7-9; 2 Peter

h) The White Throne Judgement: The unsaved dead of all ages will then be raised to appear before God at the awesome "Great White Throne Judgement", which is thus described in the Book of Revelation; "And I saw a great White Throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the Earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire" (Revelation 20:11,12,15).

- i)** New Jerusalem: God's marvellous Heavenly City, New Jerusalem, will then descend like a stupendous jewel from above to crown the paradisiacal New Earth. The Heavenly City is the glorious eternal Heavenly home for all of God's saved children, the hope of all ages, where at last, "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:3,4). (See also the remaining verses of Revelation chapters 21 and 22.)

30. Conclusion:

We urge the people of God of all denominations and persuasions to stand by the Scriptural truths we hold in common, and to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). May God bless you with His love! In Jesus' Name, amen.