

# Olentangy Community Church

## Statement of Theology

### The Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
begotten from the Father before all ages,  
God from God,  
Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made;  
of the same essence as the Father.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven;  
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,  
and was made human.  
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered and was buried.  
The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again with glory  
to judge the living and the dead.  
His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life.  
He proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.  
He spoke through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,  
and to life in the world to come. Amen.

## **Scripture**

The Bible is the Word of God, a supernatural revelation from God to Mankind. The Holy Spirit worked through humans to create writings that are without error in all that they affirm. They accurately describe the character of God, the condition of humanity, and God's plan for redemption through his incarnation in Christ. The Bible is the standard by which all teachings and philosophies should be measured and the final authority for faith and practice.

## **The Kingdom**

The kingdom of God is a spiritual reality that is made up of followers of Jesus from every nation. It is the realm where God reigns, transcending all earthly power structures. Members of God's kingdom are called to be distinct from the rest of the world, modeling Christ's example of love, peace, and non-resistance towards all people. The ultimate fulfillment of God's kingdom will occur when Jesus returns and God's perfect plan for restoration will be complete.

## **Salvation**

Salvation is a free gift of God's grace based on the work of Jesus Christ (the shedding of His blood on the cross, His resurrection, and present intercessory ministry) and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Those who receive God's gift of salvation by faith become children of God, justified in their relationship to God, and secure in an ongoing faith expressed and fostered by obedience to Christ. This obedience is achieved through progressive sanctification of believers empowered by the Holy Spirit.

# **Olentangy Community Church**

## **Statement of Practice**

### **Introduction**

This is the statement of practice for Olentangy Community Church. It is a part of the membership covenant and may be used as a reference for us as we seek to live the Christian life.

### **The Mission of the Church to the World**

We believe that Jesus Christ, to whom all authority is given, commanded the church to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and instructing them to obey all of His teachings. For this task Jesus promised His presence and power through the Holy Spirit.

Discipleship begins when a person receives salvation by grace through faith in Christ and continues as the individual surrenders to His lordship in all areas of life.

In His mission to the world, Jesus not only preached the kingdom of God but also fed the hungry, healed the sick, cast out demons and set the prisoners free. Therefore the church, in her mission to the world, must preach the gospel and minister to the needs of the total person.

*Matthew 9:35; 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Luke 4:18-19; Ephesians 2:8, 9; 4:3-16*

### **Congregational Leadership**

We believe that godly leaders are called by God to lead His church. The Lord Jesus employed the metaphor of “shepherd,” conveying the protecting, caring, healing, nurturing, and guiding role of church leadership. As the Chief Shepherd, Jesus set the example as one who served willingly, joyfully, faithfully and sacrificially, laying down His life for the sheep. He demonstrated that true leadership is carried out with the spirit of a servant.

The primary qualification for those in leadership is the willingness to be under the authority of Jesus Christ. It is only as leaders follow Jesus that they are worthy to be followed. Christian character is the foundation upon which a leader’s ministry is built.

### **Functions of Congregational Life**

#### **Worship**

As Christ offered up His life, so we gather to offer up to God our praise, our thanksgiving, our love, our repentance, our spirits, our bodies, our money – our all. When we worship God we give Him the honor and reverence He deserves. We worship God in our private devotional times, in our gathered worship services and in our everyday lives as we offer ourselves to Him as living sacrifices.

#### **Fellowship**

In Christ, the dividing walls of racism, sexism, status, class and other worldly barriers are broken

down so that many individuals become one body. Fellowship involves sharing our common spiritual union with Christ and with each other as members of His body, and is expressed through worship, prayer, discussion, encouragement, visitation, mutual aid and other times of being together.

### **Evangelism and Discipleship**

Evangelism is the distinct opportunity and responsibility of the church to introduce people to a personal relationship with the living Christ. Congregations evangelize and make disciples by demonstrating Christlike love, befriending and welcoming unbelievers, exposing them to the truth about Christ, and helping them to grow in Christ. As congregations demonstrate corporate worship, love, and community, people have the opportunity to discover the Christian life and become fully devoted followers of the resurrected Jesus.

### **Ministry**

All members of the body perform invaluable functions by virtue of their connection to the Head, who is Christ the Lord. God gives gifts to each believer to use in bringing people to Christ and in strengthening other believers. Ministry takes place as we serve God by lovingly serving others.

## **Ceremonies and Symbols of Christian Faith**

### **Water Baptism**

We believe in observing water baptism as taught by Jesus Christ and as practiced by the early church. The church is commanded to baptize believers in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Water baptism is an external symbol of internal spiritual baptism. The external symbol may be administered by the pouring of water upon the head. This symbolizes the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual baptism may also be symbolized by immersing the believer in water. This symbolizes that the believer is buried with Christ in His death and raised with Christ in His resurrection to the newness of life. Water, as an agent of cleansing, also symbolizes the divine cleansing from sin and guilt.

*Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:16-21; Acts 10:44-48; Romans 6:2-6; I Corinthians 12:13; I Peter 3:21*

### **Communion**

We believe in observing the Lord's Supper as taught by Christ and as practiced by the early church. While observing the Passover meal, Jesus instituted the New Covenant sealed in His blood. Life in the New Covenant is initiated by faith in Christ and His work of reconciliation on the cross. His sacrificial death is the supreme act of God's love in giving His only Son for the salvation of the world. The Passover reached its fulfillment through the atoning death of Christ as the Lamb of God whose death restored our communion with God and with each other.

We recognize the bread and the cup as symbols commemorating Christ's body and blood. The Scripture commands self-examination to ensure not taking the symbols in an unworthy manner. Those who do take the symbols in an unworthy manner, by violating their relationship with Christ and others, are in danger of God's judgment.

Communion on earth anticipates the perfect communion of heaven where once again Jesus will drink anew the fruit of the vine in the fullness of the kingdom.

*Matthew 26:17-29; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 10:16-17; 11:17-34*

## **Marriage**

We believe that God instituted marriage at the dawn of human history. He has given the church authority to establish, protect, nurture, and build marriage. It is a holy covenant made in the presence of other believers who hold the couple accountable to keep their commitment to God and to each other. Christian marriage between a man and woman for life is a symbol of Christ's self-giving love for the church and of the church's submission to Christ, the Head of the church.

*Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; I Corinthians 7:39; Ephesians 5:22-33*

## **Discipleship and Nonconformity**

We believe that two opposing kingdoms exist to which men and women may give their spiritual allegiance, that of Christ and that of Satan. The kingdom of Christ is composed of those who have repented of their sin and been born again by grace through faith. Those of the kingdom of Satan live for sin and self and refuse to recognize and accept the claims of Christ upon them.

Those who are part of the kingdom of Christ recognize the lordship of Christ, seek to perform good works, pursue holiness in all areas of life, and enjoy the fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit. They should openly manifest the love of God toward all people regardless of race, culture, or economic level. They regard their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, adorning them modestly and appropriately, crucifying the flesh and its lusts, and refuse any addictions or habits which will hinder their work for God, be harmful to their overall health, or damage their witness to the world. They participate in wholesome recreational activities that refresh their minds and strengthen their spirits. They are transformed by the renewing of their minds and seek to demonstrate God's perfect will in every aspect of life. They seek regularly to practice spiritual disciplines such as study, worship, prayer, fasting, silence, stewardship, and sacrificial living so as to have full participation in the life of God's kingdom and a vital relationship with Jesus their Savior.

## **Discipline within the Body of Christ**

### **Mutual Accountability**

We believe each member of the body of Christ needs the encouragement and loving accountability of others to be faithful to Christ and to become more like Christ. This kind of Christian discipline is best experienced in settings of trust, open sharing and prayer. In this way we "spur one another on to love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24 NIV)

*Acts 18:24-28; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 10:24, 25; 2 Timothy 2:24-26*

### **Corrective Discipline**

We believe Jesus Christ has given authority to His church to exercise corrective discipline within the community of believers. This discipline is intended to bring those who are in error to repentance, helping them to receive the forgiveness, grace, and love that are available in Jesus. It is to be carried out with a spirit of gentleness and humility with full knowledge that those enacting the discipline may themselves be easily tempted into sin.

The general pattern of discipline to be followed, as taught by Jesus, begins with private admonition given by a member of the church to the erring brother or sister. If the erring one refuses to hear such admonition, one or two other believers are to be included in giving the word of admonition. If there is still refusal to hear this small group of believers, the matter is to be brought before the church in a more public fashion. If the erring one refuses to hear the church on the matter, membership may be

revoked in recognition that such a one has been separated from the body of Christ. The church will continue to pray for the erring one, using every opportunity to restore him/her to full fellowship. At any point if the erring one hears the admonitions brought and repents, he/she is restored to full fellowship with Christ and His church. The purposes of discipline include maintaining the integrity and witness of the church, restoring to fellowship those who are in error, building faithfulness in the believers, and strengthening godly teaching and conduct. Such disciplinary work is to be accomplished by the entire congregation, not solely the pastoral leadership of the church.

*Matthew 18:15-22; Galatians 6:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5f*

## **Marriage and the Family**

### **The Institution of Marriage**

We believe that God instituted marriage as the lifelong covenantal union of one man and one woman. This is a holy, profound and mysterious union by which two become one in body, soul, and spirit. The highest purpose of the marriage relationship is to illustrate God's relationship with His people. In the Bible we see romantic images that depict God's love for His people. God intended the pleasure of romantic love to culminate in the sexual union of husband and wife.

*Genesis 1:27; 2:24; Song of Solomon; Isaiah 54-5-7; Hosea 2:19; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; 1 Corinthians 7:39; Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 19:7*

### **Divorce and Remarriage**

We believe that God intends marriage to be a life-long covenant between one man and one woman. The breaking of the marriage covenant is sin, whether it be through divorce, unfaithfulness, adultery, abuse, desertion, or other sins that destroy marriage. Wherever there is sin, the church must call for repentance.

We believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ is relevant to all persons, regardless of the sins they have committed or that have been committed against them, including divorce. The transforming message of the gospel includes the grace of God to forgive any sin and the call of God to a new life of holiness and purity, upholding the sanctity of life-long marriage.

We are committed to working receptively with all persons who have suffered the tragedy of divorce and we are committed to working preventively in the lives of those who have not. We accept people who come to Christ in whatever marital state they are in, whether single, divorced, or remarried.

*Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Malachi 2:13-16; Matt. 5:31,32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:1-12; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7*

### **Singleness**

We believe that the state of being unmarried is highly honored in Scripture. Single persons, whether by circumstance, choice or calling, can give themselves more fully to the work of God. As Jesus exemplified, a single person need not acquire a spouse to be effective in ministry or to be complete as a person.

*Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:8-9; 32-38*

### **Human Sexuality**

We believe that it is in violation of God's will to engage in sexual relationships outside the marriage of one man to one woman. The Bible also forbids lust and pornography.

We therefore invite persons experiencing sexual sins or temptations to seek cleansing by the blood of Christ. As a church community we commit to provide support to those struggling with sexual sins.

*Leviticus 18:22; Matthew 5:27-30; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17*

## **The Ethics of the Kingdom**

### **Sanctity of Human Life**

We believe God created each human being in His image. All human life is sacred. Any actions and words which communicate anything about the worth, dignity or value of any human being therefore reflect on the honor of the Creator. We believe that citizens of the kingdom should respect life at all stages and should not participate in the termination of human life, whether through abortion, infanticide, murder, or suicide. We also reject hatred, slander, gossip, and derogatory racial and ethnic comments; these destroy the dignity and honor of human beings as bearers of the image of the Creator.

*Matthew 5:38-48; John 18:36; Romans 5:5; 12:18-21; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8; 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4; James 2:8; 1 Peter 2:23; 4:1*

### **Nonresistance**

Jesus as the incarnate Son of God both taught and practiced the way of love in all human relationships. The teaching position of OCC is that the way of love applies to every area of life including international tension and war. Meaning that even at the risk of life itself Christians must extend love to every human and alleviate suffering, overcoming evil with love. This is not a required belief for members of OCC.

*Matthew 5:38-48; John 18:36; Romans 12:18-21*

### **Stewardship**

We believe that stewardship, rather than ownership, defines the believer's relationship to all personal resources such as time, energy, abilities, spiritual gifts, money, properties and all material possessions. As a steward, the believer is called to manage all resources according to the kingdom purposes of God. Stewardship values extend to each stage of life, including estate planning and other opportunities for giving resources at the end of our lives.

We believe the teachings of Jesus stand in opposition to the self-centered materialism of our world that defines the quality of one's life by the quantity of possessions accumulated. The work of the kingdom suffers when its citizens are consumed with supporting a personal lifestyle adopted under the lure of materialism. Such a lifestyle leaves the church, as the visible expression of the kingdom, to receive only a token contribution of leftover time and money. The principle of "first-fruits" giving is rooted in the ancient feast of Pentecost and was reaffirmed by Jesus, who commanded His followers to "seek first His kingdom." We seek to give first priority to kingdom work. This is an act of faith in God, our provider.

*Leviticus 23:10, 17; Exodus 23:19; Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalm 24:1; Matthew 6:19-24; 6:33; Luke 12:21; 1 Corinthians 4:2; 1 Peter 4:10*