

OUR BELIEFS & IDENTITY



1 | OUR CENTER

We declare that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God as revealed in the Bible, the written Word of God, is the only Savior and Lord. He is the center of our shared experience of true biblical unity.

2 | OUR EVANGELICAL CORE

We affirm our commitment to the following core truths of the Bible which we share with other genuine believers in Jesus Christ.

THE ONE TRUE GOD — There is one, and only one, true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally in three persons, never less and never more — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST — Jesus Christ is fully God, existing eternally. Everything was created by Him and for Him. His incarnation took place in the womb of a virgin. He became Man, but never sinned. He died a substitutionary death to atone for sin, resurrected bodily, and ascended into heaven where He remains fully God and fully Man, and is presently ministering until He comes again.

THE HOLY SPIRIT — The Holy Spirit is fully God, existing eternally. He is a person, and was involved in Creation and the inspiration of Scripture. His works of convicting and regenerating are essential to the believer's salvation. Believers are entitled to the benefit and joy of being filled and walking in the Spirit for empowerment in Christian life, service, and mission.

THE BIBLE — The sixty-six books, and only these, known as the Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God. God's inspiration and superintendence of the writing of every word of the Bible guarantees that what was written is His Word and therefore authoritative, true, and without error in the original manuscripts. God preserves His Word, which is powerful and effective to accomplish His purpose of salvation among all nations. God's Spirit illumines the minds of believers in every culture to understand and apply the unchanging truth of Scripture in fresh and relevant ways for the benefit of the whole Body of Christ.

HUMANITY — God created man and woman in His image. As a result, all people are bearers of that image. However, Adam's subsequent sin resulted in a condition of spiritual death which all people since Adam have experienced, marring the beauty of God's image in them in every facet of life. This condition of spiritual death has rendered all people unable to save themselves, and leads to physical death. Therefore, new birth is necessary for salvation.

SALVATION — The salvation brought by God is a complete and eternal salvation by His grace alone, received as the free gift of God through personal faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work, as He declares believers righteous in Him.

CHURCH — There exists one true Church, which is called the Household of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. It is comprised of all true disciples of Jesus Christ and is created by the action of the Holy Spirit. Tangible expressions of this true Church are found in local churches.

CHRISTIAN LIFE — The believer is saved by faith alone. The faith that saves is expected to produce obedience and good works, which are the products of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The dimensions of biblical ethics are both individual and social, and extend to every facet of life. God faithfully continues to finish the work of sanctification, which He initiated in the life of each believer with the goal of Christlikeness.

ANGELS, SATAN, DEMONS — God created a multitude of spiritual beings called "angels." Righteous angels continue to serve God and work both in the heavenly sphere and on earth. By his disobedience, Satan, a fallen angel, became the adversary of God and God's people, carrying with him a procession of demons. Jesus Christ has overcome Satan so that the final judgment and doom of Satan and his demons are certain.

FUTURE LIFE — The dead will have a conscious existence in eternity and their bodies will be resurrected. Unbelievers, already under condemnation, will be sentenced to suffer eternal separation from God. Believers, already having been granted eternal life, will be judged and rewarded according to their works, and will experience a glorified, eternal existence in the presence of the Lord.

3 | **OUR CHARIS IDENTITY:** THE SHARED COMMITMENTS OF OUR GLOBAL MOVEMENT

A Summary of Additional Commitments to *Biblical* Truth

WE SEEK to understand the intent of each biblical writer by using grammatical, historical, and contextual principles of interpretation, focused on Christ, led by the Holy Spirit, and oriented by grace. We accept the absolute authority of the Bible rather than that of creeds, traditions, or leaders.

WE COMMIT to an ongoing study, understanding, and application of God's unchanging truth in our constantly changing world, whether personal, social, or cultural.

WE AFFIRM that true believers put their trust in Jesus Christ and are kept forever in the saving grace of God through His promises and His power. Every believer has been eternally justified, blessed with all spiritual blessings, and set free from all condemnation.

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit's works of baptizing, sealing, and indwelling occur simultaneously with regeneration and are the possession of every true believer. The Holy Spirit gives each believer a unique combination of spiritual gifts for the purpose of serving God and people.

WE AFFIRM that Jesus Christ gave ordinances to the Church:

- Baptism testifies to the reality of our salvation and identifies us as disciples of the Triune God. We therefore encourage the practice of triune immersion.
- Communion testifies to our justification, sanctification, and glorification, which are accomplished through Jesus Christ. We therefore encourage the practice of these symbols: the bread and cup, the washing of feet, and the sharing of a meal.
- We encourage the practice of additional biblical symbolic actions, such as anointing with oil and prayer for the sick, laying on of hands for ministry, etc.

WE AFFIRM that the Church began on a particular day of Pentecost when our ascended Lord sent His Spirit to the waiting disciples. The present Church age will come to an end when our Lord comes in the air to remove His Church from the earth and fulfill His promises to Israel. The second coming of Christ is the personal, physical, and visible return from heaven of Christ to earth with His Church, to establish His thousand-year reign before instituting His eternal Kingdom.

A Summary of Our Commitments to *Biblical* Relationships

WE AFFIRM that the Triune God serves as the perfect and ultimate model for human relationships. As a result, each person has equal value yet different roles, which are expressed in loving unity.

WE AFFIRM that differences in gifts and ministries are a manifestation of the multifaceted grace of God. As a result, we encourage all believers to use their gifts in ways that promote the unity, growth, and ministry of the local church.

WE AFFIRM our obligation to love and respect one another, and to practice the “one another” exhortations. As a result, we commit to work together and to resolve our differences for the good of individuals, churches, and communities.

WE AFFIRM the responsibility of local churches to govern their own affairs while urging those churches to live and serve in community and interdependency with other churches.

WE AFFIRM that the mandate and urgency to fulfill the Great Commission leads us to seek ways to cooperate with one another and with likeminded Christians on the local, regional, and global levels.

A Summary of Our Commitments to *Biblical* Mission

WE AFFIRM that God’s plan for this age is best summarized in Jesus’ command to make disciples of all nations. This includes the evangelistic call to reconciliation with God by means of the completed work of Christ and the lifelong pursuit of obedience to God by means of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

WE AFFIRM that God’s plan for this age includes the recognition, training, and releasing of spiritually qualified and appropriately trained leaders. While the specific gifts, abilities, and responsibilities of leaders may vary, all leaders must serve as servants of God, shepherds of God’s people, and stewards of God’s resources.

WE AFFIRM that God’s plan for this age is most fully expressed through establishing healthy churches. Although practices may vary between cultures, healthy local churches are comprised of believers in Christ who assume a mutual commitment to worship, learning, service, prayer, and witness.

WE AFFIRM that God’s plan for this age includes our responsibility to express the compassion of Christ through proclaiming the Gospel in words while loving in deeds. We are committed to finding creative and practical ways to address the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of a fallen humanity.

4 | CHARIS FELLOWSHIP

POSITION STATEMENTS

These statements have been deemed necessary and helpful to address or clarify specific issues of culture, theology, or practice within the ministry context of North America.

AFFIRMATION OF LIFE — We affirm that human life is sacred and worthy of respect. From the moment of conception, human life is precious and deserves protection from murder, suicide, abortion, and mercy killing. We affirm that those who are terminally ill deserve appropriate medical care, including palliative care and pain management, but medically-assisted suicide is not a moral or biblical option.

MARRIAGE & SEXUALITY — We believe God created marriage to be a public covenant relationship, normally consummated by the union of sexual intercourse, between two consenting people — one man and one woman. This covenant is to endure as long as both are living; for the purposes of mutual joy, mutual edification, procreation, and symbolizing the covenant relationship between Christ and His church to all generations. We affirm that all sexual relations of any kind that occur outside the boundaries of marriage are immoral and contradict God's design for humanity.

ELDERSHIP — We affirm that men and women are both created in the image of God, are equal in value and personhood, and are designed to be inter-dependent in life and ministry within the local church. We believe that the leadership position in our local churches corresponding to the biblical role of elder/overseer/pastor is reserved for men who meet biblical qualifications.

5 | GRACE POLARIS CHURCH

POSITION STATEMENTS

These statements express the convictions and practices of Grace Polaris Church. They provide further detail regarding how we understand the Scriptures and function as a local church.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP — We affirm the leadership of a plurality of biblically-qualified men, each with congregational affirmation, to serve as members of our College of Elders. In accordance with the Bible, we believe that God has assigned men to embrace beneficial leadership in the home and in the church, complementing the equal value and distinct design of women. Consistent with God's design for the local church, those qualified men will function in the roles and responsibilities which the Bible describes for elders, including congregation-wide teaching, shepherding, and governance. With that authority, elders bear collective responsibility before God for the well-being of all believers entrusted to their care.

ORDINANCES — We practice trine immersion as a church as our sole mode of baptism for believers who publicly confess Christ as Savior and Lord, except in situations in which this is not physically or medically possible. We practice communion in a three-fold manner multiple times annually. This includes the love feast, foot washing, and the bread and cup. On occasion, we may also celebrate one of those elements because of its relevance to a particular gathering or as a teaching opportunity.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION & GENDER IDENTITY — We believe that every person is made in God's image and as distinctly male or female. This divinely assigned sex from birth also represents a person's true and fixed gender identity. Sadly, we recognize that the presence of sin causes sexual brokenness and distortion for all, including as some individuals experience confusion as to their sexual identity and/or sexual attractions. With all such distortions, we believe that God's Word and God's people are used by God's Spirit to help individuals embrace God's design for them and the way they relate to others, including sexual expression.

OUR COMMON IDENTITY

**FOUNDED IN 1964, GRACE POLARIS CHURCH
EXISTS TO HONOR GOD BY MULTIPLYING
DEVOTED FOLLOWERS OF JESUS THROUGH
WORSHIP, COMMUNITY, TRAINING, AND WITNESS.**

At Grace Polaris Church, we value both the local and global Body of Christ. While we're self-governed by our College of Elders, we're also part of a much larger movement of Jesus followers. Our specific roots date back to 1708, when a small group of believers in Germany committed to forming a church faithful to the teachings of the Bible, both in belief and practice. Persecution soon forced them to immigrate to North America and, over the centuries, our movement morphed, divided, and grew.

Today our sister churches and ministries in North America are known collectively as the Charis Fellowship (formerly the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches), a vibrant network of churches and ministries which are passionate about Jesus and biblical truth, biblical relationships, and biblical mission. The Charis Fellowship is a proud member of the global Charis Alliance, which includes outreach efforts and more than 3,000 churches in 33 countries on five continents.



This document — which includes the Charis Commitment to Common Identity in sections 1–4 — summarizes our biblical convictions, mutual commitments, and common practices.

Visit GracePolaris.org/Beliefs for More Info & Scripture References



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