

## DEFINING ASSUMPTIONS

### **Assumptions about God**

Our view of God in ministry must be a God who is for us, not mad at us (reconciliation), who has forgiven us justification), who has received us (redemption), and who has changed us and is now helping us to realize it (sanctification).

### **Assumptions about the Christian Life**

Worship accomplishes something no other feature of human existence can. It renews us, orients us to God, increases our receptivity to God's work in us, strengthens us, unites us, and helps us forget about ourselves and focus on God as the essential reality of the universe.

We cannot escape the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

Suffering (trials, not necessarily illness) is a norm of life. Regular hardship produces perseverance which enhances Christian character.

It is normal for everyone in the fellowship to be giving of themselves in some ministry on a consistent basis in order for healing and growth to come to them.

Giving generously and regularly to the work of God is a normal practice for the Christian. Having a heart of compassion for the poor, orphans and widows is normal for the Christian.

Holiness and righteousness come out of knowing and living out of our identity in Christ, rather than an outward adherence to laws and regulations.

Discipleship is the process of following Jesus - we are disciples of Jesus rather than men. Discipleship happens through relationship with Jesus, obedience to Him, and modeling our life after His. As believers gather together for teaching, training and encouragement in either small or large group this discipleship can be enhanced.

### **Assumptions about the Church and Church Life**

The primary mission and issue of church life is to help build and extend the kingdom of God (God's rule)—not self-preservation or the perpetuation of church structures or programs.

Church life should equip people to live in and help build the kingdom as Jesus described it.

The three essential elements or disciplines necessary for anyone to grow in this fellowship are:

- Involvement in a ministry on a regular, ongoing basis (with people, paper, or things).
- Involvement with and commitment to a housegroup/ small group Bible study.
- Consistent attendance at Sunday celebrations.

Each church is established by Christ for unique purposes and for a particular group, and should have differing forms of style and practice suited to that particular group.

Counseling should not be the emphasis of church life—equipping should be. Counseling does have a place in church life as one means of bringing healing and wholeness to the individual.

Relationships are what hold people together in fellowship in the local church.

Each person in the fellowship is ultimately responsible for his or her own fellowship needs and follow-up. The church provides certain settings where this can happen.

Conflict with one another in the Body of Christ is part of the normal life of the church. Conflict within the fellowship is used by God to develop many positive qualities in Christians that are important and can't be developed without conflict coming about. There is a right and wrong way for Christians to deal with the conflicts that develop.

The local church needs to be able to grow. Without a consistent giving of time, money and energy the church will quickly become stagnant. The church needs to give itself away to the world. Also, to give consistently and generously as a church body to outside ministries and needs is a normal church priority.

Evangelism is primarily a function of sharing about Jesus in the course of everyday life. The prime locations for evangelism are our homes, businesses, schools, and neighborhoods rather than the church celebrations on Sundays. "Healthy sheep will naturally reproduce more sheep."

Leadership is a functional reality, not an appointment, democratic decision, or reward.

The primary job of the pastoral staff is to equip, train, and encourage the people in ministry.

### **Assumptions about Ministry**

Believers really want to obey Jesus. The issue of ministry is removing obstacles that prevent people from doing so.

A commitment to excellence produces confidence in ministry and care.

The primary foundation for healing in all dimensions (spiritually, emotionally, or physically) is Love, as outlined in 1 Corinthians 13.

The Holy Spirit, with the church, is able, willing and free to break in and do His work in non-spectacular, non-manipulative and surprising ways.

You cannot manufacture the Holy spirit's genuine working.

We aim more to instill in people values that are consistent with scriptures and that lead to chosen behavior consistent with the Bible than to enforce simple changing of behavior.

The grace and mercy of God change people's hearts more powerfully than human or religious "regulations."

One of the easiest groups in the world to meet is the poor. As we go to the poor we come into a kingdom reality that releases God's power and favor, and thus causes momentum within the local church.

Planning is an important part of executing the tasks God has given us to do.

## **STATEMENT OF FAITH**

We confess our affirming of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, which we believe to reflect Christian orthodoxy and the clear teaching of the Holy Scripture. In addition, as members of Vineyard Christian Church of Evanston, we make the following confession of faith our own:

### **God**

We believe in one true God, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Who are co-eternal in being, co-equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfection. (*Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-11; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22; 2 Corinthians 13:14*)

### **The Father**

We believe in God the Father, the Almighty, creator of the heavens and the earth, perfect in holiness, perfect in love, perfect in judgment, from Whom the Son and the Spirit proceed. (*Genesis 1:1, 17:1; Isaiah 5:16, 6:3, 43:15; Matthew 11:25; John 6:57, 8:42, 14:16-17, Romans 11:17; 1 John 4:16*)

## **The Son**

We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary and is true God and true man. (*John 1:2 14; Luke 1:35*)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, and that our justification is made sure by His literal, bodily resurrection from the dead, and that His name and work are our sole means of salvation. (*1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 Peter 2:24; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 4:25; Acts 4:12*)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, where He is exalted at the right hand of God above all power and dominion, and ministers as our High Priest and Intercessor. (*Acts 1:9-10; Ephesians 1:20-21; Hebrews 4:14, 7:25; 1 John 2:1*)

## **The Holy Spirit**

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a person Who is with the Church forever and Who teaches the Church and guides the Church in all truth. The Holy spirit gives varieties of Gifts for the common good of the Church and guides the Church and the individual believer in service for the Church and in service towards the world. The Holy Spirit continues to manifest Himself through the gifts as described in Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; and Ephesians 4:11-12. The individual believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, has his life in Christ and final redemption guaranteed in the Spirit, and is supernaturally empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit Who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. (*John 1:16, 14:26, 16:7-11; Acts 1:8, 10:19-20, 16:6-7; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30*)

## **Scripture**

We believe in the sixty-six canonized and commonly recognized books of the Old and New Testaments as inspired by God and inerrant in the original writings, and they are the supreme and final authority in faith and life. (*2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 2:13*)

## **Depravity**

We believe that man was created in the image of God, that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also spiritual death, which is separation from God, and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature, and become sinners in thought, word and deed. (*Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:23, 5:14; Ephesians 2:1-3*)

## **Judgment and Eternity**

We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the everlasting punishment of the lost. (*John 5:28; Matthew 25:45; Revelation 20:11-15*)

## **The Church**

We believe in the one, universal Church as the Body of Christ, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the purchased people of God, the bride of Christ. The Church is built and established upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. The church is united in having one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father and one Head, Jesus Christ. The Church is all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author and giver of salvation. God has called the believers in various places to join together into local churches as visible expressions of the Church in order to bring the power, the life, the character, and the authority of God into the lives of people. (*1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:19-22, 4:4-6, 5:22-32; 1 Peter 2:5-10*)

## **Salvation**

We believe that eternal salvation is solely the gift of God, and that all who in sincere contrition repent of their sins, believe the gospel and receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith alone are born again of the Holy Spirit and become adopted sons of God. (*John 3:3-5; Titus 3:5; Acts 2:38; Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 8:16*)

## **Second Coming**

We believe in the personal, bodily and imminent return of Christ in the air for His saints. (*Matthew 24:30-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*)

