



Constitution of Eternity Christian Fellowship

Draft as of 05/08/06

Section A- Statement of Faith

We believe:

1. In Jesus Christ as risen Lord, Savior, and Son of God as stated in the historic Trinitarian formulations of the Apostles and Nicene Creeds and in the formula of Chalcedon.
2. In the accuracy, inspiration, authority and perspicacity of the Scriptures (being the “Protestant” Scriptures consisting of the 66 books of Old and New Testament) and that they are the sole rule for Christian life and practice.
3. That humankind was made in the image of God (both male and female) and was blessed to be fruitful, multiply and to have dominion.
4. However all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are lost and without salvation and so need to hear, understand and believe the gospel of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.
5. That faith in Jesus Christ is the only source of eternal salvation and so all people, everywhere, now need to repent and place their personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This salvation is free, and is by grace through faith and is not achieved through any meritorious or religious works. Works may be a sign of salvation but they are not a cause of salvation.
6. That Christians should live a Spirit-filled life of holy and reverent obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ, living in the love of God, of each other and of their neighbor, and doing good works of mercy, justice and compassion. We are also to share the gospel as we are able and to make Christian disciples of all nations. All these good works are in line with being a new creation in Christ Jesus and in building a new community, new humanity, and eventually after Christ's return, a new heaven and a new earth. Thus Christians are to be agents for the transformation and renewal of all Creation including their cities, nations and the environment.
7. That the gospel of faith in Jesus Christ has replaced the Jewish Law and that believers are free from the religious requirements of the Jewish Law including: sacrifices, religious rituals and vestments, offerings, tithes, Sabbaths, festivals, special days, and rules regarding matters of food and drink.
8. That the believer is free in such areas to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit as to what is best for him or for her in matters of conscience.
9. In the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit works “in” the believer to sanctify him or her so as to develop the fruit of the Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit also works “upon” the believer so as to empower the believer for ministry and to develop the gifts of the Spirit.
10. That Jesus guides His Church both through the Spirit and through the Scriptures, in harmony.

11. In eternal judgment, in the eternal reward of the righteous in Heaven and the eternal punishment of the wicked in Hell, and in the resurrection of the dead when Jesus shall return on the Last Day.
12. That Christ instituted two sacred ordinances - being Baptism and Communion. Baptism is only to be administered to believers who have made a clear profession of repentance and faith - and is preferably to be by full immersion of the believer in water. Communion is open to all born-gain Christian and is to consist of shared bread and wine offered prayerfully in remembrance of the work of Christ on the cross. Communion is to be held regularly in all Eternity Christian Fellowships.
13. In the five-fold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.
14. That these Christian leaders should be faithful and diligent servants - not lording it over the flock; and that those who are taught the word should hold those who minister to them in “double honor”.
15. In mercy, in justice and in holy Christian simplicity of life.
16. In the Kingdom of God, its accessibility and its miraculous powers as described in the four gospels.

Section B - Church Governance

LEADERSHIP & MINISTRY

1. Fellowships shall be governed in a simple and direct manner by the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, and by wisdom, faith and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
2. Fellowships shall follow biblical patterns of church government involving the five-fold ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (though functionally equivalent terms may be used instead) whose job is to proclaim the gospel, build up the church and to equip the saints for the work of ministry - and who should be properly remunerated for their work.
3. This five-fold ministry shall not consist of dominating or maverick individuals but shall operate on the basis of team-based, “New Creation”, servant leadership.
4. Valid ministry is not confined to the church gathering but may occur anywhere.
5. Members are viewed as being a Spirit-filled royal priesthood who minister to their families and friends and are to be encouraged to prayerfully develop an area of ministry in line with their spiritual gifts.
6. “Marketplace ministers” may be appointed for context-specific ministry to schools, businesses, and government offices.
7. Ministry is viewed as diverse and includes (but is not limited to) evangelism, missions, social justice, worship, teaching, healing, deliverance, mercy ministry and counselling and may take place both as face to face ministry and/or in cyberspace.

CHARACTERISTICS

8. Eternity Christian Fellowship encourages the living of a free and simple Christian lifestyle in community. We are aware of the spiritual and environmental dangers of individualism and materialism and thus do not support “prosperity theology” but rather seek to live lovingly, humbly, justly and graciously.
9. Fellowships should adopt simple structures that maximize their ability to evangelize within their culture and their activities should be in line with the theme of Christ-centered, grace-filled, apostolic community.
10. Fellowships are not to isolate themselves from the wider body of Christ but are to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace acting in unity with other Christian churches, especially other bible-believing evangelical and charismatic churches (with the exception of known cult groups).
11. Diligent systematic biblical exposition is the recommended method for preaching and teaching in fellowships.
12. Worship should be humble, God-honoring, biblical, excellent and partake of the “beauty of holiness” yet can be any mixture of traditional and contemporary, and can take on many different forms and expressions that serve the worship needs of that time and place.
13. Worship should be socially inclusive of “those most consider least” and focus on building a reverent spiritual community of love with Christ at the center.
14. It is fine for worship to cater to a particular age group or lifestyle or set of musical tastes however this must not be done in a manner that hurts or rejects others or that is unfairly elitist or (keeping James 2 in mind) makes unfair distinctions based on age, wealth, fashion, looks, personal prestige, race, gender or disability.
15. There should be regular prayer and intercession and a holy desire for revival.
16. Fellowships should make a regular practice of hospitality particularly towards strangers and those in need.
17. Social justice, community, worship and evangelism are viewed as mutually complementary.
18. fellowships should also have a strong focus on building inter-personal relationships through small groups and individual discipleship.
19. Eternity Christian Fellowship encourages the financial support of missionaries and the global missions effort should be a matter of regular prayer and intercession.
20. Eternity Christian Fellowship is an Internet-enabled network of Christian fellowships. Eternity Christian Fellowship ministers online as well as face-to-face and seeks to use technology for the glory of God. Our website is www.eternitychristian.com

DECISION-MAKING & ETHICS

21. Decision-making is to be done prayerfully, carefully and Scripturally, involve listening to and waiting on God, and be in line with being a faith-filled “New Creation”.
22. Fellowships are to be led as a loving Spirit-filled community, not as a purely secular corporation.
23. We believe that there is a distinction in the NT between how people and policies are handled. People are appointed by those in charge, policies are to be discussed by those affected.
24. Voting for officers is not found in the NT and is not recommended practice as it tends to lead to “church politics”.
25. Leaders shall be personally appointed or removed by those over them. That is an apostle can appoint/remove an evangelist or pastor, and a pastor may appoint/remove a teacher in the fellowship. However such appointments, removals or disciplinary action should involve consultation with other mature leaders. Life appointments are generally not wise policy, it is safer to give people renewable terms of office.

26. Major policies and significant expenditures shall be brought to a meeting, which is truly representative of those affected, for general discussion, listening and godly interaction. Decisions shall take into account the local laws of the land and shall respect them at all times.
27. Local fellowships are to be given considerable room to make their own decisions (within the scope of these constitutional guidelines) including the purchase of property which shall remain as the property and responsibility of the local congregation.
28. Meeting human needs (mercy) is more important than observing minor religious rules or completing ecclesiastical programs (sacrifice).
29. There shall be a strong focus on making fellowships gentle, accepting, “safe places” to be – socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, spiritually and financially. This is especially to include the protection of women, children and the marginalized.
30. Grace is given to us in order for us to become Christ-like and holy. Thus fellowships are not to depart from clear biblical standards of morality and sexuality.
31. Eternity Christian Fellowship sees biblical Christian ethics as universal in application and thus as applying not only to the church fellowship or to personal piety but also to business, politics, cities and communities and also to the protection of the environment.
32. Church discipline shall be done biblically, carefully, wisely, with mercy, and based in the testimony of “two or three witnesses” and never on rumor alone, and shall have two goals – the health of the fellowship, and the repentance and restoration of the person in error.
33. Program goals shall be achieved in a gentle and ethical fashion. Effectiveness does not justify sin.
34. Eternity Christian Fellowship believes in Christian freedom including the right to ask questions, make individual personal choices and engage in vigorous discussions. Constituent fellowships should not exercise undue control over minor matters such as food, drink, Sabbath observance, appearance, dress, and style of music but should allow the free exercise of the Christian's conscience in the light of Scripture.

FINANCIAL AND REGULATORY

35. Financial practices shall strictly adhere to Christian ethics and obey IRS regulations and other appropriate laws of the land. Proper books shall be kept and shall be made available for inspection.
36. Fellowships shall not make decisions that place heavy financial burdens on the membership.
37. Giving is to be non-compulsory, free, gracious and as the Spirit leads. We do not support or advocate any notion of compulsory tithing, tithing for salvation, or the cursing of those who do not tithe. The one-tenth is simply a helpful benchmark and a practice that many find useful.
38. If a fellowship lends money to Christians, to the poor or to those in need, no interest shall be charged.
39. Fellowships are not to engage in partisan politics or in the endorsement of particular political candidates. Members are not to be compelled to follow a particular political party and shall vote according to their conscience. However fellowships are free to make social comments on an independent “issue-by-issue” basis.
40. Leadership may be required to undergo a background check prior to appointment, especially those leaders working with or responsible for children.