

Fundamental Beliefs of the United Church of God

PREAMBLE

The following are statements regarding the fundamental beliefs of the United Church of God, *an International Association*. This is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of the beliefs of the Church. Questions about doctrine and belief will be addressed by a process adopted by the Council of Elders (Council) and approved by the General Conference of Elders (General Conference).

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS

1. We believe in one God, the Father, eternally existing, who is a Spirit, a personal Being of supreme intelligence, knowledge, love, justice, power and authority. He, through Jesus Christ, is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. He is the Source of life and the One for whom human life exists.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who is the Word and has eternally existed. We believe that He is the Messiah, the Christ, the divine Son of the living God, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born in the human flesh of the virgin Mary. We believe that it is by Him that God created all things and that without Him was not anything made that was made. We believe in the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of God and of Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the power of God and the Spirit of life eternal (2 Timothy 1:7; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:16).

2. We believe that Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, is God's revelation, and His complete, expressed will to humanity. Scripture is inspired in thought and word, infallible in the original writings, is the supreme and final authority in faith and in life, and is the foundation of all truth (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 10:35; 17:17).

3. We believe that Satan is a spirit being who is the adversary of God and the children of God. Satan has been given dominion over the world for a specific period of time. Satan has deceived humanity into rejecting God and His law. Satan has ruled by deception with the aid of a host of demons who are rebellious angels, spirit beings, who followed Satan in his rebellion (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 8:12; 2 Timothy 2:26; John 12:31; 16:11; Revelation 12:4, 9; 20:1-3, 7, 10; Leviticus 16:21-22; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:14; Ephesians 2:2).

4. We believe that humanity was created in the image of God with the potential to become children of God, partakers of the divine nature. God formed humanity of flesh, which is material substance. Human beings live by the breath of life, are mortal, subject to corruption and decay, without eternal life, except as the gift of God under God's terms and conditions as expressed in the Bible. We believe that God placed before Adam and Eve the choice of eternal life through obedience to God, or death through sin. Adam and Eve yielded to temptation and disobeyed God. As a result, sin entered the

world, and through sin, death. Death now reigns over all humanity because all have sinned (Genesis 1:26; 2 Peter 1:4; Hebrews 9:27; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 5:12; 6:23).

5. We believe that sin is the transgression of the law. The law is spiritual, perfect, holy, just and good. The law defines God's love and is based upon the two great principles of love toward God and love toward neighbor, and is immutable and binding. The Ten Commandments are the ten points of God's law of love. We believe that breaking any one point of the law brings upon a person the penalty of sin. We believe that this fundamental spiritual law reveals the only way to true life and the only possible way of happiness, peace and joy. All unhappiness, misery, anguish and woe have come from transgressing God's law (1 John 3:4; 5:3; Matthew 5:17-19; 19:17-19; 22:37-40; James 2:10-11; Romans 2:5-9; 7:12-14; 13:8-10).

6. We believe God so loved this world of helpless sinners that He gave His only begotten Son, who, though in all points tempted as we are, lived without sin in the human flesh. That Son, Jesus Christ, died as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity. His life, because He is the Creator of all humanity, is of greater value than the sum total of all human life. His death is, therefore, sufficient to pay the penalty for every human being's sins. In paying this penalty He has made it possible, according to God's plan, for each person and humanity as a whole to have their sins forgiven and to be released from the death penalty (Hebrews 4:15; 9:15; 10:12; John 1:18; 3:16; Colossians 1:16-17, 22; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Ephesians 1:11; Revelation 13:8).

7. We believe that the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead after His body lay three days and three nights in the grave, thus making immortality possible for mortal man. He thereafter ascended into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate (1 Peter 1:17-21; 3:22; Matthew 12:40; 1 Corinthians 15:53; 2 Timothy 1:10; John 20:17; Hebrews 8:1; 12:2).

8. We believe that all who truly repent of their sins in full surrender and willing obedience to God, and who by faith accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, have their sins forgiven by an act of divine grace. Such individuals are justified, pardoned from the penalty of sin, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, which literally abides within them and supplies the divine love that alone can fulfill the law and produce righteousness. They are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, which is the true Church of God. We believe in a true change in life and attitude. Only those who have the indwelling presence of and are being led by the Holy Spirit are Christ's (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:29-32; 2 Corinthians 7:10; John 3:16; Ephesians 1:7; 2:7-9; Romans 3:21-26; 5:5; 6:6; 8:4, 9-10, 14; 13:1; Jeremiah 33:8; John 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Philippians 2:3-5).

9. We believe in the ordinance of water baptism by immersion following repentance. Through the laying on of hands, with prayer, the believer receives the Holy

Spirit and becomes a part of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:13, 16; John 3:23; Acts 2:38; 8:14-17; 19:5-6; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

10. We believe that the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath of the Lord our God. On this day we are commanded to rest from our labors and worship God, following the teachings and example of Jesus, the apostles and the New Testament Church (Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Leviticus 23:3; Isaiah 58:13; Hebrews 4:4-10; Mark 1:21; 2:27-28; 6:2; Acts 13:42-44; 17:2; 18:4; Luke 4:31).

11. We believe in observing the New Testament Passover on the night of the 14th of Abib, the anniversary of the death of our Savior (Leviticus 23:5; Luke 22:13-14).

12. We believe in the commanded observance of the seven annual Holy Days given to ancient Israel by God and kept by Jesus Christ, the apostles and the New Testament Church. These Holy Days reveal God's plan of salvation (Colossians 2:16-17; 1 Peter 1:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:8; 15:22-26; 16:8; James 1:18; Exodus 23:14-17; Leviticus 23; Luke 2:41-42; 22:14-15; John 7:2, 8, 10, 14; Acts 2:1; 18:21; 20:16; Zechariah 14:16-21).

13. We believe that those meats that are designated "unclean" by God in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are not to be eaten.

14. We believe that Christians are forbidden by the commandments of God from taking human life, directly or indirectly, and that bearing arms is contrary to this fundamental belief. Therefore, we believe that Christians should not voluntarily become engaged in military service. If they are involuntarily engaged in military service, we believe they should refuse conscientiously to bear arms and, to the extent possible, to refuse to come under military authority (Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:21-22; 1 Corinthians 7:21-23; Acts 5:29).

15. We believe in God's enduring righteousness. That righteousness is demonstrated by God's faithfulness in fulfilling all of the promises He made to the father of the faithful, Abraham. As promised, God multiplied Abraham's lineal descendants so that Abraham literally became the "father" of many nations. We believe that God, as promised, materially prospered Abraham's lineal descendants Isaac and Jacob (whose name He later changed to Israel). We believe that God, through Abraham's Seed, Jesus Christ, is making salvation available to all humanity regardless of their physical lineage. Salvation is not therefore a right of birth. It is freely open to all whom God calls, and those who are regarded as descendants of Abraham are those of the faith, heirs according to the promises. We believe that the knowledge that God has fulfilled and continues to fulfill the physical promises made to Abraham and his children, and is fulfilling the spiritual promise through Jesus Christ, is critical to understanding the message of the prophets and its application to the world in which we live (Psalm 111:1-10; Romans 4:16; 9:7-8; Galatians 3:16; Genesis 32:28).

16. We believe God's purpose for mankind is to prepare those whom He calls, and who elect through a life of overcoming sin, developing righteous character, and growing in grace and knowledge, to possess the Kingdom and to become kings and priests reigning with Christ on this earth after His return. We believe that the reason for mankind's existence is literally to be born as spirit beings into the family of God (Romans 6:15-16; 8:14-17, 30; Acts 2:39; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 3:5; 5:10).

17. We believe that the Church is that body of believers who have received, and are being led by, the Holy Spirit. The true Church of God is a spiritual organism. Its biblical name is "The Church of God." We believe that the mission of the Church is to preach the gospel (good news) of the coming Kingdom of God to all nations as a witness, and to help reconcile to God such people as are now being called. We believe that it is also the mission of the Church of God to strengthen, edify and nurture the children of God in the love and admonition of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38-39, 47; 20:28; Romans 8:14; 14:19; Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:14; 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 12:27; 14:26; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1-2; 5:18-20; Galatians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:5, 15; Mark 16:15; Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; John 6:44, 65; 17:11, 16).

18. We believe in tithing as a way of honoring God with our substance and as a means of serving Him in the preaching of the gospel, the care of the Church, attending the festivals and helping the needy (Proverbs 3:9-10; Genesis 14:17-20; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14; Numbers 18:21; Deuteronomy 14:22-29).

19. We believe that the only hope of eternal life for mortal humans lies in the resurrection through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We believe that at the return of Jesus Christ a resurrection to spirit life will take place for all who have been God's faithful servants. We believe that after Jesus Christ has ruled on this earth for 1,000 years, there will be a resurrection to physical life of the vast majority of all people who have ever lived. We believe that after these people have had an opportunity to live a physical life, if they become converted, they too will receive eternal life. We also believe that those who reject God's offer of salvation will reap eternal death (1 Corinthians 15:19, 42-52; Acts 23:6; John 5:21-29; Romans 6:23; 8:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Revelation 20:4-5, 11-15; John 3:16; Matthew 25:46).

20. We believe in the personal, visible, premillennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ to rule the nations on earth as King of kings and to continue His priestly office as Lord of lords. At that time, He will sit upon the throne of David. During His thousand-year reign upon the earth, He will restore all things and establish the Kingdom of God forever (Matthew 24:30, 44; Revelation 1:7; 11:15; 19:16; 20:4-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16; John 14:3; Isaiah 9:7; 40:10-12; Hebrews 7:24; Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 1:32-33; Acts 1:11; 3:21; 15:16; Daniel 7:14, 18, 27).