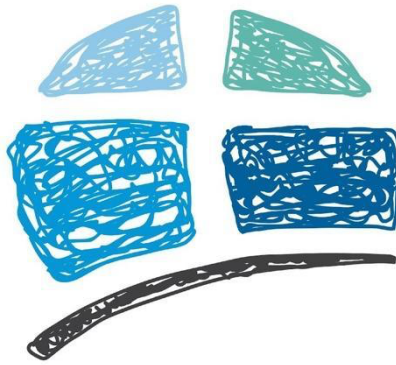




Clear River
COMMUNITY CHURCH

STATEMENT OF FAITH

January 25, 2026

Table of Contents

Summary	3
Approval.....	5
Section 1 – Foundational Beliefs (Dogma)	6
1.1 The Apostles Creed	6
1.2 The Nicene Creed	6
Section 2 – Local Church Doctrinal Distinctives	7
2.1 The Evangelical Statement of Faith.....	7
2.2 The Bible	8
2.3 Evangelical in Belief.....	10
2.4 Baptism.....	13
2.5 Holy Communion	15
2.6 Gifts of the Holy Spirit.....	18
2.7 Human Sexuality	20

Summary

This document encapsulates the foundational dogmatic beliefs and doctrinal distinctives of Clear River Community Church. Dogma, in its broadest sense, is an orthodox Christian belief that is orthodox and universal, i.e., embraced by “all believers, at all times, in all places.” These beliefs are settled, held definitively, and without the possibility of reform. Doctrinal distinctives, in contrast, are those beliefs Clear River embraces but which not all orthodox Christian churches may equally or identically embrace.

The **foundational beliefs (dogma)** which Clear River embraces consist of the historical creeds of the church:

- The **Apostles' Creed** is believed to have originated as a baptismal creed in the early Christian church. Its earliest form, known as the Old Roman Creed, dates back to the second century.
- The **Nicene Creed** was agreed upon at the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, convened by Emperor Constantine to address the growing divisions within Christianity, particularly the Arian controversy which argued that Jesus Christ was a created being and not co-eternal with God the Father. In 381, the First Council of Constantinople further amended the Nicene Creed, expanding it to include a more detailed description of the Holy Spirit, thus creating what is often referred to as the **Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed**. This version also addressed additional theological debates that had arisen since Nicaea.
 - Affirmation of Monotheism
 - The divinity of Jesus Christ, describing Him as "begotten, not made" and "of one substance with the Father," affirming His eternal nature and role in salvation.
 - Includes a detailed statement on the Holy Spirit, affirming His divinity and role in the life of the Church

Doctrinal Distinctives include the Evangelical Statement of Faith along with specific position papers on the following: the Bible, Evangelical Belief, Baptism, Holy Communion, Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and Human Sexuality. There are many other possible doctrinal distinctives where Clear River remains silent thus allowing for freedom of interpretation for the Clear River believer constrained by the orthodox beliefs codified in the creeds above.

Change History		
Version	Author	Summary of Changes
1.0	DJT	Initial Release

Approval

This Statement of Faith is made effective upon the final signature of all Leadership Team members. This version supersedes and negates all prior versions.

Effective Date: January 25, 2026

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Section 1 – Foundational Beliefs (Dogma)

1.1 The Apostles Creed

We believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He triumphed over hell.¹ The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from where He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church,² the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen

1.2 The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

¹ The historic creed reads “He descended to the dead” or “He descended into hell.” Our phrasing is meant to avoid confusion while exalting Christ’s victory

² The word “catholic” is used historically. Many people from secular backgrounds don’t understand the difference between the small “c” of catholic which refers to the universal church and the large “C” of Catholic that refers specifically to the Catholic church of Rome. We use the word Christian to honor the original intent and avoid confusion.

Section 2 – Local Church Doctrinal Distinctives

2.1 The Evangelical Statement of Faith

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the infallible, authoritative Word of God.

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

2.2 The Bible

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness..." (2 Tim 3:16)

We affirm that all words contained within the Bible are *given to us by God* (2 Tim 3:16) and so carry with them the *authority* of God Himself. No words in scripture were made up by man (2 Pt 1:21), but instead, God superintended the efforts of the human authors to give us the very words of God (1 Cor 2:13). Because God is perfect and cannot lie (Tit 1:2) or speak falsely (Num 23:19) and can only speak truthfully (Jn 17:17), we believe the scriptures contain what God affirms *without error* (*Ps 19:7; Prov 30:5*). Furthermore, we believe the scriptures also give humanity all that is *sufficient* to receive salvation through Jesus Christ (2 Tim 3:15) and to make every believer complete and equipped for every good work (2 Tim 3:17). Finally, we believe that the church, under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has come to recognize which books written by God's people are the very words of God (2 Pt 3:15-16) and these books have been passed down to us as the Bible (2 Thess 2:15).

Inspiration

It is impossible for humanity to know of God and, more significantly, to know God if He did not initiate His own self-disclosure—or revelation—to humanity. God is a communicative being and reveals Himself to humanity in several ways, to include the written revelation we refer to as the Bible. Because the Bible itself says that all scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16), all the words in the Bible are understood to be given to mankind under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that God mechanically dictated the words to its human authors, and neither does it mean that it was the human authors themselves who were merely inspired to write a tremendous work of literature. Rather, inspiration means that God superintended the author's writing of every word in the scriptures—while allowing for the freedom of expression in the author's own style and context—so that the written words are themselves the very words of God.

Authority

Because the Bible is inspired and given to us by God, and since God is the ultimate authority over all creation, the words of the Bible are themselves fully authoritative. In other words, the Bible carries with it the same authority as if God Himself were speaking to us directly.

Inerrant

Since God is the ultimate author of the words of scripture, and because God is always truthful and cannot lie, it therefore follows that the Bible is true in all that it affirms, whether it is speaking about the truth of God's character, His salvation program, history, or the sciences. The

doctrine of inerrancy³ maintains that every word of scripture, in its original autographs, when properly interpreted will be shown to be completely truthful and without any falsehood. Furthermore, while approximately one percent of all textual variants have been determined to impact the meaning of a text, not one of these questionable readings has compromised a single truth of scripture or article of faith.

Sufficiency

God has given us the scriptures so that we would have an enduring and objective record of His self-revelation, and so that we might use them to learn about His creative works, the nature of mankind, His plan of redemption, and His holy and unchanging character. The scriptures are profitable for us and give us everything we need to live the Christian life. Most importantly, the scriptures are sufficient for making us wise for salvation through Jesus Christ, and to be complete and equipped for every good work. This claim of sufficiency does not mean that truth cannot be found outside of the Bible, or that the Bible will answer every question we ever have in life. Rather, this doctrine simply says that the Scriptures provide everything that is necessary for the purpose that they were written. Said another way, if God had given us nothing more than the scriptures, this would be enough to bring us to God and to live in obedience to Him. God is infinitely gracious, however, and gives us much more than what is merely necessary.

Canon

The canon was ordained by God before His people ever recognized it as such and was given to us by God through His Holy Spirit. The sixty-six canonical books are those recognized by God's people—through the leading and illumination of the Holy Spirit—to be those sacred writings which measure up as the inspired words of God. To put it simply, the doctrine of canonicity holds that the community of faith came to eventually recognize these books as being the very words of God.

³ Norman L. Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Pub. House, 1980), 294. Paul Feinberg provides a very helpful definition of the term *inerrancy* in his essay, "The Meaning of Inerrancy." He states: "Inerrancy means that when all facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences." Feinberg goes on to explain and competently substantiate a response to eight common misunderstandings (not qualifications) with respect to his definition. Inerrancy, he argues, does not: 1) demand strict adherence to the rules of grammar; 2) exclude the use either of figures of speech or of given literary genre; 3) demand historical or semantic precision; 4) demand the technical language of modern science; 5) require verbal exactness in the citation of the Old Testament by the New; 6) demand that the Logia Jesu (the sayings of Jesus) contain the exact words of Jesus, only the exact voice; 7) guarantee the exhaustive comprehensiveness of any single account or of combined accounts where those are involved; and 8) demand the infallibility or inerrancy of the non-inspired sources used by biblical writers.

2.3 Evangelical in Belief

"Contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 1:3)

We confess to being *evangelical* in our beliefs. We affirm that to be *evangelical* is to stand in continuity with the historic Protestant faith and the ancient creeds, centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture. Our view is that evangelical belief is not defined by cultural or political movements or denominational labels, but by the embracing of the *Five Solas of the Reformation* as faithful summaries of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We proclaim Christ crucified and risen (Acts 2:23-24) in unity with the saints across the ages. We further confess our continuity with the ancient Church through the *creeds* and affirmations of the first four ecumenical councils which safeguard the truth of the Triune God and the person Jesus Christ. We embrace the doctrinal truths expressed in the Evangelical Statement of Faith. These foundations are essential to our confession and serve as guardrails for all doctrine and practice.

The Authority of Scripture — Sola Scriptura

We confess that the sixty-six books of the Bible serve as the sole, sufficient, and final authority for faith and practice (2 Tim 3:16–17; Isa 40:8). We affirm that all words contained within the Bible are given to us by God (2 Tim 3:16) and so carry with them the authority of God Himself. No words in scripture were made up by man (2 Pt 1:21), but instead, God superintended the efforts of the human authors to give us the very words of God (1 Cor 2:13). We affirm that the Word of God is clear, complete, and trustworthy, providing all instruction that is necessary for salvation and godly living. Because God is perfect and cannot lie (Tit 1:2) or speak falsely (Num 23:19) and can only speak truthfully (Jn 17:17), we believe the scriptures contain what God affirms without error (Ps 19:7; Prov 30:5). No tradition, council, or human opinion may bind the conscience apart from Scripture. Yet we affirm that the ecumenical creeds faithfully summarize biblical truth guarding against error and serving to unify the Church across time and place.

The One True and Triune God

We confess, in agreement with the Nicene Creed as first published at the Council of Nicaea and later revised at the Council of Constantinople,⁴ that the scriptures reveal the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one God (Dt 6:4) in three persons (Mt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14), and not separate manifestations or modes of the One true God. We affirm that all three persons of the Trinity completely and equally share in the divine nature, are equal in power and glory, and are equally worthy of all worship. While we believe there exists relational roles within the Godhead (Jn 6:38; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Lk 22:42; Jn 14:26), we hold that they relate one to the other in a selfless, other-glorying, infinitely loving relationship. We hold that neither the Father, nor the

⁴ The Council of Nicaea (325) condemned Arianism, which denied the full divinity of Christ by claiming that the Son was a created being and not co-eternal with the Father. The Council of Constantinople condemned the heresy of Apollinarianism which claimed Christ had a divine mind but not a human rational soul, undermining His full humanity. This council also affirmed the full divinity of Holy Spirit by condemning the falsehood of Macedonianism which treated Him as a created power.

Son, nor the Holy Spirit are created beings and that all three have pre-existed eternally with one another (Jn 1:1-3; Col 1:15–16; Gen 1:1-2). Sharing in the divine nature does not blur or diminish their individual distinctiveness or personhood. At the same time, this individuality is mysteriously held together by a mutual indwelling of one in the other (Jn 10:30; Jn 17:22-23). While each person in the Godhead holds individual intellect, self-identification, volition, emotion, and the ability to relate to others, they will always act in harmony and in unity (Jn 5:30).

The Person of Christ

We confess, in agreement with the Council of Ephesus,⁵ that Jesus Christ is one person, the eternal Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary (Lk 1:35), truly God (Jn 1:1) and truly man (Heb 4:15). He has always existed with the Father and the Spirit from eternity past (Jn 17:5). Jesus Christ—the second person of the Godhead—is neither created nor adopted, nor merely a human being. We confess, in agreement with the Chalcedonian Definition,⁶ Christ’s two natures are united in one person without confusion, blending, change, division, or separation (Jn 1:14; Phil 2:6-8).

The Holy Spirit

We believe that Jesus sent to His apostles and to the church another Advocate, the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity (Jn 14:16-17). The Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father and the Son, yet one with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is not simply a force of God nor simply the love that exists between the Father and the Son. We affirm the Holy Spirit’s divinity and His personhood and His equality in power and glory to the Father and Son. He is sent to us from the Father and the Son, so that the church would not be left as orphans. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God’s Word is revealed, the church is taught and led into all truth, the world is convicted of sin and rebellion, the sinner is spiritually reborn, spiritual gifts are sovereignly distributed to believers for the building up of the church, and the saint is conformed to the image of the Son for His glory, and to the glory of God the Father. (Jn 14:26; Jn 16:8; Jn 3:5-8; 2 Cor 3:18).

Salvation — Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus

We confess that all of mankind is guilty of unrighteousness (Rom 3:10-12) and is therefore deserving of the righteous wrath of God (Rom 1:18; Jn 3:36) and eternal separation from Him (2 Thess 1:9). All of mankind, therefore, needs a Savior. We believe that it is in Christ that we are delivered from the guilt and penalty of sin (Rom 6:23). We affirm that apart from Christ, all

⁵ The Council of Ephesus (431 AD) addressed the Nestorian heresy, which divided Christ’s divine and human natures into two persons, and affirmed Mary as Theotokos (“God-bearer”) and not merely Christotokos (“Christ-bearer”), safeguarding the truth that the one born of her was truly God incarnate. Salvation-by-works Pelagianism was also condemned, affirming divine grace as the means of salvation.

⁶ The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) confronted Eutychianism/Monophysitism, which heretically claimed that Christ’s divinity absorbed His humanity, thus negating the supreme benefit of His being our perfectly obedient sacrifice for the redemption of sinners.

humanity stands condemned (Jn 3:18), remains enslaved to sin (Jn 8:34), and is subject to death and eternal separation from God (Heb 9:27; Rev 20:11-15), the source of all life. In His mercy, God rescues us from darkness and transfers us into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col 1:13–14). We are saved from sin’s guilt, sin’s power, and sin’s consequence, and saved unto reconciliation with God who gives to us eternal life and adopts us as His children (Rom 8:15–17; Eph 2:4–5).

We confess that salvation is entirely of *God’s grace alone* (Eph 2:8–9), received *by faith alone* (Rom 3:28), and accomplished *by Christ alone* (Acts 4:12). Humanity, dead in sin (Eph 2:1-2), cannot earn or merit God’s favor. We affirm that grace is God’s free and sovereign initiative, rescuing sinners and bringing them into fellowship with Him through Christ Jesus. We affirm that God is the one who calls, regenerates, and enables faith (Jn 6:44; Tit 3:5).

We confess that justification is received *by faith alone*, apart from works of the law (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16). Faith is the instrument by which we receive Christ and His righteousness, not a work that earns salvation (Rom 4:2-5). At the same time, Scripture calls all people to repent and believe the gospel (Mt 4:17; Acts 17:30) and holds each person morally responsible before God for their response (Jn 3:18; Heb 11:6; Acts 13:38-40). We therefore confess both the sovereignty of God in salvation (Jn 6:44, 6:65) and the genuine responsibility of human beings to believe. We do not attempt to resolve this mystery by human systems but encourage our members to wrestle faithfully with the Scriptures on this fine point of doctrine. We affirm that justification rests not in the strength of our faith, but in the object of our faith—Jesus Christ, who is both the author and perfecter of faith (Heb 12:2).

We confess that salvation is accomplished *through Christ alone* (Acts 4:12; Jn 14:6). His perfect life, substitutionary death, and victorious resurrection are necessary and sufficient for our redemption. We deny that any human mediator, merit, or institution can add to His finished work. We further confess that the mystery of salvation rests upon Christ being both fully divine and fully human (Jn 1:14; Col 2:9). As true man, He was able to stand in our place, bearing our sins and fulfilling the law perfectly on our behalf (Rom 5:18–19; Heb 2:17). As true God, His sacrifice possesses infinite worth, satisfying the demands of a holy and righteous God (Heb 9:12; 1 Jn 2:2) for the sins of all of humanity (1 Pt 3:18). Were He only human, His obedience and death would be insufficient to redeem the world; were He only divine, He could not truly represent us in our humanity. In the union of His two natures, Christ alone is the sufficient Mediator who reconciles God and man (1 Tim 2:5). We affirm that Christ is the sole head of the Church (Col 1:18).

The Glory of God — Soli Deo Gloria

We confess that the glory of God is the ultimate purpose of all of creation and is the chief end of mankind (Isa 6:3; Ps 19:1; Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 10:31). We confess that all of salvation, from beginning to end, is for the glory of God alone. Human boasting is excluded, and worship, obedience, and mission flow from gratitude for God’s saving work.

2.4 Baptism

"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." (Mt 28:19)

We confess that baptism is a sacrament instituted by Christ, a sign and seal of God's covenant faithfulness to the believer (Rom 6:3–4; Gal 3:27). Baptism does not save in itself, for salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Eph 2:4–9). Water baptism, instituted by Christ (Mt 28:18–20) and faithfully practiced by the early church (Acts 2:38; Acts 18:8), while not to be equated or confused with salvation (Acts 16:30–31; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 1:17), is nonetheless intimately, and normatively, tied to it and is an essential practice of the faith (Acts 10:47). It serves as the outward sign of an inward reality, and the public declaration of union with Christ and His Church. Baptism is God's gracious and sanctifying gift to the saint that unites the spiritual with the physical.

Institution and Command

We confess that baptism is commanded of all who believe, trust, and hope in Christ Jesus and is therefore not optional but integral to Christian discipleship. Baptism marks the believer's entry into the visible Church and signifies one's covenant membership among the people of God (Acts 2:41). We deny that baptism is merely symbolic for the Spirit works through this sacrament to strengthen faith and confirm God's promises.

The Meaning Behind the Sign

We hold that baptism is the initial public proclamation of one's newfound faith. In baptism, the new believer confesses faith in the Triune God as our Lord Jesus commands us to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This language serves as a succinct summary of the faith to be confessed and the object of that confession.

We confess also that water baptism through immersion (Mark 1:9–10; Acts 8:38–39) is a powerful physical sign that *declares one's personal association with Christ's death and resurrection* (Rom. 6:3–4). The Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul's writings, explains to us that we have been buried and raised with Christ in baptism (Col 2:12). The symbolic rite, in its use of the water, powerfully declares to the sinner that he has been delivered from God's rightful wrath and judgement (1 Pt 3:20–21), that he has given new life by participating in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom 6:3–4), and that he has been cleansed of all sin (Acts 22:16).

We believe that baptism signifies a new believer's repentance from a life of sin (Acts 22:16) *and the starting point of a life of sanctification* (Rom 6:4). Peter cried out to the Jews, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). With this confession of faith comes the decision to turn away from a life of sin and rebellion (Eph. 2:1–3; Col 2:13–14; Heb. 6:1) to a life dedicated to God by the power of His Holy Spirit (Phil 2:13).

Finally, we affirm baptism as a rite of initiation into the covenant community (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27). Acts 2:41–42 says, “So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” That is, they were added to the church. The baptized believer, then, enjoys “a place among those who are sanctified by faith,” that is, among the church, the communion of saints (Acts 26:18). The local church affirms God’s forgiveness in Christ Jesus and brings the new saint under the physical and spiritual protection of the local church (Mt 16:18-19; Mt 18:15-18; 1 Cor 5:4-5; Acts 2:44-45).

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

We confess that Scripture speaks of a baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), distinct yet intimately tied to water baptism (Acts 10:47), which all believers receive at conversion (Acts 2:38). This Spirit baptism unites believers to Christ, indwells them with His presence, and empowers them for life and mission (Rom 8:9–11). We deny that Spirit baptism is a second blessing reserved for some, for there is only “one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, *one baptism*” (Eph 4-5). We affirm that water baptism and Spirit baptism are distinct (Acts 8:15-17) yet complementary and normatively conjoined (Acts 2:38), both testifying to God’s saving work in Christ.

Mode and Practice

We maintain that baptism is best administered by full immersion but may also be done with the pouring of water on the new believer’s forehead. In either case, the essential element is water applied in “*the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*” (Mt 28:19). We affirm that baptism is to be administered to those who profess faith in Christ. In preparation for receiving the sacrament, we will instruct the candidate in the essential and orthodox elements of doctrine as conveyed in the Apostle’s Creed. We will ask the new candidate to confess these truths prior to the baptism. To demonstrate covenant inclusion of children into the community of faith, and to declare the corporate responsibility of the local church in supporting the parents in teaching and nurturing these children in the faith, infants will be “dedicated” using the same pouring mode and practice of the baptismal rite (Acts 16:15, 33). We recognize diversity of practice among faithful churches, while affirming the unity of baptism in Christ.

2.5 Holy Communion

"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" (1 Cor 11:23–25)

We believe that Holy Communion, instituted by Christ Himself (Mt 26:26–28; Mk 14:22–24; Lk 22:19–20), is a sacrament of the promised New Covenant (Jer 31:31) and a supernatural means of grace. In this meal, believers truly partake of Christ by faith, receiving spiritual nourishment and strengthening through the presence of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 10:16). We deny that the Supper is a mere memorial, and we also deny the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation which teaches that the elements are changed in substance into the body and blood of Christ. Instead, we confess that the bread and cup remain ordinary elements but are set apart by God's Word and Spirit to convey extraordinary grace to the believer.

Instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ

We confess that our Lord Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper – the *eucharistia* or thanksgiving celebration – as a second unique means of sanctifying grace. Like baptism, our Lord has given us a physical sign that points to spiritual realities and truths. Holy Communion was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ on the night He was betrayed (1 Cor 11:23). He commanded His disciples to eat and drink in remembrance of Him (Lk 22:19); therefore, the Church continues in obedience to this command. We affirm the regular weekly celebration of the Supper in continuity with the early church (Acts 20:7) as they devoted themselves to “the breaking of bread” (Acts 2:42).

Real Presence

We confess that Christ is truly present in the Supper—not physically or locally, but spiritually and sacramentally. This does not mean the bread and wine are changed in substance (i.e., Roman Catholic transubstantiation), nor that Christ's body is locally contained in the elements (i.e., Lutheran consubstantiation). Rather, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we hold that believers commune with the risen Christ (Eph 2:6), who is seated at the right hand of the Father (Heb 10:12; Eph 1:20). In this way, the Supper is a real participation in Christ (1 Cor 10:16), though not a repetition of His once-for-all sacrifice (Heb 10:12). Based on the divine attribute of omnipresence, and mediated by the Holy Spirit, we teach that our Lord Jesus is in some way uniquely and spiritually present during communion. We profess that in Holy Communion our Lord communes and abides with the believer (Jn 6:56).

When we say we receive the “body and blood of Christ,” we are not speaking in crude material terms, nor reducing the Supper to mere symbolism. While Christ's body was physically broken

and His blood spilled at the cross, we agree that our Lord was speaking metaphorically to His disciples about eating His body and drinking His blood (Jn 6:48-63). This language functions as a sacramental synecdoche, a part standing for the whole of Christ's saving work and His promise to be spiritually present with us as we partake of the bread and the cup. This language is essential for biblical fidelity, sacramental realism, and union with Christ. "Body and blood" signify Christ's total self-offering in death and resurrection; receiving them is receiving Christ Himself with all of God's covenantal benefits. The sign points to the reality and the Spirit makes the sign efficacious so that we truly commune with Christ. Christ's words, "This is my body... This is my blood" (Matt. 26:26-28), grounds our confession and guards against reducing the Supper to a mere remembrance or private devotion.

Means of Grace

We affirm that Holy Communion is a means of God's grace, through which God strengthens our faith, deepens our abiding with Christ, and fosters unity among believers (1 Cor 10:17). The Supper is an instrument through which the Spirit applies the benefits of Christ's finished work to His people. We deny that the benefits of participating in the Supper are automatic or mechanical. Its benefits are received only by faith (Heb 11:6).

During the *eucharistia*, we hold that the Lord reaffirms the inaugurated New Covenant (Jer 31:31) promises with the saint, thereby reminding the believer of all the great promises of the gospel offered in baptism. We affirm that to receive His body and blood is to be united to Him in His death and resurrection (1 Cor. 10:16). Through the mystical working of the Holy Spirit in the faith-filled practice of the sacrament, the believer is reminded of the forgiveness of one's sins, is further sanctified by the renewal of one's mind (Rom 12:2), and continues to be transformed into the image of Christ as one beholds the glory of the Lord in the eucharistic celebration (2 Cor 3:18). Finally, because there is only one bread and one body (1 Cor 10:17), the rite reminds us that all the faithful are united in Christ, and that we are beholden to one another, to love and serve one another in true Christian fellowship.

Remembrance and Proclamation

We confess that the Supper is a memorial in the biblical sense: a Spirit-empowered act of remembrance that proclaims the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor 11:26). In eating and drinking, the Church remembers Christ's sacrifice, proclaims His gospel, and anticipates His return. This remembrance is not passive recollection, but active participation in the covenant promises of God.

We affirm the eucharistic celebration as a central, responsive element of our weekly worship service in continuity with the practice of the early church. As such, we maintain that the communion altar should be given a place of prominence in the sanctuary. The rite should be rich in thanksgiving, praise, solemnity, and community, and in no way performed in a perfunctory, trite, or legalistic manner. We hold that this remembrance meal must clearly exalt the person and work of our Savior.

Worthy Participation

We affirm that believers must examine themselves before partaking lest they bring judgment upon themselves (1 Cor 11:27-29). The Supper is for those who trust in Christ, repent of their sins, and seek to live in obedience to Him. As a church that takes seriously the nurturing of our children's faith, we welcome children of all ages to receive the elements together with their parents. We deny that unbelievers or the unrepentant should partake, for the Supper is a holy ordinance given to Christ's covenant people.

Believers should approach the Table with reverence and joy, discerning that Christ Himself is present to feed and strengthen them. The Supper is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet (Rev 19:9, Matt 26:29), a visible word of the gospel, and a seal of God's promises.

2.6 Gifts of the Holy Spirit

"⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. 1 Cor 12:4–11

We affirm that the Holy Spirit continues to empower the Church today, distributing gifts according to His sovereign will (1 Cor 12:11). These gifts are given not for human exaltation or spectacle, but for the building up of the body of Christ (Eph 4:11–12), the glorification of Jesus (Jn 16:14), and the witness of the gospel to the world (Acts 1:8). We confess that the Spirit's gifts are diverse, both extraordinary and ordinary, and that all are necessary for the health and mission of the Church.

Purpose

The gifts of the Spirit are given to glorify Christ (Jn 16:14), to strengthen believers (1 Cor 14:3–5), to care for the flock out of a heart of compassion and love (Matt 14:14; Mark 1:41), and to bear witness to the world (Acts 1:8). They are not ends in themselves, are not measures of spiritual maturity (1 Cor 13:1–3), and do not serve as a proof of one's salvation. Love remains the supreme mark of the Spirit's presence (1 Cor 13:13) in the heart of the believer. We confess that the Spirit distributes gifts as He wills (1 Cor 12:11), and at the times of His choosing, not according to human demands or formulas. We approach the exercise of gifts with humility, recognizing that God may choose to work in ways that surprise us, but never in ways that contradict His Word. We affirm that the Spirit's gifts are a means of grace, not a measure of status (Rom 12:3–8).

Inspiration and Distribution

The Spirit of God, who inspired the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21), also distributes gifts to believers. These gifts are not earned or demanded but sovereignly bestowed by the Spirit as He solely determines (1 Cor 12:7–11). We affirm that the Spirit's work is both extraordinary—manifested at times in prophecy, tongues, discernment of spirits, healing, or exorcism (Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 12:9–10, Mk 16:17–18)—and ordinary, expressed in service, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leading and mercy (Rom 12:6–8). Both kinds of gifts are Spirit-empowered and given to the Body of Christ, the church, for its encouragement and edification and for Christ's glorification. We hold that the Holy Spirit's extraordinary and ordinary gifts have been and will be given to the church until Christ's return (1 Cor 13:8–9, Rev 11:3). The extraordinary and

ordinary gifts have been experienced throughout church history as testified by the early church fathers (e.g., Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, Cyprian, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory Nazianzus to name a few)⁷ as well as more modern church leaders such as John Wesley.⁸

Authority, Testing & Order

Because the Spirit does not contradict Himself, all claims of spiritual gifting and manifestation must be tested against the Word of God (1 Thess 5:19–21; 1 Cor 14:29; 1 Jn 4:1). The Spirit's gifts are exercised under the authority of Scripture, which remains sufficient and final (2 Tim 3:17). We deny that any manifestation of gifts may override or add to the written Word of God. We affirm that the Spirit is not a God of confusion but rather works to promote peace and orderly worship (1 Cor 14:33,40). We deny and reject practices that elevate human experience above Christ's lordship, promote emotional manipulation, or create a man-made spectacle. The Spirit's gifts must be exercised with humility, discernment, and accountability within the gathered church (1 Cor 14:29–33).

⁷ Justin Martyr, "Dialogue with Trypho (ch. 39)", *ANF* I:214; Irenaeus, "Against Heresies" (5.8.1), *ANF* I:533; Origen, "Against Celsus", *ANF* IV:415; Cyprian, "Epistle 1", *ANF* V:277; Basil, "On The Spirit", *NPNF* (2), VIII:38; Gregory Nazianzen, "On His Sister Gorgonia", *NPNF* (2), VII:243.

⁸ Wesley on Mark 16:17 in Explanatory Notes, 138; Wesley's Diary, December 26, 1761 in Works of the Rev. John Wesley (WRJW) 3:352, 553; Wesley's Diary, October 27, 1739 in WRJW 1:236, 237; Wesley's Diary, August 6, 1759 in WRJW 2:509

2.7 Human Sexuality

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them...Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Gen 1:27, 2:24)

We affirm that all human beings are created in the image of God and are therefore worthy of all honor, respect, and dignity (Gen 1:26–27; Ps 8:4–5). We confess that God created humanity male and female, equal in dignity and worth yet distinct and complementary in design (Gen 2:18–24). We affirm that marriage is instituted by God as a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman (Gen 2:24; Mt 19:4–6), reflecting Christ's love for His Church (Eph 5:31–32). Finally, we confess that human sexuality is a holy gift from God, designed for His glory, our fruitfulness and our good, and governed by His Word (Heb 13:4; 1 Thess 4:3–5).

The Image of God

We confess that every person, regardless of ability, faith, ethnicity, gender, age, background, experience, or struggle, bears the image of God (Gen 1:27). This truth grounds our commitment to treat all people – born and unborn, young and old – with honor and dignity, recognizing their intrinsic and equal worth because they have been created by God. We deny that any human being is beyond the reach of God's grace or undeserving of Christian love and compassion (Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8).

Marriage

We affirm that God created marriage to unite man and woman in covenantal love (Mt 19:6) for the principal purpose of bringing glory to Himself through His image bearers. We acknowledge that man and woman would accomplish God's will through the fruitful bearing and raising of children who would make known the God of glory to the ends of the earth (Gen 1:27–28). Jesus Christ Himself affirmed this design (Mt 19:4–6), and the Apostle Paul teaches that marriage reflects the mystery of Christ's love for, and union with, His Church (Eph 5:31–32). We affirm that Christian marriage is intended as a lifelong and faithful commitment serving as a witness to God's covenant faithfulness (Mal 2:14). We believe that sex outside of marriage is sinful (1 Thess 4:3–5) and violates God's intention for sexual relations. We further maintain that divorce, while permissible under certain circumstances (Matt 19:9; 1 Cor 7:15), is abhorrent to our Lord (Mal 2:16) as it ruptures that foundational fabric of the family and society. We recognize, however, that divorce is an unfortunate reality stemming from our broken and sinful lives and that we as Christ's church are called to minister to our brothers and sisters who have suffered the scourge of divorce.

Finally, we deny that marriage can be redefined to include unions other than one man and one woman. Accordingly, the pastor and elders of Clear River will not conduct or participate in any ceremony uniting same-sex couples in matrimony nor will any church-owned or operated facilities be used for such a purpose.

Male and Female

We affirm that God created two genders, male and female (Gen 1:27), and that these complement one another to give the fullest and clearest image of God's design for humanity. We confess that because of the fall, human sexuality is often distorted and misused (Rom 1:24–28). We recognize that many struggle with same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria. We deny that gender is fluid or self-determined, for God Himself ordains our gender identity as either male or female. We recognize that individuals may experience confusion or distress regarding their gender, and while we affirm that such persons must be treated with compassion and dignity (Mk 12:31) being made in the image of God, we cannot affirm identities or practices that contradict God's revealed design (Lev 18:22; 1 Cor 6:9–10). We affirm that God offers forgiveness, healing, and transformation to all who repent and believe in Christ (1 Cor 6:11). However, we also recognize that total and complete healing and deliverance from same-sex attraction and/or gender dysphoria, like any other life-long struggle, may not be fully realized until the eternal state.

The Call of the Church

We confess that the Church is called to speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15), holding fast to God's design for human sexuality while extending grace and compassion to those who struggle. We affirm that prayer, discipleship, and pastoral care are essential in guiding believers toward holiness even if perfect wholeness is not to be realized until the eternal state. We deny that non-biblical cultural redefinitions of sexuality or gender are consistent with obedience to Christ.