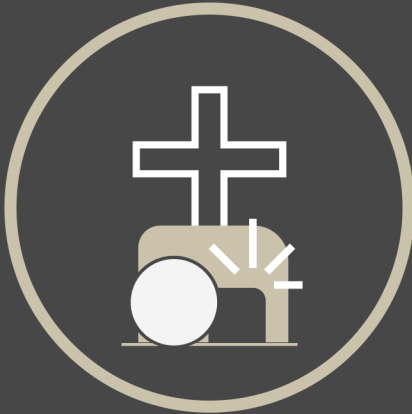
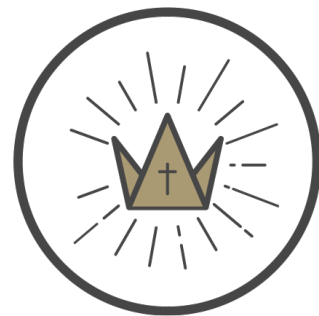
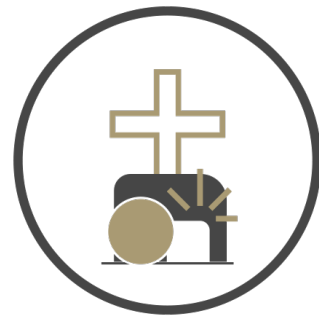
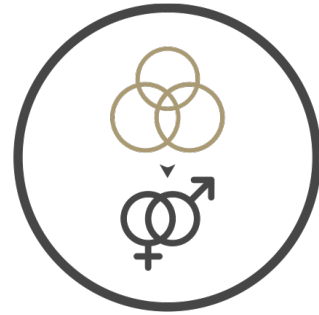
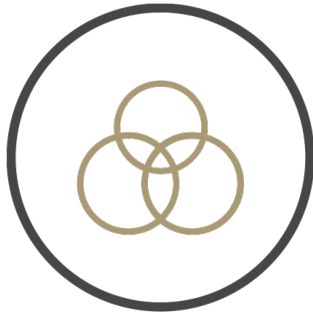


LIVING STONES CHURCH  
Doctrine





## *Living Stones Church Doctrine*

This document states and explains Living Stones doctrine - both the historical, orthodox Christian doctrines to which we adhere as well as the doctrines that distinctively shape the ministry of Living Stones Churches.

## *Christian Orthodoxy*

*Living Stones Churches are biblically rooted,  
historically informed, and gospel-centered.*

### **GOD IS TRIUNE**

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### **GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF**

In the natural world, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and in the verbally-inspired, inerrant, and authoritative 66 books of the Bible, God has revealed Himself to humanity.

### **HUMANITY**

God created human beings, male and female, in His own image. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Jesus and bear God's image in unique and distinct ways. Neither men nor women alone can fully represent the image of God on earth. At creation, both received different and complementary roles from God that are to be lived out according to the Bible.

### **THE FALL**

Adam fell into sin through the devil's temptation bringing alienation from God and total corruption to every aspect of every human being (our bodies, minds, wills, emotions, and souls).

### **GOD'S REDEMPTION OF HIS PEOPLE**

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to His Father, the eternal Son, Jesus, became human: the Word became flesh, truly God and truly human, one Person in two natures, miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit and born to the virgin Mary.

He perfectly obeyed His heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, and ascended into heaven.

## **SALVATION OF SINNERS**

By His sacrifice, Jesus bore in our place the punishment due to us for our sins, making proper and complete satisfaction of God's justice for us. By His perfect obedience, He satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf. By faith alone, through grace alone, God credits Christ's perfect obedience to all who trust in Jesus for salvation.

## **THE GOSPEL**

The gospel is the good news that, through Jesus, God saves sinners and plans to renew this broken world. Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, who died, resurrected, and ascended to the Father on behalf of His people. Through faith alone in this Jesus, God justifies, sanctifies, and adopts His people to the hope of eternal life with God in the new creation.

This good news is *biblical* (Jesus' death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), *theological and salvific* (Jesus died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), *historical* (if the saving events did not actually happen, our faith is worthless), *apostolic* (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and *intensely personal* (God adopts individuals to love and relate to them as Father).

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Holy Spirit is eternally God and the third person of the Trinity. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. By His powerful and mysterious work, He regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakens them to repentance and faith, baptizes them into union with the Lord Jesus, and justifies them before God.

## **THE CHURCH**

The Universal Church is the people of God. It consists of those born again to faith in Christ for salvation. God chose the church before the foundation of the world and is gathering them through history into one universal family under the Lordship of their Savior Jesus.

Local churches are gatherings of believers spread throughout the world. They gather for worship regularly and are sent into the world by Jesus to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them how to follow Christ.

## **THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS**

At the appointed time, Jesus Christ will return to resurrect the dead, judge the world, and renew the heavens and the earth. His bodily return will be personal, glorious, and full of perfect justice.

## **MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY**

Marriage is a God-given gift to humanity to show His personality and relationship to His church. The Bible holds marriage between one man and one woman from cover to cover. Any expression of sexuality outside of that covenant is outside of God's created will and is sinful. God beautifully designed and intends His people to participate in sex only within the union of marriage between one man and one woman. (See Gen. 2:24-25, Matt. 19:4-12, Heb. 13:4)

## **CREEDS**

Living Stones affirms the following historical creeds and statements of faith: Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, and The Lausanne Covenant.

## *LS Doctrinal Distinctives*

*Below are teaching positions that distinctively shape the ministry of Living Stones.*

### **GOSPEL-CENTERED**

The gospel is the center and ultimate motivator of all we do as a church. It is the good news of Jesus Christ—God's very wisdom. (John 3:16) It is the power of God to those who are being saved. Everything Living Stones does is birthed from and built around the gospel of God. (See Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Titus 3:3-8)

### **REFORMED SOTERIOLOGY**

God is sovereign in all aspects of salvation.

Under the curse of Adam, all humans are born into total depravity. Apart from God's intervention, no human would choose Him of their own free will. God elected, died for, draws, and preserves his people in predetermined love. The elect are effectually drawn to Jesus by the Father and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. Their salvation is eternally secured, and God guarantees their perseverance in the faith through the indwelling work of God the Spirit. (See Ephesians 2:2, 4-5. 2 Timothy 2:26. John 5:21, 6:37)

### **BELIEVER'S BAPTISM (CREDO BAPTIST)**

All Christians should be water baptized as commanded by Jesus.

Baptism is when a person is fully submerged into water and pulled back out. Submersion symbolizes the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is an outward expression of the inward reality that a person has been "born again," and has put off their old self. The old self died with Christ and was raised to new life. Baptism is an outward expression of inward faith and is therefore for believers only

(Mark 1:5-10. Acts 2:41, 8:12).

## **COMPLEMENTARIAN**

God made humanity to be in his image. Male and female, He created them. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not interchangeable. Instead, they complement each other in mutually enriching ways to represent God's image to the world. Both men and women have equal access to God and equal value before him.

As the Bible unfolds, it calls men and women to different roles within the relationships of the home and the church. In the home, God calls husbands to die to themselves and be servant-leaders of their families. God calls wives to be helpers of their husbands and submit to them out of devotion to the Lord. In the church, God calls only qualified men to fill the office of elder. Elders are to shepherd the flock of God under the authority, guidance, love, and wisdom of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd. (See Colossians 3:28, Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Timothy 3:2)

## **SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CONTINUATIONISM**

All the gifts of the Spirit listed in the Bible are present and active in His church.

The gifts of the Spirit are free to be used by members according to the guidelines of the Scriptures.

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; 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. (1 Corinthians 12). 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; John 6:63; Acts 1:8).

## **COVENANTAL HERMENEUTIC**

All sixty-six books of the Bible tell one story that details God's relationship with humanity. He relates to humanity through a series of covenants that fit under two categorical headings: The Covenant Of Works and The Covenant Of Grace. God commands humanity in the Covenant Of Works, saying, "Do this and live." But in the Covenant Of Grace, God takes the requirement of obedience and the penalty for disobedience upon himself to secure an everlasting relationship with his chosen people. The Bible chronicles the unfolding of these covenants and finds ultimate fulfillment for the Covenant Of Grace in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This fulfillment is called the New Covenant, and it is experienced by believers when they are born again by the Holy Spirit. (See Jeremiah 31:31-35, John 1:17, Romans 8:3-4)

## **LITURGICAL**

Sunday liturgy is planned with care so that the entire gathering demonstrates the gospel to the glory of God. Every gathering walks through elements that proclaim the storyline of the Bible, including Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.

## **CHURCH CALENDAR**

Living Stones follows the high holidays of the Christian church calendar. Accordingly, we acknowledge the following seasons and days in Living Stones gatherings: Advent, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Holy Week (Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Resurrection Sunday), Ascension Day, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, Reformation Day, and Christ the King Sunday.

## **THE ARTS**

Living Stones believes that visual art and music are powerful gifts God has given to humanity to reveal His glory. Therefore, Living Stones uses art as a means for people to engage with God. Sometimes Living Stones uses or displays art that secular artists create if it reveals common truth on the basis that all truth, if it is really true, is from God.

## **FIVE SOLAS OF THE REFORMATION**

**Sola Scriptura** Scripture alone is the Word of God and, therefore, the only infallible rule for life and doctrine. (See Proverbs 30:5-6, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Timothy 3:16)

**Sola Fide** Salvation is by faith alone in Christ Jesus and not good works. (See Romans 4:3-5, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Peter 1:3-5)

**Sola Gratia** Salvation is by grace alone and not merited by man in any way. (See Romans 3:23-24, Romans 11:6, Ephesians 2:4-10)

**Solus Christus** Christ alone is the only way to salvation. (See Isaiah 53:6, Acts 4:12, 1 Peter 2:24)

**Soli Deo Gloria** All glory is due to God alone. (See Isaiah 42:8, Romans 11:36, 1 Corinthians 10:31)

## **COMMON GRACE**

Living Stones believes that all humans are made in the image of God and display His nature and character in many ways. In addition, God gives some graces to all people, even though some do not receive the special grace of salvation. These graces given to all image-bearers of God are called Common Graces. They include but are not limited to the ability to marry and experience the benefits of marriage, the ability to learn and communicate truth, the ability to create beautiful things, and the ability to work together for the common good of humanity. (See Psalm 145:9, Acts 17:26-28, James 1:17)

## THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

The 1689 Baptist Confession is an accurate and faithful summary of the teaching of the 66 books of Holy Scripture. Therefore we adopted this Confession as the teaching doctrinal statement for Living Stones Churches with the following exceptions:

Articles 22.8, 26.4, 26.9

Our reasoning for these exceptions is as follows:

On 22.8, we disagree with the Confession's use of the definite article "the" when it states, "The Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord...."

While we believe that Christians are obligated to participate (insomuch as they are physically able) in weekly corporate worship with other Christians, we do not believe that the Lord's day is the only day for the weekly gathering to happen. All days are holy unto the Lord. (Col.2:16, Romans 14:5) Further, Jesus Himself is our Sabbath rest as well as the One who will bring full and final rest at his Second Coming (Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:10-1). In His person and work, the obligations of the Sabbath are fulfilled (2 Cor. 1:20, Romans 14:5). Because of this fulfillment and the Lord's establishment of the New Covenant, believers do not need to participate in a day of rest to fulfill the law's requirements. But since God rested on the seventh day, he wove the concept of a weekly day of rest into the fabric of creation. Therefore, healthy Christians should aspire to a day of rest, but it is not an act of sin to participate in this rest on a day other than the Lord's Day (Sunday).

On 26.4, we disagree with the Confession's assertion that the Roman Catholic Pope is the man of lawlessness so spoken of in 2 Thess. 2:2-9. While understanding the historical situation within which the authors of the Confession found themselves, we do not find the exegetical arguments concerning this assertion to be persuasive because we believe this man of lawlessness has yet to appear in history based on our interpretation of the Confession's cited passages. However, based on the Roman Catholic Church's own explicit teaching concerning the papacy - that "the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered"<sup>1</sup> - we believe that the Roman Catholic Pope acts as *an* antichrist. While not explicitly denying that

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<sup>1</sup> See Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Edition), Paragraph 882

Jesus is the Messiah, whoever sits as acting Pope is in opposition to Jesus by establishing himself, rather than Jesus, as the supreme authority over the Christian Church. In this way, the Roman Catholic Pope commits egregious sin against the Lord Jesus. By the very act of believing himself to be the supreme authority in the Church, the Pope denies the essence of the Lordship of Jesus by denigrating the Lord's ultimate authority and demoting Him, just as 1 John 2:22 teaches antichrists do.

On 26.9, we disagree with the Confession's assertion that Christ established the appointment of Elders to come by congregational vote. Contrary to this assertion, we see the Apostle Paul explicitly instructing both Timothy and Titus, under the superintending guidance of the Holy Spirit, to appoint Elders themselves rather than entrusting this obligation to the respective congregations (2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:5; c.f. Acts 14:23 where "they" refers to Paul and his ministry team, not the local congregation). The Biblical pattern is for Elders to appoint other Elders.