

# BELIEFS FOR TEACHERS

Here at Living Stones we have a statement of beliefs that all church attendees must agree with if they want to come on mission with the church and become covenant members. That statement, called “beliefs for members”, is made up of non negotiable, traditionally orthodox, key doctrines of the Christian faith. To become a teacher or elder at Living Stones there are other doctrines that a person must agree to teach that are of lesser importance than the doctrines in the “beliefs for members” statement, but that are still very important and are official teaching positions of Living Stones church. This statement will include the “beliefs for members” statement, and then be followed by a section where the additions can be found for required beliefs of teachers and elders.

## **Section 1**

### Beliefs for Members

#### **The Gospel**

We believe there is one God in the universe who has created all things for the purpose of his glory, but the apex of his creation, humankind, sinned by rebelling against God. Because all humans sin against God, he sent his son Jesus to live the sinless life that we could not live. Jesus died the death we deserve in our place so that he could atone for our sin and that Jesus rose from the dead to prove his victory over death. Those who trust in the person and work of Jesus receive the Holy Spirit of God who seals our redemption and eventually redeems all things as we look forward to the full establishment of the Kingdom of God.

#### **The Scriptures**

We believe that the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is fully inspired by God. The Scriptures are authoritative and sufficient to speak into the life of all believers in matters of faith and conduct. As the Bible is God-breathed it is without flaw or error. God used many human authors in their own style and vocabulary to bring the Bible to fruition, so it is accurate to say that the Scriptures are fully authored by both God and people. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21, Matthew 5:18, John 16:12-13)

#### **God the Trinity**

We believe that the universe was created by, is ruled by, and is held together by one God and that he is the only God that there is. We believe that this one God is triune; meaning that he eternally exists as three distinct persons, but that he is not three separate gods. The three persons of God are God the Father, God the Son who is Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit. While they perform distinct roles in creation, providence, redemption, and relationship, their roles are

harmonious. The three persons of the Trinity are co-eternal in being, power, glory, nature, attributes, and perfections, and are equally worthy of worship, confidence, and obedience. God the Trinity is spirit and is a personal God. (Genesis 1:1, Matthew 28:18-19, Mark 12:29, John 1:14, Acts 5:3-4, 2 Corinthians 13:14, John 4:24, Deuteronomy 6:4)

### **God the Father**

We believe in God the Father, a person of the Triune God. We believe that he is an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. We believe that the Father ordains the events of history, that he foreknows all that shall come to pass, that he concerns himself mercifully in the affairs of humankind, that he is the hearer and answerer of prayers, and that he is the one who sends his son Jesus to save humankind from sin and death through his own death on the cross. We believe that the Father is not only father to Jesus, but that he is The Heavenly Father to all of his children on earth who put their faith in Jesus for salvation. (Isaiah 53:10, Matthew 23:9, John 3:16, Matthew 6:9, Ephesians 1:3-6, Isaiah 41:21-29)

### **God the Son who is Jesus**

We believe that Jesus, the unique and eternal son of God the Father, came to earth as a man without ceasing to be God. We believe that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a woman named Mary who became his earthly mother, and that she gave birth to Jesus as a virgin. We agree with Jesus' teachings and believe he lived a sinless life on earth, and that he performed miracles. We believe that when Jesus came to earth he was fully God while being fully man. We believe that Jesus received the wrath of God that was directed toward the sin of humans, and that Jesus died the death that humans deserve as a substitute in our place to atone for human rebellion against God. We believe that Jesus' death on a cross was a work that accomplishes redemption for all who receive his death as their substitute, and that Jesus' work is all that can make a person right with God. We believe that Jesus rose from the dead in a literal, bodily resurrection, that he ascended into heaven where he is exalted at the right hand of God, and that he now acts as an intercessor, high priest, and advocate for all who believe and trust in him. We believe that Jesus will return one day to earth to judge the living and the dead. (John 1:1 & 14, Philippians 2:5-11, Matthew 1:18-23, Colossians 2:9, Hebrews 4:14-16, Luke 24:36-43, 1 John 2:1-2, Romans 3:23-25, 1 Peter 2:24, 1 Timothy 2:5, 1 Peter 4:5)

### **God the Holy Spirit**

We believe that The Holy Spirit is a person, the third person of the Triune God, and that he came forth to humanity from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. We believe that he is the supernatural agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, and indwelling and sealing them unto the day of redemption. We believe that he is the divine teacher and helper who guides believers into truth and that it is the responsibility and privilege of all Christians to seek the filling of the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Holy Spirit empowers Christians with supernatural gifts, or talents, to perform ministry to

the church and to the world. (John 16:8-11, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 & 27-31, Romans 12:3-8, Romans 8:9, 2 Corinthians 3:5-6, Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:22-26)

### **Man in God's image**

We believe that humankind, both male and female; have been directly created by God in his image and in his likeness. Although humans are not gods and fall short of God's glory, God made humans to be like him. Adam, the first human, rebelled against God and brought sin into the world, passing that sin onto all humans and tarnishing God's image in humankind. All humans save Jesus inherit a sinful nature, are born rebellious against God in both nature and practice, and are alienated from having a true relationship with God. Humans are completely unable to save themselves from their sin and lost condition, and are unable to make themselves right with God through any action or desire, because even one sin equals spiritual and physical death. Humans' inability to save themselves places them under the wrath, condemnation, and righteous judgment of God, meaning that a savior is needed to save humans from themselves. Through God's grace Jesus is sent by God as a savior of the souls of humans, and through a process called sanctification the Holy Spirit renews humans who believe upon Jesus to renew them unto the image and likeness of God. (Genesis 1:26-28 & 2:7 & 2:18-24 & 3:1-24, Romans 1:18, Ephesians 2:1-3, Romans 3:23 & 5:12 & 19, John 5:24)

### **Salvation**

We believe that all humans are sinful and rebellious against God and are in need of salvation from that sin to be made right with God. Without salvation, no human can enter heaven or be a part of God's family. We believe that salvation is a free gift given to humans by God and that it is a gift that is only offered and acquired by God's grace. Salvation is neither merited nor secured in part or in whole by any work or virtue of humans. Salvation is received by humans through them placing their faith in the person and work of Jesus as their Lord and substitute. We believe that upon receiving the gift of salvation that a person is given a new nature that enables them to live out their holy calling and relationship with God, as well as a new eternal life, which is the life of Jesus, which is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit of God indwelling and residing in the believer. Upon receiving the life of Jesus, the believer is made righteous by his righteousness, receives sonship in the family of God, receives deliverance from condemnation, and receives every spiritual resource needed for life and godliness. (1 John 5:11-13, John 1:12, Romans 3:22-24 & 6:23 & 8:1, Galatians 3:26, John 5:24, Ephesians 1:7 & 2:8-10, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 1:18-19)

### **The Church**

We believe in the universal church, whose membership is made up of all regenerated persons on earth past, present, and future, and that those persons make up a living spiritual body of which Jesus Christ is the head. We believe that the universal church is made up of many local

expressions, often called “local churches”, which consist of believers in Jesus from a common region who are joined together by faith in Christ, worship of God, fellowship with God and with one another, and the work of the mission that God has given to the church, which includes delivering the truth about Jesus to a broken world. We believe that all Christians have a responsibility to submit and belong to a local church, and that each believer must place themselves under the authority and leadership of that local church, including the local church’s responsibility to discipline of unrepentant members. We believe in the autonomy of the local church, free from control from any except God himself. We believe that the local church has a responsibility to properly observe the God given ordinances of water baptism and communion. (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:41-47, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 1 Peter 2:4-5, Hebrews 10:24-25 & 13:17)

### **Satan**

We believe that there exists a spiritual being that is Satan, or the devil, which was once a holy being who enjoyed heavenly honors. Through pride and ambition Satan desired to be as God is, so he rebelled against God and drew many angels into his rebellion. Satan is now the unholy ruler of this world, he is humankind’s greatest tempter, he is the enemy of God and of God’s children, he is the author of false religions, and the author of the powers of darkness and evil. We believe that Satan is destined for a final defeat at the hands of Jesus Christ, as well as judgment and eternal punishment in hell. (Ezekiel 28:11-19, Isaiah 14:13-14, 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 20:10 & 12:10, Ephesians 2:1-3)

### **The last things and the eternal state**

We believe that Jesus Christ will physically return to earth one day to eradicate evil and judge the living and the dead. In his judgment Jesus will complete the salvation of God’s children, granting them eternal peace from sin and suffering, and he will deliver eternal suffering in hell to the wicked. We believe that all Christians will be resurrected in bodily form and enter into what is called the glorified state. Any Christian who dies before this event is temporarily separated from the body and immediately enters into the presence of God in heaven, awaiting this bodily resurrection. (Matthew 16:27, John 14:3, Acts 1:11, Philippians 3:20-21, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Titus 2:13, 1 Corinthians 4:5 & 15, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12, Revelation 20:4-6 & 11-15, Luke 16:19-26)

## **Section 2**

Beliefs for Teachers

### **Believer Baptism**

We believe that all Christians should be water baptized as was commanded by Jesus. Jesus himself was baptized. We believe that baptism is most biblically carried out when a person is

fully submerged into water and pulled back out, and that this submersion is symbolic for two things. First, it is symbolic of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Secondly, it is an outward expression of the inward reality that a person has been “born again”, and that they have put off their old self. Our old self has died with Christ and we have been raised to newness of life. Because of this we believe that baptism is reserved for believers only. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Mark 1:5-10, Romans 6:3-4, Colossians 2:12, Acts 2:41, Acts 8:12)

### **Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

We believe that all Christians are indwelled with the Holy Spirit of God at the moment that they cross the line of faith and enter into a relationship with Jesus. The Scripture refers to this indwelling as a baptism, saying that Jesus himself baptizes all Christians with the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Holy Spirit then indwells believers permanently, but that he fills them in a special way temporarily when Christians are at most in tuned with the will of God and are the most drawn to God in their relationship with him. This temporary filling also happens when Christians are faithfully and obediently performing their God given spiritual gifts. Our belief is contrasted with one Christian view that teaches that a person is baptized “in” the Holy Spirit at conversion, but then can be later baptized “by” the Holy Spirit in a separate event that they call a “second blessing baptism”. This second blessing is not taught in the New Testament. (Matthew 3:11, Acts 1:5, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 5:18, Acts 4:8)

### **Men’s and women’s roles in ministry and the home**

Rather than a hierarchical view of men’s and women’s roles where men dominate and women are subservient, or an egalitarian view where men and women are completely equal and also have equal roles in the home and in the church, we believe that the Scripture teaches what is called a “complementarian view”. This view asserts that men and women are completely equal in the home and in the church in their value and worth, but that men and women are made by God to be different, and that because of this difference they are made to serve in different roles. We believe that in the church men and women can both serve in various leadership roles, including the office of deacon, but that the office of elder/pastor is reserved for men only. We believe that the gifts of leadership and teaching are given by the Holy Spirit to both men and women, but that God calls the men to lead and teach adults in co-ed environments. Women and men are both called to lead and teach women, as well as children in order to raise them up in the Lord. Despite some differences in role, men and women are both called by God to be active in serving the Kingdom of God in a powerful way. When men and women serve side by side, their differences complement each other.

We also believe in the complementarian view of roles in the home. Husbands and wives are equal in their value and worth to God and to their families, but their roles are different. The husband is called by God to be the head of the family, and the wife is called to be his helper. In many ways the wife is the nurturer of the family and the one who often holds it together, and the Holy Spirit reveals the will of God for the family to the husband as he leads. Although these

roles are different, they are complementary and of equal importance. (1 Timothy 2:12-14, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Ephesians 5:22-33, Genesis 3:16, 1 Corinthians 11:2-16)

### **Unconditional Election**

Humankind bears responsibility for their own sins that they were born into, and that they have chosen to commit, and those sins have earned eternal punishment for all people. Although all people have chosen to sin against God, we know that some come to repentance and salvation from sin. We affirm that humans have a responsibility to exercise faith, but believe that those who enter into a saving relationship with Jesus do so not according to their own will or exertion, but rather that it is ultimately the will and choice of God to decide who will enter into a relationship with his son Jesus. We believe that those who are predestined unto life were chosen unto salvation before the foundation of the world was laid, according to God's eternal and immutable purpose, and to the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will. He has chosen out of his mere free grace and love, without any cause or coercion outside of himself, or any condition in man moving him towards his act of election. In our will, humans have chosen sin, in God's will and according to his grace he has chosen some for redemption. (Romans 8:29-30, Romans 9:1-29, 2 Timothy 1:9, John 15:16, John 6:44, Ephesians 1:3-14, Acts 13:48, John 5:21)

### **Effectual Call**

We believe that all people are irresistibly drawn to one of two masters, either Satan or God. All people who do not have a saving relationship are drawn in by the power of Satan and of sin. When a person is saved and regenerated by God they are then irresistibly drawn in by his grace. The reason that a saved person finds the love and grace of God so irresistible is because a saved person has been washed clean of his/her old nature, given a new nature that is born of God, and this new nature born of God then can't help but respond to God positively and be drawn in by him. Our belief is contrasted with prevenient grace, which is a belief that God's grace enables us to come to him and leave sin behind, but that God's grace does not guarantee that we will. (Ephesians 2:2, 4-5, 2 Timothy 2:26, John 5:21, John 6:37)

### **Assurance of salvation**

We believe that because salvation is secured and granted by an unchanging and all powerful God and because salvation is not based on the will of humankind, that salvation cannot be lost or removed from us. Since no condition in humans determines whether or not they are chosen, but it is by the work of Jesus and by the grace of God that we are saved, then no work of humans can cause them to be unsaved. We believe that a person once saved is sealed with the presence of the Holy Spirit, and that his presence guarantees that we will spend eternity with God. We believe that once God begins to sanctify us that he will never let us go, but rather he will complete our sanctification when we enter the eternal presence of God. We believe that a saved person will persevere in the obedience of faith notwithstanding any seasons of wandering. We believe that once saved, there is no more chance of condemnation because of

the work of Jesus in securing our salvation. (Philippians 1:6, Philippians 3:20-21, John 17:2, John 6:39, John 10:28, 1 Peter 1:4-5, 2 Timothy 1:12, Ephesians 1:11-14, 2 Timothy 4:18, Jude 1, 24-25, Romans 8:1, Hebrews 12:5-11)