

LIVING STONES CHURCHES



DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

What we believe and how we live are inseparable.

Our doctrinal statement acts as the unifying beliefs that anyone who wants to join the mission of Living Stones as covenant members must hold in alignment. This statement, called *Doctrine for Members* (Section 1) is made up of non-negotiable, traditionally orthodox, key doctrines of the Christian faith.

To become a teacher or pastor at Living Stones there are other beliefs that a person believe in addition to the essential doctrines. These beliefs build off our doctrine and act as the theological compass for our church.

SECTION 1:

DOCTRINE FOR MEMBERS

THE TRIUNE GOD

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. (Isaiah 45:5; John 1:18; Colossians 2:9; John 5:18; Acts 5:3-4; John 16:13-15) This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. (Psalm 18:30) He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. (Hebrews 11:3) Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace. (Isaiah 46:9-10; Hebrews 1:3; Titus 2:11-14; Revelation 7:10)

THE REVELATION OF GOD

God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. (Romans 1:19-20; John 1:1; John 14:9) Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the

Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. (Genesis 1:3, 12:1; Matthew 3:17; 2 Peter 1:20-21, 3:15-16; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Acts 1:16; Hebrews 3:7; Luke 1:1-4; James 1:21). These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. (Psalm 19:7, 119:160; John 17:17; 2 Peter 1:19; Luke 16:31; John 20:21; James 1:22; Proverbs 30:5-6). We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. (Romans 11:33; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14). The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. (1 Corinthians 10:11; Luke 8:21; Hebrews 10:23) As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel. (Revelation 1:3; 1 Peter 1:8; John 17:6)

THE CREATION OF HUMAN BEINGS

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. (Genesis 1:26-31) Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. (Genesis 2:21-24; Romans 1:26-28; Matthew 19:3-9) In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband

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exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-33) In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The Pastor/Elder role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments. (1 Timothy 2:12-14)

THE “FALL”

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan’s temptation. (Genesis 1:27, Genesis 3) As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God’s own gracious intervention. (Romans 3:23, 6:23) The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself. (Romans 5:1-11; 1 John 2:2, Revelation 20:11)

THE PLAN OF GOD

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. (Romans 8:28-29; Ephesians 1:11-12; Revelation 5:9-10) We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace. (Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 3:21-26; Hebrews 10:10-14; Revelation 7:9-12) In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer. (Mark 1:14-15; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 13:7-10)

THE GOSPEL

We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God’s very wisdom. (John 3:16) Utter folly to the

world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is *Christological*, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is “Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised”). (1 Corinthians 1:20, 2:14; Romans 1:16, 3:23-26, 4:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:2-3) This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved). (Acts 2:22-25; Isaiah 53; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 5:10; 1 Corinthians 15:12-18, 15:4-8; Acts 1:21-22; 2 Thessalonians 2:13)

THE REDEMPTION OF CHRIST

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. (John 4:31-34; Hebrews 1:8, 13:8; John 1:14; Titus 2:13; 1 John 5:20; Hebrews 2:17, 4:15) The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. (2 Samuel 7:13; Isaiah 7:14, 11:1, 53:5; Luke 1:27-35) He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. (1 Peter 2:22; John 9:1-34; Matthew 8:23-27; Matthew 27:11-58; John 20:25-27; Luke 24:39-43; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Acts 1:2-3; Ephesians 4:10) As the Mediator King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God’s sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. (1 Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 1:20, 2:6; Jude 1:4; Hebrews 3:1; 1 John 2:1) We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God:

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on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. (2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 2:14; 1 John 2:2; Colossians 2:13-14; Romans 1:16, 3:22, 6:8) By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. (1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14; Matthew 25:46; John 14:3). We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12). Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. (Job 5:11; Ezekiel 21:26; Galatians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 1:30)

THE JUSTIFICATION OF SINNERS

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. (Philippians 2:8; Colossians 2:13-14). By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. (2 Corinthians 5:21). By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. (Romans 5:21; Ephesians 2:8). Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. (Isaiah 53:6,10; John 10:18; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 5:1-2). We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification. (Titus 3:5-8; Ephesians 2:8-9)

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. (Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 3:8). Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord

Jesus Christ, and, as the "other" Paraclete, is present with and in believers. (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:14, 14:16-17). He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, baptizing them into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. (John 16:18, 3:8; Acts 16:14; 1 John 5:1; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 3:23-25). By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. (Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:2; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 12:7). The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service. (Ephesians 1:14; Romans 8:12; John 16:13; John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 12:11; John 6:63; Acts 1:8).

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. (Colossians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 3:18). Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. (Ephesians 2:8-10). Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers shouldn't withdraw into seclusion from the world, or become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. (Matthew 5:13-16; John 17:16-18; Jeremiah 29:7; Revelation 21:24-27). Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. (John 18:36; Matthew 22:39; Romans 12:16-18; Galatians 6:10). The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. (Matthew 4:17; Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 8:22-23; Revelation 21:1-4). The kingdom of God is an invasive power that

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plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 26:18). It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God. (1 Peter 2:9-12)

GOD'S NEW PEOPLE

We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in heaven. (Hebrews 12:22; Ephesians 26). This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each "local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. (Ephesians 1:22, 5:23; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Timothy 3:14-16). The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:3-5; Psalm 17:8; Isaiah 49:6). The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Matthew 18; Galatians 6:1-5; Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 12:31; Galatians 6:10). Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. (Hebrews 10:15). Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. (Ephesians 2:14; Romans 5:1). His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:27-29). The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

BAPTISM & THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself and reserved for believers. (Acts 2:38, 4:12, 8:12; Matthew 3:13-15, 28:19; 1

Corinthians 11:23-32). The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. (Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25). Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things. (1 Corinthians 11:26; John 6:53-57; Romans 6:1-10; Colossians 2:12).

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 1:7; James 5:7-9; Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Timothy 4:1). We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. (Revelation 20:12; Romans 2:5-7, 14:10, 12; 7:17; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:30, 46; Revelation 14:9-11; Revelation 22:3; 2 Peter 3:11-13). On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. (Hebrews 2:10; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:6-9). God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace. (Jude 1:24; Revelation 21:3-4, 23, 22:4).

PART 2:

ADDITIONAL BELIEFS FOR TEACHERS

BELIEVER BAPTISM

We believe that all Christians should be water baptized as commanded by Jesus. 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 symbolizes the death and resurrection of Jesus and is an outward expression of the inward reality that a person has been "born again," and that they have

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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 indwelt 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)

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 or 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 not withstanding 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)

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ACTS 29 DISTINCTIVES

Along with each of the points of doctrine above, Living Stones Church is a member of the Acts 29 Network, a family of church-planting churches that stands in the tradition of historic evangelical confessionalism. As a member our convictions align on the following five distinctive theological foundations:

1. We are passionate about gospel centrality.
2. We enthusiastically embrace the sovereignty of God's grace in saving sinners.
3. We recognize and rest upon the necessity of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit for all of life
4. We are deeply committed to the fundamental spiritual and moral equality of male and female and to men as responsible servant-leaders in the home and church.
5. We embrace a missionary understanding of the local church and its role as the primary means by which God chooses to establish his kingdom on earth.

For more info about Acts 29 visit **Acts29Network.org**