

"What We Believe"

Systematic Theology Narrative:

We believe God inspired the authors of Scripture by his Spirit to speak to all generations of believers, including us today. God calls us to immerse ourselves in this authoritative narrative communally and individually to faithfully interpret and live out that story today as we are led by the Spirit of God.

In the beginning God created all things good. He was and always will be in a communal relationship with himself-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God created us to be relational as well and marked us with an identity as his image bearers and a missional calling to serve, care for, and cultivate the earth. God created humans in his image to live in fellowship with him, one another, our inner self, and creation. The enemy tempted the first humans, and darkness and evil entered the story through human sin and are now a part of the world. This devastating event resulted in our relationships with God, others, ourselves, and creation being fractured and in desperate need of redeeming.

We believe God did not abandon his creation to destruction and decay; rather he promised to restore this broken world. As part of this purpose, God chose a people, Abraham and his descendants, to represent him in the world. God promised to bless them as a nation so that through them all nations would be blessed. In time they became enslaved in Egypt and cried out to God because of their oppression. God heard their cry, liberated them from their oppressor, and brought them to Sinai where he gave them an identity and a mission as his treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, a holy people. Throughout the story of Israel, God refused to give up on his people despite their frequent acts of unfaithfulness to him.

God brought his people into the Promised Land. Their state of blessing from God was intimately bound to their calling to embody the living God to other nations. They made movement toward this missional calling, yet they disobeyed and allowed foreign gods into the land, overlooked the poor, and mistreated the foreigner. The prophetic voices that emerge from the Scriptures held the calling of Israel to the mirror of how they treated the oppressed and marginalized. Through the prophets, God's heart for the poor was made known, and we believe that God cares deeply for the marginalized and oppressed among us today.

In Israel's disobedience, they became indifferent and in turn irrelevant to the purposes to which God had called them. For a time, they were sent into exile; yet a hopeful remnant was always looking ahead with longing and hope to a renewed reign of God, where peace and justice would prevail.

We believe these longings found their fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, mysteriously God having become flesh. Jesus came to preach good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted and set captives free, proclaiming a new arrival of the kingdom of God, bringing about a new exodus, and restoring our fractured world. He and his message were rejected by many as he confronted the oppressive nature of the religious elite and

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the empire of Rome. Yet his path of suffering, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection has brought hope to all creation. Jesus is our only hope for bringing peace and reconciliation between God and humans. Through Jesus we have been forgiven and brought into right relationship with God. God is now reconciling us to each other, ourselves, and creation. The Spirit of God affirms as children of God all those who trust Jesus. The Spirit empowers us with gifts, convicts, guides, comforts, counsels, and leads us into truth through a communal life of worship and a missional expression of our faith. The church is rooted and grounded in Christ, practicing spiritual disciplines and celebrating baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The church is a global and local expression of living out the way of Jesus through love, peace, sacrifice, and healing as we embody the resurrected Christ, who lives in and through us, to a broken and hurting world.

We believe the day is coming when Jesus will return to judge the world, bringing an end to injustice and restoring all things to God’s original intent. God will reclaim this world and rule forever. The earth’s groaning will cease and God will dwell with us here in a newly restored creation. On that day we will beat our swords into tools for cultivating the earth, the wolf will lie down with the lamb, there will be no more death, and God will wipe away all our tears. Our relationships with God, others, ourselves, and creation will be whole. All will flourish as God intends. This is what we long for. This is what we hope for. And we are giving our lives to living out that future reality now.