

## CLRA Statement of Faith 2016 Revised Version

### Preamble:

One of CLRA's core convictions is that we have to believe together in order to worship and work together. Our aim has never been to weaken the CBOQ, rather we aim to strengthen our shared ministries by establishing a more robust platform of theological agreement.

We are not the first to recognize this need. At the 1985 CBOQ Assembly in Windsor a motion was passed affirming the need for a definitive Statement of Faith for our denomination. While it was recognized that the CBOQ is a fairly diverse association of churches, it was also recognized that shared mission cannot proceed without shared conviction. Any attempt to recruit interest and investment in common projects that did not include a clear statement of shared belief and Gospel conviction is doomed to fail. In response to this clear mandate, the Faith and Order committee began work on the document which came to be named *This We Believe*. Sadly, the document was never made binding or normative within the CBOQ family of churches and it was presented merely as "a resource for churches". While resources can be wonderfully helpful, they rarely exert the sort of norming and restraining influence that the 1985 Assembly seemed to consider necessary for the on-going fruitfulness of the CBOQ family of churches.

Our history since 1985 has only served to validate the concerns of that Windsor Assembly. As our theological diversity has increased unchecked, our collective enthusiasm for and investment in our shared mission has correspondingly waned. While CLRA does not see itself as the solution to that problem, we do believe that a possibility exists for convictional association within our wider denominational body. This document is intended to clarify the essential theological convictions that would define and limit that association. It does not seek to summarize every aspect of Christian belief, but like all such statements, it seeks to communicate clearly, publicly and usefully those convictions deemed central and necessary for functional and formal association.

We further intend this document to serve as a stimulant to theological conversation within the Canadian Baptist family of churches. Content-less faith is suddenly out of fashion. Praise the Lord! We are all being forced by necessity to discuss things long assumed. We believe that God means this for our good. To the extent that this document can serve that noble end, we give Him glory.

## Acknowledgements:

We happily acknowledge substantial dependence upon and gratitude towards a variety of rich and useful sources. We would like first of all to express profound thankfulness towards the Faith and Order committee for their work on *This We Believe*.

As much as possible we have tried to follow their lead in making good use of other reformed and evangelical sources. In the preface to *This We Believe*, the Faith and Order Committee wrote:

This approach has historical precedent. In the 1670s evangelicals were faced with persecution in England and Baptists determined to make common witness by preparing a statement of faith based on the Westminster Confession (1648) and the Savoy Confession (1658). Signatories to the Second London Confession (1677/78) stated that they had written to show "our hearty agreement with them in that wholesome protestant doctrine, which with so clear evidence of Scriptures they have asserted." In 1742 a modified version, The Philadelphia Confession, was adopted in North America. It placed the indelible mark of Reformation orthodoxy on the main stream of Baptist life and witness on this continent.

Baptists have historically attempted to root their statements of faith within the wider framework of evangelical thinking. While we have certain distinctives, our greater emphasis remains on those convictions we share with the greater mass of believers throughout Christendom. As such, we gladly acknowledge dependence upon the following documents in addition to *This We Believe*:

- i. T4G's (Together For The Gospel) Statement of Affirmations And Denials
- ii. The Philadelphia Confession of 1742
- iii. The Baptist Confession of 1689
- iv. The New Hampshire Confession Of Faith 1833

All statements of faith inevitably reflect the theological controversies of their day. The original Baptist Confession, for example, included a great deal of colourful polemic toward the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand and the Anabaptists on the other. Similarly, statements of faith from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries were heavily weighted towards Trinitarian and Christological formulations. In every generation Christians defend what is being attacked at the time; so it is with this document. Decisions have been made about what to include, what to emphasize and what to omit in reflection upon the current state of theological discourse within Evangelicalism generally and the CBOQ in particular. We acknowledge therefore that the ultimate utility of this document rests upon both its faithfulness to the message of Scripture and its diagnosis of contemporary challenges thereto.

SDG  
Paul Carter  
Marc Bertrand  
2016

### **Regarding The Revised Conference Draft:**

The first public draft of this Statement was posted on the CLRA website and was read/viewed approximately 580 times by 500 different individual users. Given that there are only about 300 churches in the CBOQ we were very pleased with this level of engagement; thanks be to God.

This revised draft reflects the work of 23 CLRA pastors, elders, deacons and lay people who gathered together at MBC (Muskoka Bible Centre) on May 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> 2016. As we have many times stated, we have to believe together in order to work together and therefore the lion's share of our time together at MBC was spent working and praying through this document. It is our fervent hope that should the Lord tarry, this document will serve as the basis of all our future partnership and mission together.

May God Alone Be Glorified.

General Editor  
Rev. Paul Carter  
May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016

## **CLRA (Covenant Life Renewal Association) Statement Of Faith: Affirmations And Denials**

### **Article I – Of The Holy Scriptures**

- i. We affirm that the Holy Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is the only sufficient, certain, inerrant and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.
- ii. We deny that the Bible is a mere witness to the divine revelation, or that any portion of Scripture is marked by error or the effects of human sinfulness.
- iii. We affirm that the authority and sufficiency of Scripture extends to the entire Bible in all 66 books and is our final authority for all doctrine and practice.
- iv. We deny that any portion of the Bible is to be used in an effort to deny the truthfulness or trustworthiness of any other portion. We further deny any effort to identify a canon within the canon or, for example, to set the words of Jesus against the writings of Paul. We deny the right of any ecclesial authority to sit in judgment over Holy Scripture.
- v. We affirm the centrality of expository preaching in the Church and the urgent need for a recovery of biblical exposition and the public reading of Scripture in worship.
- vi. We deny that God-honouring worship can marginalize or neglect the ministry of the Word as manifested through exposition and public reading. We further deny that a Church devoid of true biblical preaching can survive as a Gospel Church.

2 Tim. 3:15-17; Isa. 8:20, Isa. 66:2; Luke 16:29,31; John 16:13-14; Eph. 2:20; Rom. 1:19-21, 2:14,15, 10:17, 15:4; 1 Cor. 14:37-38; Psalm 19:1-3; Heb. 1:1; Prov. 22:19-21; 2 Pet. 1:19,20

### **Article II – Of God In Holy Trinity**

- i. We affirm that there is but one living and true God, the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, infinite in being and perfection and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence and obedience. In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God,

and comfortable dependence on Him.

- ii. We deny the claim that the Trinity is not an essential doctrine, or that the Trinity can be understood in merely economic or functional categories.
- iii. We affirm that God the Father reigns with providential care over His universe and all creatures contained therein. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God as Father is the wellspring and fountain of salvation, choosing His elect in Christ before the foundation of the world.
- iv. We deny that the God of the Bible is in any way limited in terms of knowledge or power or any other perfection or attribute, or that God has in any way limited His own perfections.
- v. We affirm that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the divinely appointed mediator between God and man. Having taken upon Himself human nature, yet without sin, He perfectly fulfilled the law; suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. He was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended to His Father, at whose right hand He ever lives to make intercession for His people. He alone is Head over the church and He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission.
- vi. We deny that the substitutionary character of Christ's atonement for sin can be compromised without denying and repudiating the Gospel.
- vii. We affirm that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired men of old to write the Scriptures and through illumination enables men and women in every generation to understand the truth contained therein. He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He calls people to the Saviour and effects regeneration. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ and pours out the love of the Father in the hearts of true believers and gives witness to the believer that he or she is a child of God. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance and the seal of faith. He liberally and prudentially gives gifts to all believers unto the edification of the church. The Holy Spirit becomes in our hearts the Spirit of supplication.
- viii. We deny that the Holy Spirit is merely "the power of God" or that He is the possession of an elite class among the blood bought people of God. We deny the identification of speaking in tongues as a unique sign gift, seeing instead an emphasis on a diversity of gifts within the Body of Christ for her common edification.

1 Cor. 8:4,6; Deut. 4:15-16, 6:4; Jer. 10:10; Isa. 46:10, 48:12; Exod. 3:14; John 4:24; 1 Tim. 1:17; Mal. 3:6; 1 Kings 8:27; Jer. 23:23; Ps. 90:2; Gen. 17:1; Isa. 6:3; Ps. 115:3; Prov. 16:4; Rom. 9:5, 11:36; Exod. 34:6,7; Heb. 11:6; Neh. 9:32,33; Ps. 5:5,6; Exod. 34:7; Nahum 1:2,3.

### **Article III – Of Creation And Fall**

- i. We affirm that in the beginning it pleased God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom and goodness, to create the world and all things therein whether visible or invisible in the space of six days and all things very good.
- ii. We deny that the universe is eternal, or self existent or without purpose and obvious design. We further deny any attempt to explain the origin and uniqueness of human life without reference to the Creator and his eternal will.
- iii. We affirm that God created humanity in his image and likeness, male and female and that the first humans, Adam and Eve, were created in holiness, under the law of their Maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, by nature and by choice, and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.
- iv. We deny that human beings are born innocent or that any persons are without need of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We deny that the existence of sinful orientations or desires within human beings should be interpreted as God's will for their behaviour and personal expression.

Genesis 1-3 in total; Eccles. 7:29; Rom. 2:14,15; John 1:2,3; Heb. 1:2; Job 26:13; Rom. 1:20; Col. 1:16; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rom. 5:6, 8:7; Eph. 2:1,5; Titus 3:3-5; John 6:44

### **Article IV – Of Redemption**

- i. We affirm that salvation is all of grace, and that the Gospel is revealed to us in doctrines that most faithfully exalt God's sovereign purpose to save sinners and in His determination to save his redeemed people by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to His glory alone.
- ii. We deny that any teaching, theological system, or means of presenting the Gospel that denies the centrality of God's grace as His gift of unmerited favour to sinners in Christ can be considered true doctrine.
- iii. We affirm that sinners are justified only through faith in Christ, and that justification by faith alone is both essential and central to the Gospel.
- iv. We deny that any teaching that minimizes, denies, or confuses justification by faith alone can be considered true to the Gospel. We further deny that any teaching that separates regeneration and faith is a true rendering of the Gospel.

- v. We affirm that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers by God's decree alone, and that this righteousness, imputed to the believer through faith alone, is the only righteousness that justifies.
- vi. We deny that such righteousness is earned or deserved in any manner, is infused within the believer to any degree, or is realized in the believer through anything other than faith alone.
- vii. We affirm that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is God's means of bringing salvation to His people, that sinners are commanded to believe the Gospel, and that the Church is commissioned to preach and teach the Gospel to all nations.
- viii. We deny that evangelism can be reduced to any program, technique, or marketing approach. We further deny that salvation can be separated from repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- ix. We affirm that the liberty which Christ has purchased for believers under the gospel, consists in their immediate freedom from the guilt of sin, their progressive freedom from the power of sin and their ultimate freedom from the presence of sin.
- x. We deny any notion of liberty which teaches that Christians can ever be entirely free from the battle with sin and temptation in this earthly life.
- xi. We affirm that God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to His word, or not contained in it.
- xii. We deny any notion of liberty which would leave people or churches free to believe or practice things contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

Matt. 6:12; Luke 17:5,19:8, 22:31,32; John 1:7-12, 5:25, 10:28, 15:14, 17:17; Acts 11:18, 15:11, 16:31, 20:32, 24:14, 26:18; Rom. 3:24-26, 4:5-8, 17-19, 25, 5:17, 6:5-23, 7:18-23, 8:30-32, 10:14,17, 11:7; 1 Cor. 1:30,31, 2:14, 2 Cor. 3:17-18, 4:13, 5:21, 7:1,11; Gal 2:20, 3:8, 5:17, 24; Eph. 1:1-11, 17-20; Eph. 2:1-6, 8, 3:16-19, 4:15-16; Col. 1:11,21,22; 1 Thess. 5:21-23; 2 Thess. 2:13,14; 1 Tim. 1:13,15, 2:6; 2 Tim. 1:9-12; Titus 3:2-7; Heb. 10:14, 11:13, 12:14; Phil. 3:8,9; 1 Pet. 1:2,11,18,19, 2:2; Ezek. 36:26-31; Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:27; Ps. 110:3; Ps. 19:7-10, 69:72; Eccles. 7:20; Zech. 12:10; Ps. 119:6,128; Isa. 1:16-18, 53:5,6, 55:7; Ps. 89:31-33

## **Article V – Of Marriage, Sexuality And Gender**

- i. We affirm that marriage is to be between one man and one woman; united in loving covenant before God for the mutual help and comfort of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with legitimate offspring, and the preventing of sexual immorality.

- ii. We deny that it is lawful or legitimate before God for any man to have more than one wife, or for any woman to have more than one husband at the same time. We further deny that it is lawful or legitimate before God for a man to marry another man, or for a woman to marry another woman.
- iii. We affirm that men and women are equal in dignity and worth, bearing as they do the very image and likeness of God. We affirm that the Scripture reveals a pattern of complementary order between men and women, and that this order is itself a testimony to the Gospel, even as it is the gift of our Creator and Redeemer. We also affirm that all Christians are called to service within the body of Christ, and that God has given to both men and women important and strategic roles within the home, the Church, and the society. We further affirm that the teaching office of the Church is assigned only to those men who are called of God in fulfillment of the biblical teachings and that men are to lead in their homes as husbands and fathers who fear and love God.
- iv. We deny that the distinction of roles between men and women revealed in the Bible is evidence of mere cultural conditioning or a manifestation of male oppression or prejudice against women. We also deny that this biblical distinction of roles excludes women from meaningful ministry in Christ's kingdom. We further deny that any Church can confuse these issues without damaging its witness to the Gospel.

Gen. 1:27-28, 2:18, 24; Lev. 18:6-18, 22; Neh. 13:25-27; Mal. 2:15; Matt. 19:5,6; Mark 6:18; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 5:1, 6:9-11, 7:2,9, 39, 11:4-5, 14:29-35; Gal. 3:23-29; Eph. 5:21-33; 1 Tim. 2:8-15, 3:1-13, 4:3; Heb. 13:4

## **Article VI – Of Ministry And the Church**

- i. We affirm that the heart of the Great Commission is to make disciples of all nations by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that this is best done in and through local churches adorning their proclamation with a faithful witness of love and good deeds.
- ii. We deny that good works on their own can communicate the saving message of the Gospel; the Gospel must be heard or read in vernacular words for it to be believed to saving effect. We further deny that the local church can be bypassed as the primary vehicle for Christian mission.
- iii. We affirm that the Lord Jesus is the head of the Church, which is composed of all His true disciples, and in Him is invested supremely all power for its government. According to His commandment, Christians are to associate themselves into particular churches for their mutual edification and their due performance of that public worship, which he requires of them in the world. To each of these churches He has given needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which He has appointed.



- iv. We deny that any mere human being can be in any sense the head of the church and that the claim of any to be the Vicar of Christ on earth should be strongly resisted. We further deny that any Christian can truly be a faithful disciple apart from the teaching, discipline, fellowship, and accountability of a congregation of fellow disciples, organized as a Gospel Church.

Matt. 16:18, 18:15-20, 28:18-20; Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:10,20-23, 4:11, 5:23,27,32, 6:18; 1 Cor. 1:2, 5:4-5,13, 9:6-14; Acts 2:41-42, 6:3-6, 11:26, 14:23, 15:2-25, 20:17-28; Rom. 1:7, 16:1-2; Col. 1:18; John 10:16, 12:32; 2 Cor. 1:24, 2:6-8; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2, 4:14; 5:17,18; Gal. 6:6,7; 2 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:1-10; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6,14,15; Heb. 12:23, 13:17; Ps. 122:6; 1 John 4:1; 3 John 8-10

## **Article VII – Of Baptism And The Lord’s Supper**

- i. We affirm that baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, obligatory upon every believer, to be unto the party baptized, a sign of their fellowship with Him, in His death and resurrection; of their being engrafted into Him; of remission of sins; and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life. We further affirm that baptism properly follows a credible profession of faith and is prerequisite to church membership. The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, wherein the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance.
- ii. We deny that agreement on believer’s baptism by immersion alone is a sufficient basis for free will association or missiological partnership between local churches.
- iii. We affirm that the Lord’s Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and wine, and to be observed by His church till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate His death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with Him, and of their church fellowship.
- iv. We deny that the Lord’s Supper can be faithfully administered apart from the right practice of church discipline. We further deny that the elements are in any way physically or substantially altered into the body and blood of Christ. While Christ is present really and spiritually he is not to be understood as present physically in or “underneath” the elements.

Matt. 3:16, 28:19,20; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:27; Mark 1:4; Acts 2:41, 8:12, 8:36-38, 18:8, 22:16; John 3:23; 1 Cor. 10:16-21, 11:23-29; Heb. 9:25,26,28; Matt. 7:6, 26:26,27, 2 Cor. 6:14,15

## **Article VIII – Of The Autonomy Of The Local Church And Free Will Association**

- i. We affirm that every duly gathered local church, according to the mind of Christ declared in His word, has been given all power and authority which is in any way needful for their carrying on that order in worship and discipline, which He has instituted for them to observe; with commands and rules for the due and right exerting, and executing of that power.
- ii. We deny that a church's autonomy may be exercised independently of the Word of God or that it may govern itself in ways contrary to the clear teaching of Holy Scripture.
- iii. We affirm the principle and potential benefit of free will association between substantially aligned local churches. The appropriate aim of this association should be strategic collaboration, mutual consultation and intercessory prayer. We further affirm the right of a local church to withdraw from association should the association no longer reflect the theological convictions of that congregation. Similarly, we affirm the right of the association to declare local churches no longer substantially aligned.
- iv. We deny that any such association may be entrusted with any church-power properly so called; or with any jurisdiction over the churches themselves, to exercise any censures either over any churches or persons; or to impose their determination on the churches or officers.

Matt. 18:15-20, 28:20; John 10:16, 12:32; Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23,25; Rom. 16:1,2; 1 Cor. 5:4, 5, 5:13; 2 Cor. 1:24; 2:6-8; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6,14,15; 1 John 4:1; 3 John 8-10; Ps. 122:6

## **Article IX – Of The Return Of Christ And Last Things**

- i. We affirm our belief in the imminent and physical return of the Lord Jesus to the earth. The Lord shall descend with the voice of an archangel and with the sound of the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ shall arise first. Then we who are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will be with the Lord forever.
- ii. We deny any attempt to spiritualize the return of the Lord. We further deny that we are to find ultimate fulfilment or happiness in this present world or that God's ultimate purpose is for us to find a more meaningful and prosperous life in this fallen world. We further deny that any teaching that offers health and wealth as God's assured promises in this world can be considered a true Gospel.

- iii. We affirm that God has appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ; in which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all people who have lived upon the earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ when everyone shall receive according to their deeds. The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life in the New Heavens and the New Earth wherein we shall see the face of God and enjoy his presence forever.
  
- iv. We deny that the Bible's teaching on everlasting punishment is meant as mere symbol or empty threat or that it means anything other than the opposite of what is meant by everlasting life. We further deny that the punishment of hell is only of everlasting significance or that one's experience of hell is anything other than everlasting, conscious torment.

**Come Lord Jesus; come quickly. Amen**

Matt. 10:28, 12:36, 25:34, 46; Mark 9:47-48, 13:35-37; Luke 12:35-40, 16:22-23; 1 Cor. 15:35-57; 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 20:15, 21:3; Acts 17:31; John 5:22,27; 1 Cor. 6:3; Jude 6; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Eccles. 12:14; Rom. 9:22-23, 14:10,12; 2 Tim. 4:8; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; Rev. 20:11-15, 22:20