

Statement of Beliefs

Staunton Grace Covenant Church is an evangelical, charismatic, and reformed church in Staunton, Virginia. We are a contemporary expression of the historic Christian faith embracing the authority of the scriptures and of the historic confessions of faith including the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. Staunton Grace Covenant Church is a member of Grace Network, an association of evangelical, charismatic, and reformed churches in the mid-Atlantic region which relates to other church networks internationally. The following statements express our specific beliefs.

The Bible

We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the authoritative Word of God, divinely inspired and written in the words of men. The Bible is entirely trustworthy and is the final authority in everything it teaches. The Bible is the infallible rule of faith and practice, inerrant in all it professes. We believe it is the standard by which all subsequent revelation is to be evaluated (II Timothy 3:16, Luke 24:27, Romans 15:4, II Peter 1:19-21).

God

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is the author of truth, love and faith (Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-3, Deuteronomy 6:4, I Timothy 1:17, I Corinthians 8:6, Rom. 11:36).

Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Further, He rose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where he sits at the right hand of God the Father where He will remain until He comes again. He is our high priest and advocate and intercedes on our behalf forever (John 1:1-2,14; Heb.1:8; Heb. 1:2-3; Heb. 2:14; Matt. 1:20, 22-23; John 19:30; Heb. 10:10-18; Isaiah 53:4-5; Eph. 2:4-7; Heb. 1:3; I John 2:1-2; Rom. 8:34)

Holy Spirit

We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ; to convict men and women of sin, righteousness and judgment; to regenerate the sinner; and to indwell, guide, comfort, instruct, and empower

the believer to godly living and service (John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7-14; Rom. 8:9-11; Gal. 5:16, 22-25).

We believe the Holy Spirit imparts various gifts or abilities greater than our own for the purpose of accomplishing God's will and for the church's common good. These gifts include miraculous healings, words of knowledge, discernment, prophecy, leadership and service. Gifts function in the believing community under the supervision of pastors and elders (Acts 2:1-4; I Cor. 12:4-11, 27-31; Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:7-12).

We believe that all who commit their lives to Jesus Christ have an immediate indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We also believe there is a Baptism of the Holy Spirit, separate from the salvation experience. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is for the purpose of empowering the believer to be a witness to the resurrected Christ, and for service to God. It is available to each Christian who will ask and believe. This experience is clearly obvious to the individual and it comes with a manifestations of the Spirit's power and may include the ability to pray, worship and intercedes in a "heavenly language," as referred to in scriptures (Acts 1:8; Acts 8:14-17; Acts 19:1-6; Rom. 8:26-27; I Cor. 14:4-5).

Kingdom of God

In his earthly ministry Jesus preached the kingdom of God and proclaimed its coming. Those who believe in Christ's atoning death and resurrection are translated from the kingdom of darkness (Satan) into the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13-14) and begin to taste to the powers of the world to come (Heb. 6:5). While the kingdom of God is present on earth today, it will be fully manifest at the return of Christ (Matt. 25:31-46; Matt.19:28-30).

The god of this world, Satan, rules a kingdom of darkness, and is also supernaturally empowered to enslave people to sin and destruction in rebellion against the kingdom of God. Those under his dominion are blinded of the glorious gospel of the kingdom of Christ (II Cor. 4:3-4).

Sin and Salvation

We believe that men and women were created in the image of God but have fallen into sin and are therefore under the wrath of God. Only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit can salvation and a new spiritual life be

obtained because sin has alienated us from God, darkened our minds, crippled our wills and made us unable to serve Jesus Christ on our own (Gen. 1:26-27; Gen. 3:22-24; Eph. 2:1-4).

Men and women must renounce their own sinful disobedience and selfish pride and turn from their sinful ways and accept Jesus as the atonement for their sins and believe God raised Him from the dead. Jesus Christ is the truth and only way to God, therefore He is man's only Savior, Redeemer, Healer, Deliverer and Lord of all. He is God's appointed judge of the living and the dead (Eph 4:17-24; I John 1:8 – 2:3; Rom 10:6-10; John 14:6; Matt. 25:31-32).

We believe that this salvation of man is wholly a work of God's free grace and is not the result of human works, goodness or religious ceremony. God provides His righteousness to all who put their faith in Jesus Christ alone and who willingly publically confess their faith to others and receive water baptism as a testimony of their new life in Jesus Christ (Titus 3:3-7; Eph 2:8-9; Matt. 28:19-21; Luke 24:46-49; Mark 16:15-16) .

Covenant Life

We believe God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. He has made promises to those who are under the new covenant, by faith in Jesus Christ. His promise of forgiveness and eternal life are activated the moment one commits himself to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Jesus is the source of life and the all necessary provision for the believer both spiritual and physical (Heb. 8:8-12; Rom. 6:23; Phil. 4:19; II Cor. 9:8).

The covenant a believer has with God is to accept His lordship over their life, to accept the appointed pastoral care God provides for them and to love and build the Church for God's purpose. Therefore, the believer is also called to recognize he is in a covenant relationship with other believers in Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:8-12; 13:17; I Cor. 10:16-17; I Cor.12:27).

When a person submits to Jesus Christ as His Lord, he or she pledges their life to follow God's will for their life. The Holy Spirit abides in each believer which seals and guarantees this covenant within each person. Since Jesus is within the heart of each person in the covenant, there is a covenant loyalty between each believer. This means a willingness of each believer to love one another in practical ways, forgiving one another, serving one another, correcting one another in a loving attitude, through the Word of God, when

necessary. This also means being willing to lay down one's life for another believer, if necessary (Eph. 4:29-32; John 15:12-14; I John 4:7-12).

Church

We believe that the true Church is composed of all such persons who, through saving faith in Jesus Christ, have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are united together in a common belief in Jesus Christ and that He is the Head of His church. The Church's calling is to worship and serve God in the world, to proclaim and defend His truth, to exhibit His character, and to pursue the quest for righteousness and justice. Additionally, the church demonstrates the reality of His new order by daily practicing the principles of living that Jesus taught and modeled with His life (Eph. 1:20-23; Matt. 28:19-21; I Peter 2:4-5; Eph 4:25-29).

The church is to be organized with a male pastor or pastors called to preach the Word of God and to lead the congregation to a deeper commitment to live as Jesus did. Elders are men called to assist the pastor in leading the congregation and meet the qualifications for this position as described in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Specific staff may be hired to assist the pastor in areas of ministry such as music, young children, youth, administration, etc. (I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).

Members of the congregation are encouraged to be involved in ministry that provides the entire church with the benefit of their specific gifts, talents and abilities (I Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 4:11-16).

We believe in accountability within our church to ensure the members of the church are fulfilling the mission of the church and we believe in being associated with other like-minded churches to ensure together we are fulfilling God's mission for His believers in the world we live in. This is why our church is a member of the Grace Network of Churches.

We believe the work of the church should be supported by the tithes and offerings of its members in order to complete God's mission. We believe we are called to give 10% of our gross income to our local church and that offerings are funds given over and above the tithe. We also believe that a significant portion of our discretionary budget should be designated to missions (Gen. 14:18-20; Gen 28:20-22; Mal. 3:10-12; Matt. 23:23; Acts 11:27-30; Gal. 2:9-10; I Cor. 16:1-3; II Cor. 8:1-5).

Jesus Christ's Return

We believe in the future, visible coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring salvation and judgment to completion. His purpose will be to manifest His government and peace on this world. We believe His appearing will occasion the resurrection of the righteous who have died and are now with Him. This blessed hope of the Church has a vital bearing on our daily living by calling us believers to be watchful, holy and earnest in service. We also believe no man knows the exact time and date of His return and that we are to "be about our father's business" while He tarries (II Peter 3:8-10; John 5:25-29; Matt. 24:36; Rev. 21:1-8).

Final Judgment

We believe in a final judgment at the end of the age. We believe the believers in Christ and those who do not believe in Jesus shall stand before God and be judged. The believer's sins will not be remembered and their faith will be rewarded by having eternal life with God and Jesus Christ. The non-believer will be judged and will spend eternity in separation from God resulting in a condition of eternal torment (Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-14; Dan. 12:2).

Evangelism

We believe Jesus' statement in Matthew 28:18b-20, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you." We accept this commission and join with all others believing in His power to complete this commission, personally and corporately.

Civil Authority

We believe God is the author of all government and authority. He has ordained civil government for the establishment of order and peace in the nations. He has ordained government in His church to bring it to righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. We believe there should be mutual respect between civil and spiritual authority (Rom 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-17; Matt. 23: 1-3; Heb. 13:17).

We believe it is the task of civil authority to maintain order and freedom among those they govern. We believe it is the task of the Church to speak prophetically to the nations and to their governments, both by its proclamations and its life-style. The Church must faithfully proclaim Jesus as

Lord. Additionally, the Church is to pray for, honor, and work toward good civil government in order for the Gospel to be freely proclaimed (Matt. 5:13-16).