

**STATEMENT OF FAITH: Stephen J. Dawe**  
**Examining Council for Ordination**  
**Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada**

**1) Account of conversion**

My parents were Anglican and very active in our local congregation, though theologically not a great deal was taught about the need to repent of your sin and turn in faith to Jesus Christ for salvation. In retrospect, my inability to see that, when it was so clearly and often said in the Book of Common Prayer is a testament to the blindness that we can have when in our own sin. My conversion to faith in Christ came as a teenager, when I found myself in a difficult time in life. I found myself reading the Gospel according to John in the Gideon's Bible I had been given in school several years earlier. Through God's grace (and the fact John crafted the Gospel to have this effect) I came to understand the message of the Gospel<sup>1</sup>, having seen my own sinfulness, my need for a saviour, and God's provision of that saviour in Jesus Christ. I placed my trust (faith) in Jesus Christ for salvation and as my only righteousness before a holy God<sup>2</sup>.

**2) Account of call to ministry**

Roughly co-extensive with my effective call to salvation, God has also given me a profound desire to preach and teach. This desire has been attended by the necessary giftings, often and repeatedly shown through whatever church I have been part of, and has been seen by those with whom I have ministered. If I lack the opportunity to preach and teach, I will invariably seek out those opportunities, either through small group ministry, actual preaching in a church, or in direct evangelism. Generally my skills have been most developed in the fields of apologetics, group discipleship, and preaching.

Though there have been times where I was not actively pursuing ordained pastoral ministry, it has always been a focus. For a period, I was involved in teaching at a small university in South Korea, which allowed for short term missions throughout the breaks between semesters. During one of these breaks, I did a short stint in Ulaan Bataar, Mongolia, where I did a verse by verse exposition of the Johannine epistles. This reaffirmed my desire to do this kind of Biblical teaching generally, and so after prayer with my pastor in the Korean Church, and my discipleship training group, I decided to return to Canada to seek pastoral ministry. In short, I have always been called to the ministry, and have gravitated towards it, been gifted for it, and feel some trepidation when I do not engage in ministry. I echo Paul's feelings recorded in 1 Corinthians, "woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel"<sup>3</sup>

**3) Concept of ministry**

Ministry is the role of every believer in Jesus Christ, and is to be done in the power God provides and practically worked through local congregations of believers (churches).

The ordained pastoral ministry of pastor/elders, as one type of ministry, is a role of servant support for the local congregation<sup>4</sup>. Pastor/Elders are called to lead the Church through an attitude of servanthood for the congregation, with an eye to preparing the members of the congregation for the work of ministry<sup>5</sup> in the world. Pastor/elders fulfil particular roles in the application of discernment to doctrine, teaching and the administration of Church discipline for

---

<sup>1</sup> John 20:30-31

<sup>2</sup> John 3:16

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:16

<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter 5:1-11

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 4:11-14

the local congregation<sup>6</sup> through the preaching of the word of God<sup>7</sup> and prayer for ailing believers<sup>8</sup> so that the members of the congregation are built up in holiness, community, and righteousness, that they might live to the glory of God in their daily lives.

## **Doctrine**

### **4) God**

There is one living and true God. God eternally and necessarily exists. God has been accurately revealed in scripture and history to be three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, same in essence, co-equal in power and glory, remaining different in person and role while in full agreement. It is fitting to worship God in all three persons. God is Spirit, perfectly loving and perfectly holy

God is the only fitting ultimate object of human affection<sup>9</sup> worship, and glorification. Human affections to one another spring from an overflow of the love God has for us and we have for Him. Where any affection supplants God, we are guilty of the primary sin of idolatry, and will find ourselves unable to love others rightly, as what does not come from faith is sin. God is three persons, each person is fully God, and There is one God. This is revealed throughout scripture, though there are no verses that directly speak of the trinity, we see the trinity operating throughout<sup>10</sup>

### **5) God the Father.**

God the father exists eternally, and was the primary instigator of creation<sup>11</sup> and salvation<sup>12</sup>. God the father remained in heaven throughout the Son's incarnation<sup>13</sup>, commanding and affirming the ministry of the Son<sup>14</sup>.

### **6) God the Son (Jesus Christ)**

Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Man in one Person. Prior to His incarnation He eternally existed with the Father<sup>15</sup> and was working in creation<sup>16</sup>. Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit<sup>17</sup>, born of the Virgin Mary. Though tempted by Satan<sup>18</sup>, he lived a sinless life on this earth<sup>19</sup>. He willingly gave his life<sup>20</sup> and shed His blood on the cross as an offering for sin<sup>21</sup> so that all who believe in Him are declared righteous<sup>22</sup>. He arose bodily from the grave<sup>23</sup> and

---

<sup>6</sup> 1 Timothy 3:1-5

<sup>7</sup> II Timothy 4:1-5

<sup>8</sup> James 5:14

<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12, Joel 2:13, Luke 10:27

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 1:26-27, 18:1-21, Matthew 3:13-17

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 1:1, (John 1:1-3)

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 53:1-10, Matthew 26:42

<sup>13</sup> John 14:1-17

<sup>14</sup> John 12:28

<sup>15</sup> John 8:58

<sup>16</sup> John 1:1-3

<sup>17</sup> Luke 1:35, Matthew 1:20

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 4:1-11

<sup>19</sup> Hebrews 4:15

<sup>20</sup> John 10:15-17, Matthew 26:39

<sup>21</sup> Hebrews 9:11-12

<sup>22</sup> John 3:16, Romans 3:21-26

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20

ascended into heaven<sup>24</sup>, where He now intercedes for His own as their great High Priest<sup>25</sup>. Jesus is the Lord of the believer's life<sup>26</sup>, and the head of the Church<sup>27</sup>.

### **7) God the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgement<sup>28</sup>. The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus Christ<sup>29</sup>. At conversion He regenerates, indwells, seals and baptizes the believer into the body of Christ. As a believer is yielded to God, they are by the Holy Spirit conformed into the very image of Christ. As He wills, the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts and empowerment for service to God<sup>30</sup>. The Spirit allows the Christian to live a victorious life of faith in Jesus Christ, and in obedience to the word of God, repenting of the sin which easily ensnares us<sup>31</sup>.

When it comes to the gifts of the Spirit that are generally associated with the supernatural, I do not see any reason to believe that God cannot use them in the modern church. I also note that we are specifically commanded to pray for healing<sup>32</sup>. However, Satan and his servants can, and often do mimic the work of God to lead people astray<sup>33</sup>. For this reason any use of claimed gifts of the Holy Spirit must be done in an orderly way<sup>34</sup>, in submission to the God-called elders of the local congregation<sup>35</sup>. Biblical principles are to be used in discerning miraculous gifts, healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues, and other spiritual manifestations, which means that most spontaneous miraculous manifestations are inappropriate in the context of the Sunday worship.

### **8) The Scriptures**

I affirm the plenary verbal inspiration of the Old and New Testament Scriptures as originally given. While the texts were written by human authors, with human styles and word choices, it is to be considered scripture<sup>36</sup>. They are lacking errors in all that they affirm, and a person trusting them will not be led astray, and thus the Bible is also infallible<sup>37</sup>. The Scriptures are the 66 books comprising the Old (39 books) and New (27 books) Testaments.

Discerning what Scriptures affirm is to be done by prayerful reading of the text in its totality, and no section of scripture is to be taken to invalidate another section of scripture. The text of scripture is understandable for salvation to any who read it, and yet care is to be given to make sure that it is read accurately. History must be read historically, prophecy read as prophecy, and poetry must be read as poetry.

While we do not possess the original writings of the Biblical text, the text has been accurately preserved by the grace of God through human agents from the time of their writing. This is confirmed by the science of textual criticism when rightly understood. English translations are to be trusted insofar as they are accurate representations of the original

---

<sup>24</sup> Acts 1:6-11

<sup>25</sup> Hebrews 7:23-26

<sup>26</sup> John 14:1-17

<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 5:23

<sup>28</sup> John 16:5-11

<sup>29</sup> John 16:14-15

<sup>30</sup> Romans 12:1-8

<sup>31</sup> Romans 8:12-17

<sup>32</sup> James 5:14

<sup>33</sup> Mark 13:5-6, 22; I Corinthians 12:1-3; II Timothy 3:6-9

<sup>34</sup> I Corinthians 12:4-31

<sup>35</sup> Titus 1:5-9

<sup>36</sup> I Peter 1:20-21, II Peter 3:16

<sup>37</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16-17

languages, and while all translations differ, none that have been made with an eye to accuracy of expressing revelation are to be ignored or despised.

The scriptures are the final authority for the faith and practice of individual Christians and the Church. All members of the Church, *especially those in leadership*<sup>38</sup>, are to be held to what Scriptures affirm as central Gospel **doctrines**, and called to repent from what the Bible reveals as sin.

### **9) State and Fall of Humankind**

Humanity, equally male and female, was created good in the garden of Eden<sup>39</sup>. Men and women equally reflect the glory of God in complementary concert with one another. Neither femininity nor masculinity can be denied without denying some facet of God's good creation and reflection in humanity. Adam fell because of his disobedience and rebellion against God and thus incurred physical and spiritual death<sup>40</sup> which is alienation from God. As a consequence mankind is depraved in all his facets, having inherited a sinful nature through Adam and becoming sinners in thought, word and deed, both by what we choose to do and by what we fail to do<sup>41</sup>. In sinfulness, we most commonly suppress the truth of God<sup>42</sup>.

### **10) Salvation and Regeneration**

I believe that salvation is a work of God, available to whosoever will believe in Jesus Christ<sup>43</sup>. God is just in saving us by grace as He poured out on Christ the just results for our sin<sup>44</sup>, meaning that as someone places his trust in Christ (the biblical meaning of faith), God reckons them just<sup>45</sup>. This is justification. This trust, or saving faith, necessitates a life of repentance from dead works and sin<sup>46</sup>. While we are saved by faith alone that faith, if saving, will not remain alone<sup>47</sup>. This process after belief is called sanctification.

The power for salvation comes from God alone in His sovereign election of a people to salvation by His will and in His power, to the Glory of His name, and to the eternal joy of His people. A person is regenerate and justified through faith at the time of conversion or new birth, though will come to reflect God's holiness increasingly through their lives as God sanctifies them.

### **11) The Church**

I believe in the universal Church, unified by faith in Christ and the work of God, is comprised of all regenerate true believers<sup>48</sup>. Christ is her head<sup>49</sup>.

The visible Church is made up of local congregations of believers insofar as it is possible to discern the regeneration of another person<sup>50</sup>. The decisions of the local Church are to be based on the guidance of God discerned by that congregation.

---

<sup>38</sup> I Timothy 5:20

<sup>39</sup> Genesis 1:27-28, Genesis 2:4-35

<sup>40</sup> Genesis 3:6, I Corinthians 15:21-22

<sup>41</sup> Romans 5:12-14

<sup>42</sup> Romans 1:18; 2:1-2

<sup>43</sup> John 3:16; Romans 3:22-23

<sup>44</sup> Hebrews 2:17; Romans 5:9; I John 2:2; 4:10

<sup>45</sup> Romans 3:19-31

<sup>46</sup> James 2:14-26

<sup>47</sup> Ephesians 2:1-10

<sup>48</sup> I Corinthians 12; Matthew 16:16-18

<sup>49</sup> Ephesians 1:22-23

<sup>50</sup> I Corinthians 5:1-12

The Church in local contexts is to be governed primarily by Godly elders who seek the will of their true head, Christ, as they are transformed by the renewal of their minds<sup>51</sup>. Elders are to be held to a higher standard than the congregation<sup>52</sup>, and are to be disciplined publicly if such becomes necessary.

### **12) The Mission of the Church**

The Church exists to glorify God by making the Gospel of Jesus Christ known through her mutually edified, disciplined<sup>53</sup> members to all peoples everywhere. The Church is a display of the glory and mercy of God in saved sinners.

### **13) Evangelism**

Christians are called to be Christ's witnesses to the sinful world<sup>54</sup>. This means that Christians are called to tell others about the good news of Jesus Christ's saving work on the cross for the sin of humanity, and individual humans, and that salvation is to be found through faith in Jesus Christ alone<sup>55</sup>.

### **14) Last Things (eg. The Second Coming, Heaven, Hell, Judgement)**

The Lord Jesus Christ will return, literally and physically<sup>56</sup>. Before the return of Christ at the end of the age, people who die continue in conscious existence either in the presence of Christ or in torture in Hades<sup>57</sup>. I believe also in the universal resurrection of all people at Christ's return and just judgement of the world, either to eternal conscious torment for the unredeemed ungodly, or to eternal joy for those redeemed by Christ<sup>58</sup>.

### **15) Baptist Beliefs and Distinctives**

Many of the basics have been covered in more depth above, such as the *Lordship of Christ* (6), *The authority of the scriptures* (8), *Regenerate Church Membership*, and local *Church autonomy* (11). With Baptists historically, I also affirm that the individual believer is fully competent to stand before God under the righteous covering of Jesus Christ alone<sup>59</sup>, and thus are themselves a member of a royal priesthood as a definitional part of being a regenerate believer in Jesus Christ<sup>60</sup>.

Further, I affirm that Baptism is a required step of obedience by a believer, that by Biblical warrant, and the very word itself is to be done by full immersion. As it is a step of obedience for believers, and as the Church is to be made up of regenerate believers, it is inappropriate to Baptize infants, or anyone else who does not show evidence of belief in Jesus Christ<sup>61</sup>.

Finally, while all labours of the Christian are to be considered holy, as they are to be done as if being done for Jesus Christ<sup>62</sup>, the fact that Jesus himself noted a distinction between what the

---

<sup>51</sup> Romans 12:1-2

<sup>52</sup> I Timothy 3:1-7

<sup>53</sup> Matthew 18:17; I Thessalonians 5:11

<sup>54</sup> Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>55</sup> John 3:16-21

<sup>56</sup> Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 22:6-21

<sup>57</sup> Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; I Corinthians 5:1-10

<sup>58</sup> Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11-22:5

<sup>59</sup> James 4:12

<sup>60</sup> 1 Peter 2:9

<sup>61</sup> Romans 6:3-5; Mark 16:16; Matthew 3:16; John 3:23

<sup>62</sup> Ephesians 6:5-9

individual renders to God and opposed to Caesar<sup>63</sup>, it is wrong for the Church to dictate to the government what it *must* do, as governance is the government's job<sup>64</sup>. It is also wrong for the state to dictate the beliefs and actions of the local Church.

#### **16) Relationship to CBAC**

As was stated above, the highest level of authority within the Church is the local congregation. However, for purposes of mission and fellowship, it is fully appropriate for local Churches to affiliate closely and voluntarily with other churches of like belief. In our context, that affiliation is under the auspices of the CBAC.

As with any fellowship between believers or groups of believers, the bond of fellowship should only be questioned when and if the local church's obedience to Jesus Christ is jeopardized by those bonds of fellowship.<sup>65</sup>

#### **17) Inter-Denominationalism**

It is wholly appropriate for individual believers, and even local congregations to fellowship and even partner with believers of other doctrinal persuasions as long as those doctrinal distinctions do not rise to the level of embracing sin<sup>66</sup>, or of denying the Gospel of Jesus Christ<sup>67</sup>.

---

<sup>63</sup> Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:19-26

<sup>64</sup> Romans 13:1-7

<sup>65</sup> Acts 5:29; Ephesians 5:19-21

<sup>66</sup> I Corinthians 5:11

<sup>67</sup> II Peter 2