



THE HIAWATHA CHURCH ELDER STATEMENT OF FAITH

Purpose of this Affirmation

At Hiawatha Church, we believe that the elders are the spiritual authority in the church. In other words, elders teach, promote, protect and defend the vision, values and theology of Hiawatha at the highest level. They also need to demonstrate a life that reflects these beliefs and values, and protect against a type of legalistically and hypocritically driven spirituality that neglects the gospel's power.

As a result, not everyone is ready to serve as an elder at Hiawatha. We believe that the qualifications for elders listed in the following passages make it clear that the office of elder is indeed a high calling:

1 Timothy 3:1-7¹

¹ The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Titus 1:6-9

⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

1 Peter 5:1-4

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, scripture references are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers.

From these passages we see that not only are certain character qualities necessary for eldership, but important doctrinal positions must also be understood (and cherished!) so that elders can be *able to teach* (1 Timothy 3:2) and *hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that [they] can give instruction in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it* (Titus 1:9), and *shepherd the flock of God that is among [them]* (1 Peter 5:1). As a result of these qualifications, the elders at Hiawatha have decided that in addition to being a member of Hiawatha, an elder candidate must have the following:

1. Doctrinal training and agreement with the Hiawatha Elder Statement of Faith so they can teach and defend the faith,
2. A personal ministry involved in shepherding the flock, knowing their gifts and using them,
3. Courage and trust in God in new and Spirit-directed ways, as he leads,
4. Integrity: one who lives out his faith in a way consistent with the doctrine he professes,
5. An ability to manage the flock well; i.e., skill and passion in helping usher in God's Kingdom among the church community, and
6. A common understanding of our vision, values, and missional purposes at Hiawatha.

There are areas of theology that this paper is silent on, but this Statement is designed to communicate what the “top drawer” issues are for us at Hiawatha, or the *core* of our theology. In areas it needs correction, we aim to amend and better articulate our understanding of the Scriptures in the future.

Ultimately, this Elder Statement of Faith was created to help train elder candidates, other leaders at Hiawatha, and the church in general—by “feeding” them with sound doctrine, refuting false doctrine, and overall building a solid gospel-centered foundation for people to build upon throughout their lives. It is our aim to be constantly raising up new leaders in a movement to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ among our church and out into our neighborhood, city, and world. May the name of Christ become more famous through the promotion and teaching of the gospel in our ministry! And may he help us to “contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) in all that we do. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

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1. *Scripture, the Word of God Written*

1.1 We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the infallible Word of God, verbally inspired by God, and without error in the original manuscripts, being an accurate historical account of events as recorded by ancient authors. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21, John 17:17, John 8:31-32)

1.2 We believe that the Word of God is powerful, and able to accomplish the objectives God has set forth. By this power released from the Word of God, people's lives are changed forever. (Jeremiah 23:29, Isaiah 55:10-11, Psalm 19:7-11)

1.3 We believe that God's intentions, revealed in the Bible, are the supreme and final authority in testing all claims about what is true and right. In matters not addressed by the Bible, what is true and right is assessed by criteria consistent with the teachings of Scripture. (Psalm 119:105, 160, John 17:17, Matthew 22:29)

1.4 We believe God's intentions are revealed through the intentions of inspired human authors, even when the authors' intention was to express divine meaning of which they were not fully aware, as, for example, in the case of some Old Testament prophecies. Thus the meaning of biblical texts is a fixed historical reality, rooted in the historical, unchangeable intentions of its divine and human authors. However, while meaning does not change, the application of that meaning may change in various situations, understanding the principles that are eternal in nature to be applied to changing times and cultures. Nevertheless, it is never legitimate to infer a meaning from a biblical text that was never intended to communicate the meaning carried by the words which God inspired. (1 Peter 1:10-11, 2 Peter 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:15)

1.5 Therefore, the process of discovering the intention of God in the Bible is a humble and careful effort to find in the language of Scripture what the human authors intended to communicate. Limited abilities, traditional biases, personal sin, and cultural assumptions often obscure biblical texts. Therefore the work of the Holy Spirit is essential for right understanding of the Bible, and prayer for his assistance is as essential as a proper effort to understand and apply God's Word. (Psalm 119:12, 1 Corinthians 2:12-16)

2. *The Trinity, One God as Three Persons*

2.1 We believe that there was, is and always will be one living and true God, eternally existing in three Persons, equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence, and redemption. (Deut 6:4, John 1:1-3, Acts 5:3-4, Matthew 28:18-20)

2.2 We believe that God is supremely joyful in the fellowship of the Trinity, each Person beholding and expressing his eternal and unsurpassed delight in the all-satisfying perfections of the triune God. (John 17:26, Proverbs 8:27-30, John 15:11, John 17:22-24)

3. *God's Eternal Purpose and Election*

3.1 We believe that God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his will, freely and unchangeably ordain and foreknow whatever comes to pass. We believe he did this in order to display the full extent of his glory for the eternal and ever-increasing enjoyment of all who love him. (2 Timothy 1:8-10, Romans 9:14-24, Ephesians 3:3-12, Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:20, Revelation 13:8)

3.2 We believe that God upholds and governs all things – from galaxies to subatomic particles, from the forces of nature to the movements of nations, and from the public plans of politicians to the secret acts of solitary persons – all in accord with his eternal, all-wise purposes to glorify himself, yet in such a way that he never sins, nor ever condemns a person unjustly; but that his ordaining and governing all things is compatible with the moral accountability of all persons created in his image. (Psalm 115:3, Isaiah 40:26, Matthew 10:29-30, Colossians 1:16-17, Mark 4:39-41, Amos 3:6, Genesis 50:20, Proverbs 21:1, Proverbs 16:9, Deuteronomy 32:4, James 1:13, Daniel 4:37)

3.3 We believe that God's election is an unconditional act of free grace which was given through his Son Christ Jesus before the world began. By this act God chose, before the foundation of the world, those who would be delivered from bondage to sin and brought to repentance and saving faith in his Son Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:19, Romans 9:11-18, John 10:25-29, John 6:37-39, Romans 8:28-30)

4. God's Creation of the Universe and Man

4.1 We believe that God created the universe, and everything in it, out of nothing, by the Word of his power. Having no deficiency in himself, nor moved by any incompleteness in his joyful self-sufficiency, God was pleased in creation to display his glory for the everlasting joy of the redeemed, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. (Genesis 1:1, Hebrews 11:3, Exodus 3:13-14, Psalm 50:9-15, Acts 17:25, Isaiah 43:7, Matthew 25:23, Revelation 5:9)

4.2 We believe that God directly created Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from his side. We believe that Adam and Eve were the historical parents of the entire human race; that they were created male and female, with each being made equally in the image of God; that they were created without sin; that they were created to glorify God; and that they were appointed differing and complementary roles in marriage as an illustration patterned after Christ and the church. (Genesis 1:27, 2:7, 2:21-22, Romans 5:14, Genesis 2:18, Ephesians 5:22-33)

5. Man's Sin and Fall from Fellowship with God

5.1 We believe that, although God created Adam and Eve morally upright, they were led astray from God's Word and wisdom by the subtlety of Satan's deceit, and chose to take what was forbidden, and thus declare their independence from, distrust for, and disobedience toward their all-good and gracious Creator. Thus, our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original innocence and communion with God. Although they were created in the image of God, this image was now marred and every area of their lives was now tainted with sin. (Ecclesiastes 7:29, Genesis 3:1, 13, 2 Corinthians 11:3, Genesis 3:7-8)

5.2 We believe that, as the head and representative of the human race, Adam's fall became the fall of all his posterity, in such a way that corruption, guilt, death, and condemnation belong properly to every person. All persons are thus corrupt by nature, enslaved to sin, and morally unable to truly delight in God and overcome their own proud preference for the fleeting pleasures of self-rule. Even though we are still created in the image of God and

his likeness, and can make moral choices that follow God's ways, this fallen nature taints every area of life. (1 Corinthians 15:21, Romans 5:12-19, Ephesians 2:2-3, Romans 6:16, 20, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Romans 8:7-8)

5.3 We believe God has subjected the creation to futility, and the entire human family is made justly liable to untold miseries of sickness, decay, calamity, and loss. Thus all the adversity and suffering in the world is an echo and a witness of the exceedingly great evil of moral depravity in the heart of mankind; and every new day of life is a God-given, merciful reprieve from imminent judgment, pointing to repentance. (Romans 1:18, 8:20-21, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Romans 8:35-36, Romans 2:4)

6. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God

6.1 We believe that in the fullness of time God sent forth his eternal Son as Jesus the Messiah, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary. We believe that, when the eternal Son became flesh, he took on a fully human nature, so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one Person, without confusion or mixture. Thus the Person, Jesus Christ, was and is truly God and truly man, yet one Christ and the only Mediator between God and man. (Galatians 4:4, Luke 1:34-35, Matthew 1:23, John 1:1-14, Hebrews 2:14-18, 1 Timothy 2:5)

6.2 We believe that Jesus Christ lived without sin, though he endured the common infirmities and temptations of human life. He preached and taught with truth and authority. He worked miracles, demonstrating his divine right and power over all creation: dispatching demons, healing the sick, raising the dead, stilling the storm, walking on water, multiplying loaves, and foreknowing what would befall him and his disciples, including the betrayal of Judas and the denial, restoration, and eventual martyrdom of Peter. (Hebrews 2:18, 4:15, Matthew 22:16, Matthew 11:4-6, John 13:19, John 6:64, Luke 22:31-34)

6.3 We believe that his life was governed by his Father's providence with a view to fulfilling all Old Testament prophecies concerning the One who was to come, such as the Seed of the woman, the Prophet like Moses, the Priest after the order of Melchizedek, the Son of David, and the Suffering Servant. (Luke 24:25-26, 44-46, Genesis 3:15, Romans 16:20, Deuteronomy 18:18, Acts 3:20-23, Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 5:5-6, Isaiah 9:7, Matthew 1:1, Isaiah 52:13, 53:3-6, Mark 10:45)

6.4 We believe that Jesus Christ suffered voluntarily in fulfillment of God's redemptive plan, that he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, that he died, was buried and on the third day rose from the dead to vindicate the saving work of his life and death and to take his place as the invincible, everlasting Lord of glory. During forty days after his resurrection, he gave many compelling evidences of his bodily resurrection and then ascended bodily into heaven, where he is seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for his people on the basis of his all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, and reigning until he puts all his enemies under his feet. (John 10:18, Isaiah 53:10, Acts 2:23, Mark 15:15, John 19:30, 1 Corinthians 15:3, John 19:40-41, 1 Corinthians 15:4, Matthew 28:6, Romans 4:25, Philippians 2:9-11, Acts 17:31, Acts 1:3, 9-11, Colossians 3:1, Romans 8:34, 1 John 2:1-2, Hebrews 1:13, 1 Corinthians 15:25, Hebrews 1:13)

7. The Saving Work of Christ

7.1 We believe that by his perfect obedience to God and by his suffering and death as the immaculate Lamb of God, Jesus Christ obtained forgiveness of sins and the gift of perfect righteousness for all who trusted in God prior to the cross and all who would trust in Christ

thereafter. Through living a perfect life and dying in our place, the just for the unjust, Christ absorbed our punishment, appeased the wrath of God against us, vindicated the righteousness of God in our justification, and removed the condemnation of the law against us. (Romans 5:18-19, 1 Peter 3:18, Romans 5:6, 14:9, Galatians 2:21, John 1:29, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Acts 13:38, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 3:9, Romans 3:21-22, 4:3, 3:25-26, Galatians 2:16, Romans 5:9, Galatians 3:13, Ephesians 2:3-6, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, John 3:36, Colossians 2:13-14)

7.2 We believe that the atonement of Christ for sin warrants and impels a universal offering of the gospel to all persons, so that to every person it may be said, "God gave his only begotten Son so that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life." Whoever desires may come for cleansing at this fountain, and whoever does come, Jesus will not cast out. (John 3:16, Matthew 28:19, Acts 1:8, Romans 10:11-15, Revelation 22:17, John 4:14, Isaiah 55:1-2, John 6:37)

7.3 We believe, moreover, that the death of Christ did obtain more than the genuine offer of the gospel for all; it also obtained the omnipotent New Covenant mercy of repentance and faith for God's elect. The death of Christ is sufficient for all, but only effectual for authentic followers of Christ. In his death, Christ expressed a special covenant love to his friends, his sheep, his bride. For them he obtained the infallible and effectual working of the Spirit to triumph over their resistance and bring them to saving faith. (Luke 22:20, 1 Corinthians 11:25, Hebrews 9:15, 13:20-21, Acts 11:18, 2 Timothy 2:24-25, John 6:44, Ephesians 2:8-9, Acts 16:14, John 15:13, John 10:14-15, Ephesians 5:25, Revelation 5:9, John 17:6, 9, 19, 14:26, 16:7)

8. The Saving Work of the Holy Spirit

8.1 We believe that the Holy Spirit has always been at work in the world, sharing in the work of creation, awakening faith in the remnant of God's people, performing signs and wonders, giving triumphs in battle, empowering the preaching of prophets and inspiring the writing of Scripture. Yet, when Christ had made atonement for sin, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, he inaugurated a new era of the Spirit by pouring out the promise of the Father on his Church. (Genesis 1:2, Psalm 104:30, Haggai 1:14, Romans 8:7-9, Judges 14:6, Judges 3:10, 1 Samuel 10:6, 2 Peter 1:21, Luke 24:49, Acts 2:16-18, 33)

8.2 We believe that the newness of this era is marked by the unprecedented mission of the Spirit to glorify the crucified and risen Christ. This he does by giving the disciples of Jesus greater power to preach the gospel of the glory of Christ, by opening the hearts of hearers that they might see Christ and believe, by revealing the beauty of Christ in his Word and transforming his people from glory to glory, by manifesting himself in spiritual gifts (being sovereignly free to dispense, as he wills, all the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10) for the building up of the body of Christ and the confirmation of his Word, by calling all the nations into the sway of the gospel of Christ, and, in all this, thus fulfilling the New Covenant promise to create and preserve a purified people for the everlasting habitation of God. (John 16:13-14, 7:39, Acts 1:8, Romans 15:18-19, Acts 16:14, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, 1 Corinthians 12:7-10, Hebrews 2:3-4, Jeremiah 31:33-34, Jeremiah 32:40, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:21)

8.3 We believe that, apart from the effectual work of the Spirit, no one would come to faith, because all are dead in trespasses and sins; that they are hostile to God, and morally unable to truly submit to God or please him, because the pleasures of sin appear greater than the pleasures of God. Thus, for God's elect, the Spirit triumphs over all resistance, wakens the

dead, removes blindness, and manifests Christ in such a compellingly beautiful way through the gospel that he becomes irresistibly attractive to the regenerate heart. (Ephesians 2:4-6, Romans 8:7-9, Mark 4:19, Romans 6:17, 2 Corinthians 4:4-6)

8.4 We believe the Holy Spirit does this saving work in connection with the presentation of the gospel of the glory of Christ. Thus neither the work of the Father in election, nor the work of the Son in atonement, nor the work of the Spirit in regeneration is a hindrance or discouragement to the proclamation of the gospel to all peoples and persons everywhere. On the contrary, this divine saving work of the Trinity is the warrant and the ground of our hope that our evangelization is not in vain in the Lord. The Spirit binds his saving work to the gospel of Christ, because his aim is to glorify the Christ of the gospel. (Acts 16:14, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 4:4, 6, John 16:14, Acts 4:12, 1 Timothy 2:5, Romans 3:19-22, Titus 3:5-7, Ephesians 1:13-14, Acts 17:30-31)

9. The Justifying Act of God

9.1 We believe that in a free act of righteous grace God justifies the ungodly by faith alone apart from works, pardoning their sins, and reckoning them as righteous and acceptable in his presence. Faith is thus the sole instrument by which we, as sinners, are united to Christ, whose perfect righteousness and satisfaction for sins is alone the ground of our acceptance with God. This acceptance happens fully and permanently at the first instant of justification. Thus the righteousness by which we come into right standing with God is not anything worked in us by God, neither imparted to us at baptism nor over time, but rather is accomplished for us, outside ourselves, and is imputed to us. (Romans 3:21-24, 28, 4:4-5, 5:1, 18-19, 6:4-8, Galatians 2:16, 3:24, 5:4, Titus 3:5-7, 1 Corinthians 1:28-30, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Jeremiah 23:5-6)

9.2 We believe, nevertheless, that the faith, which alone receives the gift of justification, does not remain alone in the person so justified, but produces, by the Holy Spirit, the fruit of love and leads necessarily to sanctification. This necessary relation between justifying faith and the fruit of good works gives rise to some biblical expressions which seem to make works the ground or means of justification², but in fact simply express the crucial truth that faith that does not yield the fruit of good works is dead, being no true faith. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Galatians 5:6, 22-23, 1 John 3:14, 4:8, 16, 20, 1 Timothy 1:5, 2 Thessalonians 1:11, 2:13, Acts 26:18, James 2:17-20, 26, 1 John 2:3-4)

10. God's Work in Faith and Sanctification

10.1 We believe that justification and sanctification are both brought about by God through faith, but not in the same way. Justification is an act of God's imputing and reckoning; sanctification is an act of God's imparting and transforming. Thus the function of faith in regard to each is different. In regard to justification, faith is not the channel through which power or transformation flows to the soul of the believer, but rather faith is the occasion of God's forgiving, acquitting, and reckoning as righteous. But in regard to sanctification, faith is indeed the channel through which divine power and transformation flow to the soul; and the sanctifying work of God through faith does indeed touch the soul and change it into the likeness of Christ. (Acts 15:9, 26:18, Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3, 5, 1 Thessalonians 5:23,

² To clarify we are saying that these biblical passages can *seem* to make works the way by which one becomes justified. A few examples are John 5:28-29, Matthew 18:34-35, James 2:21-25, Galatians 6:8-9, and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. See articles 7.1 and 9.1 where it is made clear that our cleared legal standing before God is brought about by God apart from us and then given, or imputed, to us and is not produced by our good deeds. Such instances in Scripture are rightly described as moral effects, or the transformation of life, which result from justifying faith.

Romans 6:19, 22, 1 Peter 1:2, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 3:21-22, Romans 5:1, James 2:17-20, Galatians 5:6, Colossians 1:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 1:11, 2:13, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, 4:16-18)

10.2 We believe that the reason justifying faith necessarily sanctifies in this way is fourfold:

First, justifying faith perseveres, that is, it is a continuing kind of faith. Even though we are justified at the first instant of saving faith, this faith justifies only because it is the kind of faith that will surely persevere. The extension of this faith into the future is, as it were, contained in the first seed of faith, as the oak in the acorn. Thus the moral effects³ of persevering faith may be rightly described as the effects of justifying faith. (Hebrews 3:14, 1 John 2:19, Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13, Romans 4:3, 19-22, 5:1, James 2:21-23)

Second, we believe that justifying faith trusts in Christ not only for the gift of imputed righteousness and the forgiveness of sins, but also for the fulfillment of all his promises to us based on that reconciliation. Justifying faith magnifies the finished work of Christ's atonement, by resting securely in all the promises of God obtained and guaranteed by that all-sufficient work. (Philippians 3:9, Romans 3:21-22, Acts 10:43, Hebrews 3:6, 11:1, Romans 4:20-22, Colossians 1:23, 2 Corinthians 1:20)

Third, we believe that justifying faith embraces Christ in all his roles: Creator, Sustainer, Savior, Teacher, Guide, Comforter, Helper, Friend, Advocate, Protector, and Lord. Justifying faith does not divide Christ, accepting part of him and rejecting the rest. All of Christ is embraced by justifying faith, even before we are fully aware of, or fully understand, all that he will be for us. As more of Christ is truly revealed to us in his Word, genuine faith recognizes Christ and embraces him more fully. (Romans 10:9, Acts 20:21, 2 Timothy 3:15, John 20:31, Philippians 1:29, John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3, Luke 2:11, John 13:13, Acts 16:7, John 14:18, 27, 2 Corinthians 1:5, Philippians 1:19, 3:15, John 15:13-15, 1 John 2:1, 2 Thessalonians 3:3)

Fourth, we believe that justifying faith enjoys heartfelt, Spirit-given (yet imperfect) satisfaction in all that God is for us in Jesus. This embracing of all of Christ is neither a mere intellectual assent nor a mere decision of the will. Therefore, the change of mind and heart that turns from the moral ugliness and danger of sin, and is sometimes called "repentance," is included in the very nature of saving faith. (1 John 5:1-4, John 3:19-21, Hebrews 11:24-26, John 6:35, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Matthew 3:8, Romans 12:2)

10.3 We believe that this persevering, future-oriented, Christ-embracing, heart-satisfying faith is life-transforming, and therefore renders intelligible the teaching of the Scripture that final salvation in the age to come depends on the transformation of life, and yet does not contradict justification by faith alone. The faith which alone justifies, cannot remain alone, but works through love. (Acts 26:18, 15:9, James 2:17-20, Galatians 5:6, see footnote 2)

10.4 We believe that this simple, powerful reality of justifying faith is God's gift which he gives unconditionally in accord with God's electing love, so that no one can boast in himself, but only give all glory to God for every part of salvation. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the decisive agent in this life-transformation, but that he is supplied to us and works

³ Please see footnote 2 for an explanation of moral effects.

holiness in us through our daily faith in the Son of God whose trustworthiness he loves to glorify. (John 3:16, Ephesians 1:4-6, 2:8-9, Acts 11:18, 16:14, 2 Timothy 2:25, John 6:44, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, 15:10, Romans 11:36, Galatians 3:5, 5:16-17, Romans 8:5-8, John 16:13-14)

10.5 We believe that the sanctification, which comes through our union with Jesus Christ and the power of the Spirit, is not yet complete in this life. Slavery to sin is completely broken. In Christ, we have the ability to always choose the God-honoring, non-sinful path. Our sinful desires are progressively weakened by the power of a superior satisfaction in the glory of Christ. However, remnants of corruption remain in every human heart that give rise to a real war, and call for vigilance in the lifelong fight of faith. (2 Thessalonians 2:13, Philippians 3:12, 1 John 1:8-10, 2:1, Romans 6:11-14, 17, Galatians 5:16-18, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Peter 3:18, Hebrews 3:12-13, 10:14, 1 Peter 2:11, 1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Timothy 4:7-8)

10.6 We believe that all who are justified will win this fight. They will persevere in faith and never surrender to the enemy of their souls. This perseverance is the promise of the New Covenant, obtained by the blood of Christ, and worked in us by God himself, yet not so as to diminish, but only to empower and encourage, our vigilance; so that we may say in the end, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." (John 10:27-30, Romans 8:30, Hebrews 3:14, 1 John 2:19, 1 Corinthians 1:8-9, Philippians 1:6, 1 Peter 1:5, Jeremiah 32:40, Hebrews 13:20-21, Philippians 2:12-13, 2 Timothy 4:7-8, 1 Corinthians 11:25, 15:10)

11. Living God's Word by Meditation and Prayer in the Power of the Holy Spirit

11.1 We believe that faith is awakened and sustained by God's Spirit through the power of his Word and the transformation that happens through prayer, in the context of Christian community. Our power for living Godward comes from the imparted Spirit of Jesus Christ into our lives, and our union with Jesus is the foundation of all of our sanctification as we progress in our faith. This good fight of faith is fought mainly by meditating on the Scriptures, allowing them to sink deep into our lives, and praying that God would apply his word deeply into our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 10:17, Ephesians 1:18-19, Luke 22:31-32, 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Ephesians 4:11-16, Ephesians 6:10-18, Psalm 1:1-3, Hebrews 4:12)

11.2 We believe that the promises of God recorded in the Scriptures are suitable to save us from the deception of sin by showing us superior pleasures in the protection, provision, and presence of God. Therefore, hearing, reading, understanding, studying, pondering, memorizing, and savoring the promises of all that God will be for us in Christ are the primary means of the Holy Spirit to break the power of sin's deceitful promises in our lives. (Jeremiah 15:16, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:3-4, Hebrews 11:24-26, Romans 10:17, Ephesians 3:4, Ephesians 5:17, 2 Timothy 2:7, Psalm 119:11, Psalm 1:2)

11.3 We believe that God has ordained to bless and use his people for his glory through the means of prayer, offered in Jesus' name by faith. All prayer should seek ultimately that God's name be hallowed, and that his kingdom come, and that his will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. God's sovereignty over all things is not a hindrance to prayer, but is in fact the very reason for hope that our prayers will be powerfully answered and succeed in glorifying him and bringing about his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. (Philippians 4:6-7, Matthew 7:7-11, John 14:13, James 1:5-8, Matthew 6:9-10, Ephesians 6:19)

11.4 We believe that prayer is the essential companion of meditation, as we cry out to God for the inclination to turn from the world to the Word, and for the spiritual ability to see the glory of God in his testimonies, and for a soul-satisfying sight of the love of God, and for strength in the inner man to do the will of God. By prayer God sanctifies his people, sends gospel laborers into the world, and causes the Word of God to spread and triumph over Satan and unbelief. (Psalm 119:36, Psalm 119:18, Ephesians 1:18, Ephesians 3:14-16, Colossians 1:9-11, 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, Matthew 9:38, 2 Thessalonians 3:1)

12. Christ's Church and Her Ordinances

12.1 We believe in the one universal Church, composed of all those, in every time and place, who are chosen in Christ and united to him through faith by the Spirit in one body, with Christ himself as the Head. We believe that the ultimate purposes of the Church is to glorify God in the everlasting and ever-increasing joy of worship, to spread the wonderful message of Christ to create more devoted worshippers of Jesus Christ, and to nurture believers in this powerful relationship with him. (Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 1:22, 4:15-16, 3:6, 10, 20-21, Psalm 95:6-7, John 4:19-24, Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:8, Philemon 4-6, Hebrews 3:12-13, 1 Timothy 4:6-16)

12.2 We believe it is God's will that the universal Church find expression in local churches in which believers agree together to hear the Word of God proclaimed, to engage in corporate worship, to practice the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, to build each other's faith through the manifold ministries of love, to hold each other accountable in the obedience of faith through biblical discipline, and to engage in local and world evangelization. The Church is a body in which each member should find a suitable ministry for his gifts; it is the household of God in which the Spirit dwells; it is the pillar and bulwark of God's truth in a truth-denying world; and it is a city set on a hill so that outsiders may see the light of its good deeds – especially to the underprivileged in society – and give glory to the Father in heaven. (Acts 14:21-23, 16:4-5, 1 Peter 2:9, Hebrews 10:24-25, Ephesians 4:11-16, 2 Timothy 4:1-2, Colossians 3:15-16, Matthew 28:19, 5:14-16, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, 12:4-7, 13-20, Romans 12:6-8, James 5:19-20, Galatians 6:1, Matthew 28:19-20, Colossians 4:5-6, Ephesians 2:20-22, 1 Timothy 3:15, Luke 14:13-14, Galatians 2:10)

12.3 We believe that baptism is an ordinance of the Lord by which those who have repented and come to faith express their union with Christ in his death and resurrection, by being immersed in water in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of belonging to the new people of God, the true Israel, and an emblem of burial and cleansing, signifying death to the old life of unbelief, and purification from the pollution of sin. (Acts 2:38, 18:8, Colossians 2:12, 1 Peter 3:21, Galatians 3:26-27, Romans 6:3-8, Acts 8:36-39, John 3:23, Matthew 28:19, Ephesians 2:11-22, 3:6, Romans 2:28-29, 4:16, Galatians 3:7-14, Hebrews 10:22)

12.4 We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord in which gathered believers eat bread, signifying Christ's body given for his people, and drink the cup of the Lord, signifying the New Covenant in Christ's blood. We do this in remembrance of the Lord, and thus proclaim his death until he comes. Those who eat and drink in a worthy manner partake of Christ's body and blood, not physically, but spiritually, in that, by faith, they are mysteriously nourished with the benefits he obtained through his death, and thus grow in grace. (1 Corinthians 11:17-28, Luke 22:17-20, 1 Corinthians 10:16-22, John 6:53-57, 63)

12.5 We believe that each local church should recognize and affirm the divine calling of spiritually qualified men to give leadership to the church through the role of elder in the ministry of the Word and prayer. Women are not to fill the role of pastor or elder in the local church, but are encouraged to use their gifts in appropriate roles that edify the body of Christ and spread the gospel. (Acts 14:23, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 5:17, 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, Acts 6:1-4, 1 Timothy 2:12-13)

13. Christ's Commission to Make Disciples of All Nations

We believe that the commission given by the Lord Jesus to make disciples of all nations is binding on his Church to the end of the age. We believe all who have been reconciled to God are Christ's ambassadors and have been given the ministry of reconciliation – that God has reconciled the world to himself through Christ not counting men's sins against them. This task is to proclaim the gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation, baptizing them, teaching them the words and ways of the Lord, and gathering them into churches able to fulfill their Christian calling among their own people. Missions exist among the peoples of the earth because worship doesn't. The goal of missions, therefore, is to help as many people as possible become authentic worshippers of Jesus Christ, freeing them to become God-saturated and glorifying. (Matthew 28:18-20, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20, Revelation 5:9, 1 Corinthians 12:18-27, Colossians 2:18-19, Acts 14:23, Romans 1:5, John 4:23, Romans 15:8-11)

14. Death, Resurrection, and the Coming of the Lord

14.1 We believe that when Christians die they will be made perfect in holiness, received into paradise, and are taken consciously into the presence of Christ, which is more glorious and more satisfying than any experience on earth. (1 Corinthians 15:49-53, Hebrews 12:22-23, Luke 23:43, Philippians 1:23, 3:20-21, 2 Corinthians 5:1-9, 12:2-4)

14.2 We believe in the blessed hope that at the end of the age Jesus Christ will return to this earth personally, visibly, physically, without warning, in power and great glory; and that he will gather his elect, raise the dead, judge the nations, and establish his kingdom. We believe that the righteous will enter into the everlasting joy of their Master, and those who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness will be handed over to everlasting conscious misery. (Titus 2:13, Matthew 24:27, 30, 42, 44, 25:13, Acts 1:9-11, Mark 14:61-62, Luke 24:39-43, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, Luke 21:27, Matthew 24:31, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, 2 Timothy 4:1, 1 Corinthians 15:22-24, Psalm 16:11, Matthew 25:23, 46, 19:29, Romans 1:18, Daniel 12:2, Matthew 3:12, 2 Thessalonians 1:9, Revelation 14:11).

14.3 We believe that the end of all things in this age will be the beginning of a never-ending, ever-increasing joy in the hearts of the redeemed, as God displays more and more of his infinite and inexhaustible greatness and glory for the enjoyment of his people. (Ephesians 2:6-7, Psalm 16:11, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2:9)

15. The Spirit of This Affirmation and the Unity of the Church

15.1 We do not believe that all things in this statement of faith are of equal weight, some being more essential, some less. We do not believe that every part of this affirmation must be believed in order for one to be saved. Remember, the purpose of this document is for unity among the eldership at Hiawatha Church.

15.2 Our aim is not to discover how little can be believed, but rather to embrace and teach "the whole counsel of God." Our aim is to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fullness of its truth, and the glory of its Author. We believe biblical doctrine stabilizes saints

in the winds of confusion and strengthens the church in her mission to meet the great systems of false religion and secularism, which are prevalent in every age, including ours. We believe that the supreme virtue of love is nourished by the strong meat of God-centered doctrine. We also believe that a wonderful life-transforming, powerful, living relationship with Jesus Christ is sustained in an atmosphere of deep and joyful knowledge of God and his wonderful works. (Acts 20:27, Galatians 1:8, 2 Peter 3:2, 1 Timothy 6:3-5, 2 Peter 1:20-21, Ephesians 4:13-14, Galatians 1:6-7, 1 Timothy 1:3-7, Psalm 145:1-21)

15.3 We believe that the cause of unity in the church is best served, not by finding the lowest common denominator of doctrine, around which all can gather, but by elevating the value of truth, stating the doctrinal parameters of the elders at Hiawatha, seeking the unity that comes from the truth, and then demonstrating to the world how Christians can love each other across boundaries rather than by removing boundaries. In this way, the importance of truth is served by the existence of doctrinal borders, and unity is served by the way we love others across those borders. (Ephesians 4:4-6, John 13:34-35, Philippians 2:1-4, 4:8-9, 2 Timothy 2:14-18, 23-26)

15.4 We do not claim infallibility for this affirmation and are open to refinement and correction from Scripture. As elders, we encourage conversation regarding these statements, and will be constantly revising this document to better reflect the language and nuances of our theological understandings. However, we do hold firmly to these truths as we see them and call on others to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so. As conversation and healthy debate take place, it may be that we will learn from each other, and this document is to be amended. Clearly, only God's word is infallible. This is our best attempt at a synthesis of the major doctrines revealed to us in his word. (1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Peter 3:18, Acts 17:11)