



**Faith and Practice**  
**The Book of Discipline**

Graham Friends Church  
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# Graham Friends Church

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## God

We believe in one<sup>(1)</sup> eternal<sup>(2)</sup>, omnipresent<sup>(3)</sup>, unchanging<sup>(4)</sup>, personal<sup>(5)</sup> God: perfect in holiness<sup>(6)</sup>, wisdom<sup>(7)</sup>, love<sup>(8)</sup>, power<sup>(9)</sup>, and justice<sup>(10)</sup> without preceding cause or beginning<sup>(11)</sup>, creator<sup>(12)</sup> and preserver<sup>(13)</sup> of all things, visible and invisible.

He exists as one divine being and yet as a trinity of three distinct persons, identical, inseparable, and equal in divinity, power and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit<sup>(14)</sup>.

God revealed Himself in the past in many and various ways, though supremely in the person of Jesus Christ<sup>(15)</sup>. He continues to reveal Himself today through His creation<sup>(16)</sup>, the Holy Scriptures<sup>(17)</sup> and the workings of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people<sup>(18)</sup>.

He alone is worthy of our worship, honor, praise and thanksgiving, now and forevermore<sup>(19)</sup>.

- |      |                              |      |   |
|------|------------------------------|------|---|
| (1)  | Deuteronomy 6:4, Mark 12:29  | (11) | Psalms 93:2   |
| (2)  | Psalms 90:1-2, Romans 1:20   | (12) | Genesis 1:1, Romans 11:36                             |
| (3)  | Psalms 139:7-12              | (13) | Psalms 104:27-30, Col. 1:16-17                        |
| (4)  | James 1:17, Malachi 3:6      | (14) | Matthew 28:19, John 14:16,18,23, II Corinthians 13:14 |
| (5)  | John 14:9                    | (15) | Hebrews 1:2, John 1:18                                |
| (6)  | Isaiah 6:3, I Peter 1:15-16  | (16) | Romans 1:19-20  |
| (7)  | Psalms 139:2-3, Hebrews 4:13 | (17) | II Timothy 3:16, II Peter 1:21                        |
| (8)  | Romans 8:32-39, I John 4:8   | (18) | Acts 8:29, 13:2, 15:28, 16:6-10                       |
| (9)  | Isaiah 40:12-28              | (19) | Galatians 1:5   |
| (10) | Psalms 89:14, Romans 3:26    |      |   |

## Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ, the Word who was with God and was God<sup>(1)</sup>, is the only begotten Son of God<sup>(2)</sup>. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit<sup>(3)</sup> and born of the virgin Mary<sup>(4)</sup>; and is the express image of the invisible God<sup>(5)</sup>. He combines within Himself both the divine nature of God and human nature in one perfect indivisible personality, the God-man<sup>(6)</sup>.

He lived and suffered in the world to show the Way of Life<sup>(7)</sup>, He was crucified and died as the atonement for the sin of the whole world<sup>(8)</sup>, making the only provision whereby people can find forgiveness of sins and cleansing from all unrighteousness<sup>(9)</sup>.

He died in our place<sup>(10)</sup> and rose again the third day for our justification<sup>(11)</sup>; He ascended into heaven<sup>(12)</sup> and sits at the right hand of God, ever living as our only mediator and High Priest making intercession for us<sup>(13)</sup>, and from there will return again to receive His church into Himself<sup>(14)</sup> and to judge the world in righteousness<sup>(15)</sup>.

- |     |  |      |   |
|-----|--|------|---|
| (1) | John 1:1                                 | (9)  | Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:13-14, Titus 2:14 |
| (2) | John 1:18, I John 4:9                    | (10) | I Corinthians 15:4, I John 4:10               |
| (3) | Matthew 1:20, Luke 1:35                  | (11) | Romans 4:25, I Corinthians 15:4               |
| (4) | Matthew 1:18, Luke 1:34                  | (12) | Acts 1:9, Ephesians 4:8                       |
| (5) | Colossians 1:15                          | (13) | Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25, Hebrews 9:24       |
| (6) | John 1:14, Colossians 2:9                | (14) | 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17                       |
| (7) | Romans 5:10, Ephesians 5:2, I Peter 2:21 | (15) | Romans 2:16, II Timothy 4:1                   |
| (8) | Romans 3:23-25, I John 2:2               |      |   |

## The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit, not as an impersonal principle or influence, but as a divine person<sup>(1)</sup>, and though distinct from the Father and Son, proceeding from both<sup>(2)</sup>, with whom He is equal in authority, power, glory, and titles<sup>(3)</sup>.

He is the divine agent in conviction of sin<sup>(4)</sup>, regeneration<sup>(5)</sup>, sanctification<sup>(6)</sup> and the believers' assurance<sup>(7)</sup>.

He is given as an indwelling Presence to every believer to be a teacher<sup>(8)</sup>, guide<sup>(9)</sup>, and source of comfort<sup>(10)</sup>.

He purifies the heart of the believer<sup>(11)</sup> and imparts at His own choosing spiritual gifts for service and the building up of the Body of Christ<sup>(12)</sup>. He produces in believers the fruit of the Spirit<sup>(13)</sup> so that they may conform to the image of Christ.

(1) John 14:16, John 14:26, John 16:13-14

(2) John 15:26, John 16:7

(3) Matthew 28:19, II Corinthians 13:14

(4) John 16:8

(5) John 3:5

(6) I Corinthians 6:11

(7) Romans 8:15-16, Galatians 4:6

(8) John 14:26

(9) John 16:13

(10) Acts 9:31

(11) Acts 15:9, I John 1:9

(12) 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Ephesians 4:7-13

(13) Galatians 5:22-23

## Holy Scripture

With early Friends, we believe that all Scripture<sup>(1)</sup> both of the Old and New Testaments is given by inspiration of God, without error in all that it affirms<sup>(2)</sup> and is the only infallible rule of faith and practice<sup>(3)</sup>. It is fully authoritative and trustworthy, fully sufficient for all believers now and always<sup>(4)</sup>, and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness<sup>(5)</sup>.

Thus, the declarations contained in it rest on the authority of God Himself<sup>(6)</sup>, and there can be no appeal from them to any other authority whatever. They are the only divinely authorized record of the doctrines which we are bound as Christians to believe<sup>(7)</sup>, and of the moral principles which are to regulate our behavior<sup>(8)</sup>. Only such doctrines as are contained in the Scripture can be regarded as Articles of Faith<sup>(9)</sup>. The Holy Spirit, who inspired the Scripture, must ever be its true interpreter<sup>(10)</sup>. Whatever any person says or does which is contrary to the Scripture, though under profession of the guidance of the Spirit, must be reckoned and accounted a delusion<sup>(11)</sup>.

The Scripture demands of believers complete obedience<sup>(12)</sup> and is made increasingly open to those who study and obey it<sup>(13)</sup>.

(1) II Timothy 3:16

(2) Psalm 19:7-11

(3) Psalm 119:4, Psalm 119:105

(4) Psalm 119:89, I Peter 1:25

(5) John 15:3, II Timothy 3:16-17

(6) II Thessalonians 7:13

(7) Romans 1:16

(8) Psalm 119:9

(9) John 17:17

(10) John 14:26, John 16:13, II Peter 1:21

(11) II Peter 1:20, I John 4:1

(12) Psalm 119:4, I Corinthians 4:2

(13) I Corinthians 2:4-5, I Corinthians 2:12

## Creation

We believe creation to be that free act of the triune God<sup>(1)</sup>, the Father<sup>(2)</sup>, Son<sup>(3)</sup>, and Holy Spirit<sup>(4)</sup>, by which in the beginning and for His own glory<sup>(5)</sup> God made, without use of pre-existing material<sup>(6)</sup>, the whole visible and invisible universe<sup>(7)</sup>.

- |     |                              |     |   |
|-----|------------------------------|-----|---|
| (1) | Genesis 1:1, Genesis 1:26-27 | (5) | Psalms 19:1, Colossians 1:16            |
| (2) | Hebrews 1:2                  | (6) | Hebrews 11:3                            |
| (3) | Colossians 1:16              | (7) | Nehemiah 9:6, John 1:3, Colossians 1:17 |
| (4) | Job 33:4, Psalm 104:30       |     |   |

## Satan

We believe in the existence of the Evil One “that old serpent which is the Devil, and Satan”<sup>(1)</sup>, the old deceiver who by his own choice rebelled against God<sup>(2)</sup> and became evil, who tempted our first parents to sin<sup>(3)</sup>, and who through their disobedience brought about the fall of the human race<sup>(4)</sup>; with all its attendant degeneracy, unhappiness and misery<sup>(5)</sup>.

Satan demonstrated his evil character and purpose in his perpetual opposition to Christ by the temptation in the wilderness<sup>(6)</sup> and to His people and to His kingdom<sup>(7)</sup>. But his power is limited<sup>(8)</sup>, and in God's own time he will be chained and finally cast into the lake of fire<sup>(9)</sup>.

While Satan is active in this world, Christians through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them are able to resist Satan's temptation and have victory over him<sup>(10)</sup>.

- |     |   |      |  |
|-----|---|------|--|
| (1) | Revelation 20:2                                     | (6)  | Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-15            |
| (2) | Luke 10:18  | (7)  | II Corinthians 4:1, Ephesians 2:2      |
| (3) | Genesis 3:1-6, II Corinthians 11:3, Revelation 12:9 | (8)  | Job 1:12, Job 2:6, I Corinthians 10:13 |
| (4) | Romans 5:12,15-19                                   | (9)  | Revelation 20:3, Revelation 20:10      |
| (5) | Genesis 3:17-19, Romans 8:18-22                     | (10) | I Peter 5:8-11, I John 4:4             |

## Humanity

### The Creation

We believe that by a definite act God created man and woman in His own image, holy and capable of knowing and obeying God's will, in order to glorify God and enjoy His fellowship forever <sup>(1)</sup>.

### The Fall

We believe that Adam and Eve fell from this original state by a voluntary act of disobedience <sup>(2)</sup>, thus suffering the immediate loss of a perfect relationship to God <sup>(3)</sup> and making self the center of their lives. By this act, they suffered spiritual death, and sin entered the world and death by sin, so that death passed upon all <sup>(4)</sup>.

We further believe that as a consequence of the fall, all people are born with a nature which is thoroughly sinful <sup>(5)</sup> and not subject to the law of God, so that only through the operation of the grace of God can they repent and call upon Him. However, by God's grace infants are not under condemnation but are heirs of salvation <sup>(6)</sup>.

- |     |  |     |   |
|-----|--|-----|---|
| (1) | Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 1:31, Genesis 2:7, James 3:9b | (3) | Genesis 2:17  |
| (2) | Genesis 3:6-24   | (4) | Ezekiel 18:19-20, Romans 5:12-14, Romans 5:17-19, Romans 6:23a, Psalm 51:5, Psalm |

58:3  
(5) Isaiah 53:6

(6) Matthew 18:3

## Salvation

We believe that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>(1)</sup>, through the direct and immediate agency of the Holy Spirit<sup>(2)</sup>, persons may be reconciled to God and recovered from the fallen state through justification<sup>(3)</sup>, regeneration<sup>(4)</sup>, sanctification<sup>(5)</sup> and ultimately the resurrection of the body<sup>(6)</sup>.

## Justification

In response to sinners' repentance, surrender of themselves, and sincere faith in the power and sufficiency of Jesus' atoning death and shed blood<sup>(7)</sup>, God pardons them from past sins and declares them righteous, not for anything they have done but because of the obedience and atoning death of Christ<sup>(8)</sup>.

## Regeneration

In response to sinners' repentance, surrender of themselves, and sincere faith in the power and sufficiency of Jesus' atoning death and shed blood, God also by His gracious power makes them new creatures<sup>(9)</sup>. By the Holy Spirit they are born again into the family of God<sup>(10)</sup> to a new life of love to God and to people<sup>(11)</sup>. Their minds are enlightened to understand His truth<sup>(12)</sup>, and their wills are renewed to do His will<sup>(13)</sup>, as He begins to conform them to His image. The evidence of this regeneration of the believers is the fruit of the Spirit<sup>(14)</sup>.

(1) Galatians 1:3-5, Ephesians 2:8-9  
(2) John 3:5, Romans 5:5  
(3) Romans 4:25, Romans 5:1, Titus 3:7  
(4) Colossians 3:9-11, Titus 3:5  
(5) I Peter 1:2  
(6) I Corinthians 15:20-21  
(7) 1 John 2:1-2, Ephesians 1:7

(8) Romans 3:25, II Corinthians 5:20-21  
(9) II Corinthians 5:17  
(10) Romans 8:14-16  
(11) John 3:3, I John 4:7-21  
(12) John 16:12-15, Romans 12:1-2  
(13) I John 2:17  
(14) Galatians 5:22-23

## Sanctification

It is the will of God that believers receive the fullness of the Spirit. From the moment of conversion, the Holy Spirit begins drawing the believer to growth in grace and obedience to the will of God, thus preparing the child of God for the crisis experience of entire sanctification. When the believer consecrates his being entirely to God through faith in Christ, God instantaneously both purifies the heart and fills with His Spirit. In sanctification the heart of the child of God is cleansed from all inbred sin and is perfected in love. The cleansed believer is separated from sin and is set apart to love and serve God, and he is empowered for effective service and for more rapid growth in the graces of the Spirit.

We believe that sanctification is that work of the Holy Spirit by which the child of God is separated from sin unto God and is enabled to love God with all his heart and to walk in all His holy commandments blameless. Sanctification is initiated at the moment of justification and regeneration. From that moment there is a gradual or progressive sanctification as the believer walks with God and daily grows in grace and in a more perfect obedience to God. This prepares for the crisis of entire sanctification which is wrought instantaneously when the believer presents himself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, through faith in Jesus Christ, being effected by the baptism with the Holy Spirit who cleanses the heart from all inbred sin. The crisis of entire sanctification perfects the believer in love and empowers him for effective service. It is followed by lifelong growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The life of holiness continues through faith in the sanctifying blood of Christ and evidences itself by loving obedience to God's revealed will.

Genesis 17:1  
Deuteronomy 30:6  
Psalm 130:8  
Isaiah 6:1-6  
Ezekiel 36:25-29  
Matthew 5:8,48  
Luke 1:74-75  
Luke 3:16-17  
Luke 24:49  
John 17:1-26  
Acts 1:4-5  
Acts 1:8  
Acts 2:1,4

Acts 15:8-9  
Acts 26:18  
Romans 8:3-4  
I Corinthians 1:2  
I Corinthians 6:11  
II Corinthians 7:1  
Ephesians 4:13,24  
Ephesians 5:25-27  
I Thessalonians 3:10,12-13  
I Thessalonians 4:3,7-8  
I Thessalonians 5:23-24  
II Thessalonians 2:13  
Titus 2:11-14

Hebrews 10:14  
Hebrews 12:14  
Hebrews 13:12  
James 3:17-18  
James 4:8  
1 Peter 1:2  
II Peter 1:4  
I John 1:7,9  
I John 3:8-9  
I John 4:17-18  
Jude 24

## The Church

We believe that the church is made up of all those from the apostles until now<sup>(1)</sup>, both the triumphant dead and the living<sup>(2)</sup>, who through response to God's gracious offer of salvation<sup>(3)</sup> by repentance of their sins<sup>(4)</sup> and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior<sup>(5)</sup> have been born again<sup>(6)</sup> as new creatures in Christ<sup>(7)</sup>. This church is spiritual in nature<sup>(8)</sup>, universal in scope<sup>(9)</sup>, holy in character<sup>(10)</sup>, and redemptive in its life and purpose<sup>(11)</sup>.

Its purposes are to make disciples of all nations by its witness to the grace and love of God<sup>(12)</sup> and to live as a loving fellowship who build up one another in the grace and knowledge of God<sup>(13)</sup>.

The church accomplishes these purposes by its existence as particular local congregations gathered out of the world<sup>(14)</sup> and as associations of congregations in larger organizations<sup>(15)</sup> under the leadership and service of those called and gifted to such service<sup>(16)</sup>. It worships in prayer<sup>(17)</sup>, thanksgiving<sup>(18)</sup> and song<sup>(19)</sup>; diligently studies the Word of God<sup>(20)</sup>; witnesses to and proclaims the gospel of God's Son<sup>(21)</sup>; exercises the gifts of the Spirit<sup>(22)</sup>; administers discipline<sup>(23)</sup>; and performs works of blessings and service both physical and spiritual to its members and to all in need<sup>(24)</sup>.

(1) Matthew 16:18  
(2) 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17  
(3) Ephesians 2:8-9  
(4) II Chronicles 7:14; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 2:38  
(5) John 1:12; Romans 5:1

(6) John 3:3  
(7) II Corinthians 5:17  
(8) John 4:23-24; I Peter 2:5  
(9) I Corinthians 12:12-27; Hebrews 12:23-24  
(10) Psalm 24:3-4; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation

- |      |   |      |   |
|------|---|------|---|
|      | 19:7-8  | (18) | Psalm 100:1-4; Philippians 4:6; I<br>Thessalonians 5:18     |
| (11) | Luke 24:46-47   | (19) | Psalm 100:2; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians<br>3:16             |
| (12) | Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8  | (20) | Acts 17:10-11; Colossians 3:16; I Peter 2:2-3               |
| (13) | Acts 2:41,46-47; Ephesians 4:11-16  | (21) | Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8                                  |
| (14) | I Corinthians 1:2; Acts 11:22; I Thessalonians<br>1:1                               | (22) | I Corinthians 12:7-11; Ephesians 4:11-13; II<br>Timothy 1:6 |
| (15) | Romans 16:4, 16:16; I Corinthians 16:19; II<br>Corinthians 8:1; Galatians 1:2, 1:22 | (23) | Matthew 18:15-17; II Corinthians 2:5-8;<br>Galatians 6:1    |
| (16) | Ephesians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:17  | (24) | Matthew 25:34-40; John 13:12-17                             |
| (17) | Isaiah 56:7; Luke 19:45-46; I Thessalonians<br>5:17; James 5:13-16                  |      |   |

## Last Things

We believe that upon death the mortal body returns to the dust from which it came<sup>(1)</sup>. The spirits of the righteous will experience joy and life in the presence of God, but the unrighteous will be separated from His presence in the darkness and torment of their evil<sup>(2)</sup>.

We believe in the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that His second coming will include two separate events:

**First stage** – The Lord will descend in the air to rapture the Church. At this time the righteous dead will be raised first, and then the living believers will be caught up together to meet the Lord. All will be changed to their glorified bodies to be forever with the Lord.

I Thessalonians 4:16-17  
I Corinthians 15:51-53

**Second stage** – Christ returns to earth with all His saints. This will be a literal, visible, bodily return as He comes in power, great glory, authority and judgement; as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Matthew 24:27-31; 25:31-32  
Revelation 19:11-16

The importance of this doctrine is evident in the prominence given to it in both the Old and New Testaments and in the teachings of Christ Himself. The certainty of His return exhorts us to watchfulness, holiness, Christian activity and comfort of those who mourn their Christian dead.

Luke 19:13  
I Timothy 6:14  
I Thessalonians 5:23

We believe the second coming of Christ is both a point of time as well as a period which includes a series of events. During this period Christ will fulfill all prophecies made concerning His final and complete triumph over evil. Included in this series of events is the examination and reward of believers and the judgment whereby the wicked are banished to everlasting punishment.

John 5:28-29  
I Corinthians 3:12-15  
II Corinthians 5:10  
Revelation 20:11-15

We believe that Christ will consummate His kingdom over all people and nations by His final triumph over Satan<sup>(3)</sup>.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will finally judge all persons for their belief in Him as demonstrated by commitment of their lives to the way of the cross, the lost to everlasting punishment, the redeemed to eternal blessing and life<sup>(4)</sup>.

(1) Genesis 3:19; Psalm 103:14-16; Ecclesiastes 12:7

(2) Luke 16:19-31; 23:39-43

(3) I Corinthians 15:23-26; Philemon 2:9-11; Revelation 20:10-15

(4) Matthew 25:31-46; II Corinthians 5:10

## **Sacred Worship**

### **A. Prayer and Praise**

No practice in Christian living is more often spoken of in the Scripture than prayer and praise both as duty and as privilege. The Bible gives examples of and instruction in these practices. In the Old Testament Daniel is an outstanding example in that despite the king's decree to the contrary, he faithfully and openly prayed to God three times a day. The Psalms are filled with prayer and praise to God. Reading them, the Christian learns of the rich rewards from such practices. Our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, as our sure example in holy living often gave Himself to prayer and praise. He also often instructed His disciples, and thus Christians of all generations, to pray faithfully and to expect God's answer (Matthew 7:7; John 16:23; James 5:16b).

A sense of need is a sufficient call to prayer. Hence burdened sinners may come boldly to the throne of grace and find a welcoming Father from whom they can obtain forgiveness. Similarly burdened Christians can find in prayer the assurance of God's love and relief from their burdens as they cast all their cares on the Lord (I Peter 5:7).

Prayer is the life breath of Christian living and gives the Christian unbroken access to the Heavenly Father. It is thus essential for the maintenance and development of the Christian life. We believe that families within our fellowship should set apart each day a time for collective prayer, Bible reading and praise; and that in our public services of worship we should give importance to prayer and praise.

### **B. Christian Worship**

Worship is a privilege of the Christian. It is a spiritual experience in which believers give themselves to communion and fellowship with the the Heavenly Father, a time when they consciously feel and give adoration and love and gratitude to God. It is a time of reverent coming before the Almighty God as children of His by grace.

The first preparation for profitable worship is a humble spirit which recognizes the grace of God in giving us this privilege. Equally important is a contrite spirit which is submissive to His lordship and superior will for our daily living. When these attitudes prevail, worship is full of meaning and reward (Psalm 51:17).

The service of worship will usually include times of prayer, praise and preaching. During public worship services we should also allow frequent times for reflection, meditation, and decision.

Inasmuch as public worship aids Christians to grow in grace, it is the focal point of the church's local ministry. Since it is a testimony to the surrounding community of the importance of worshiping God, members should attend the services of their congregation regularly and faithfully. They should impress upon their children the same religious practice, believing that thus they will aid in leading their children to salvation and to the worship of God.

From the beginning of His earthly life (Matthew 2:2) and throughout the ages of time (Revelation 4:10-11), the Lord Jesus Christ has been, is, and will be the object of worship. We make Him the center of our worship, and delight in collectively and personally giving Him praise and adoration as God. Without His presence, through the Holy Spirit, our worship would not have either meaning or depth.

### **C. The Ordinances**

Regarding outward religious observances. Friends have maintained a deep desire to stress the inward spiritual significance. Activities connected with worship can easily become a ritual in which the true meaning is distorted or lost. Friends emphasize the inward spiritual experience in baptism as the baptism with the Holy Spirit and in Communion as the daily fellowship with Christ in which the life is a sacrament. We recognize the importance that outward observances can have in preparing the heart of the worshiper to grasp and appropriate spiritual truth.

The congregation may arrange services, perhaps in special meetings rather than in the regular worship service, for baptism and communion upon the request of members, while treating tenderly the consciences of those who protest the use of outward symbols. In all such services it should be abundantly clear to all the congregation that Friends have the right to abstain from as well as to participate in the observance. In these services it should also be clear that the observances are only symbols of an inward spiritual experience.

### **D. Harmony in the Church**

Harmony in the church family is essential to its good witness in the community and to its worship of and service to its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Watchful care should therefore be taken to maintain that harmony. The congregation, and especially the pastor and officers, should be concerned that nothing be permitted to bring disruption to the peace and unity of their fellowship. They should be quick to discern differences of opinion so as to prevent a degeneration into serious conflicts among the members of the congregation. In the event that dissension or resentment does arise, the pastor and officers should admonish all parties of the serious threat involved in their attitudes and make every effort, especially following the pattern laid down by our Lord Himself in Matthew 18:15-20, to reach a speedy reconciliation (I Peter 1:22; Hebrews 13:1; I John 4:21; Matthew 5:23-25).

## **Christian Living**

Early in their religious lives, Christians learn that it is necessary to make many decisions about their behavior. They discover some practices which, though common to society about them, will seriously hinder their Christian growth and witness. Hence making right decisions about such matters will determine their growth in life and witness. Knowing that it is growing Christians who have the greater effectiveness in witness and service, and greater delight in their own lives, Friends hold the following testimonies as guidelines toward Christian growth which we understand to be taught in the Bible. It is our desire that Christians within our fellowship experience speedy and rich progress toward the attainment of fullness in Christ.

### **A. Moderation and Modesty**

Because the pressures to follow a style of life like that of the non-Christian society are so great upon Christians, Friends insist that our citizenship is not of this world. The New Testament command, Be not conformed to this world, (Romans 12:2) reminds us that in our living we must take care that our dress be modest and decent in every way. We must also take care that we not be seduced by the attractions and abundance of earthly goods and thus fall into covetousness. In the furnishing of our homes, in the providing for our tables, in the accumulation of material things – in every way we should show our conviction that the fashion of life of this world is not that of the Christian.

### **B. Weddings, Funerals, and Memorials**

#### **Weddings**

Since the wedding ceremony is solemn and holy, Friends feel that it should be simple and reverent. While wishing it to be an occasion to be remembered for its beauty, we should nevertheless avoid ostentation and extravagance. We should take care to make the entire ceremony one of Christian celebration, watching in the choice of music and all other parts of the service that it be all occasion of seeking God's blessing on the union and His guidance in the establishment of the home.

Those preparing for marriage are strongly advised to seek godly pre-marital counseling in which the principles of God's Word are set forth. The covenant relationship of marriage should not be entered into without a proper understanding of the life-long commitment involved.

#### **Funerals**

Knowing that our bodies have been made of dust (Genesis 3:19) and shall return to dust, Friends ought to avoid extravagant and expensive funerals and memorial stones.

#### **Memorials**

When a congregation feels that it would be a fitting tribute and possible testimony to others, the Memorial Committee may prepare a memorial statement of the exemplary life of the deceased member or regular attender.

### **C. Unwholesome Habits**

Friends should be especially watchful against being involved in the unwholesome habits characteristic of this evil world. Both II Corinthians 7:1 and I Corinthians 3:17 serve as a basis for our testimony against such habits.

Unwholesome habits include the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. Abundant suffering has resulted for those who have been ensnared by these practices, not to mention the tragic effect on health, mind, money, and relationships. In indulging in such habits, one's example as a Christian is also damaged. Friends are warned also to avoid gluttony in any form or practice, considering the harm done to one's self and to one's influence on others.

Because of these grave considerations Friends should avoid such habits and refrain from assisting in the manufacture or promotion of the use of alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs. If new Christians find it difficult to break these habits, loving care should be extended to them so that they may come to freedom from them.

### **D. Amusements**

With the increase of leisure and the wide availability of entertainment of every kind, Friends should consider most carefully the recreation and amusements to which we give ourselves, our interest, our time, and our money. Amusements can and do have a large influence upon character and life.

Our members should avoid attending or being involved in movies and theatrical performances of a demoralizing nature, in dances, and in other activities that may be injurious to Christian growth.

Members are not to be involved in lotteries, wagering, or any other kind of gambling. Friends should take care to avoid publications tending to undermine their faith in the authority of the Scriptures and to hinder their Christian growth.

Though acknowledging certain benefits and potential for Christian ministry in radio and television, Friends must also recognize and avoid programs which are unwholesome or demoralizing in music, language, or action portrayed.

Friends participating in summer and weekend camping and recreation which take them away from their congregation should remember their own spiritual needs, the concerns of the church, and their responsibilities to the church as they plan such activities.

### **E. Secret Societies**

Many organizations make attractive appeals for membership and involvement. Friends must study carefully such organizations – the time, commitment, money required, as well as the likely influence of the organization upon them. Especially we will then avoid affiliation with secret societies which base their rituals on a distorted understanding of the Bible and directly or indirectly give Jesus Christ less than divine nature, even though they may appear to have spiritual value. The oath-bound character of such societies seem not only unnecessary, but also likely to prove harmful to honesty.

# **The Christian Family**

## **A. The Family**

The family is the basic unit of human relationship, and as such is also the foundation unit of society and of the church. The many Biblical references to the family assure us of its divine origin and of God's concern for the family and the home.

## **B. Marriage**

Marriage is a union of a man and a woman into a oneness which no other human relationship can provide. Made before divine and human witnesses, the marriage vow unites a couple so fully that they "become one flesh." (Genesis 1:24; Ephesians 5:31) Marriage also, even more importantly, involves mental, emotional, and spiritual union. Friends should therefore enter into marriage under the full persuasion that it is a life-long commitment and union.

A union so solemn is to be entered into only after much forethought, planning and prayer, and "in the fear of the Lord." Friends should seek earnestly the will of our Lord concerning their choice of a mate, remembering the apostolic injunction, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." (II Corinthians 6:14a) Parents should use watchful care to help their children find mates of Christian character and commitment.

Friends believe that sex is a beautiful gift of God when it joins a man and a woman together in self-giving love. (Hebrews 13:4) We hold this depth of relationship is appropriate only in marriage and that sexual relations should be abstained from outside the marriage bond. The basis for a good marriage is not sexual alone, but true friendship and a lifetime of self-giving, as the Apostle Paul admonished (Ephesians 5:22-29) Friends who find severe difficulty in their marriage relationship are urged to prayerfully seek counsel from a pastor or a Christian therapist who can mediate those problems in order that the marriage be restored to the state God desires.

## **C. Divorce**

Since the only clear Biblical allowance for divorce is adultery, Friends discourage seeking a divorce on any other grounds. (Mark 10:2-9) The sanctity of the marriage vows requires Friends to seek earnestly to prevent serious marital discord, perhaps through counseling, and to make every effort toward a happy, harmonious, and holy marriage.

The break-up of many marriages in our day lays great responsibility upon the congregation to be sensitive to the needs of those becoming involved in such crises and to be quick in showing loving concern for them.

Friends ought not to marry divorced persons, except where that divorce was granted on grounds of adultery. We ask our ministers to consider the circumstances carefully, perhaps in consultation with the leaders of their congregation, before deciding whether to perform the ceremony.

## **D. Parents and Children**

The responsibility of parenthood is given by God (Psalm 127:3). The Scriptures often speak of this responsibility and give guidance for bearing it. Parents should early and continually turn to God for wisdom and guidance in the rearing of their children.

The Bible commands: Children, obey your parents in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1), and throughout its pages examples clearly support its teaching that obedience is the right attitude of children to parents. Obedience goes hand in hand with respect, honor and love for parents. On their part, parents should be sensitive to the concerns and needs of their children so that they can freely speak their hearts to each other.

Parents have great spiritual, as well as physical, material, and educational responsibility for their children. Knowing that their children face the pressures of temptation from all sides, particularly in their schools, Christian parents have a great responsibility to guide them into a real understanding of what they believe and what they should do in the face of such temptation. Parents should from the beginning have a concern that their children come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This concern will move them to pray faithfully with and for their children, to try to build a home atmosphere that will draw them to God, to encourage them in regular attendance of services of worship and in Christian service, and to provide them with Christian instruction in the home.

## **E. Church and Children**

The church should be responsible for children and young people in supporting, guiding and helping them develop their lives spiritually in order to promote their physical and mental well-being, while establishing their commitment to God and His service (Proverbs 22:6).

## **Christian Service**

### **A. The Public Ministry**

Friends believe that God provides for the church by calling men and women to be ministers of the Gospel. For the edifying and equipping of the Church the Holy Spirit confers on them the gifts of pastoring and evangelizing (Ephesians 4:11). This calling to the ministry will be evidenced in the life and work of the public minister. While there will be those who also have administrative ability or unusual insight into the Scriptures, it is this distinctive call of God which sets apart a person to serve in the Gospel ministry. Freely received, this call and gift should be freely and devotedly given in service to God and the Church.

### **B. Stewardship**

Friends believe that they are required to be conscientious and wise stewards of every part of life (Romans 14:22). At least four areas of life deserve special consideration.

#### **The Lord's Day**

In celebration of our Lord's rising on the first day of the week, Sunday, the early church established it as the day for Christian worship and rest from secular activities. Friends honor this day in accordance with the commandment: "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy." (Exodus 20:8) Friends should consider carefully how to make the most of the day for the Lord's service and worship and for rest of body and mind from the week's labors. On this day, Friends should refrain from involvement in any business, in shopping, or in unnecessary supplying of temporal, secular needs.

## **Tithing**

The practice of tithing our income to the Lord began in the Old Testament. Later our Lord Jesus Christ approved this practice, and Friends believe it is still the minimum to be given and the best means of providing for the financial needs of the church. But Christians do well to let generosity beyond the tithe characterize all their giving to God. As this method of giving is followed, there will be no need to resort to other methods of fund-raising.

Since the Bible in both precept (Malachi 3:10) and practice (I Corinthians 16:2) identifies the place for the giving of tithes and offerings as the church, Friends believe that the church is the place for one's giving and the church then must earnestly seek for divine wisdom in its use of the gifts for the Lord's work.

## **Wills**

Friends should prepare legal wills and testaments while in health and judgment and thus express their wishes regarding their possessions and families. In the distribution of their estates Friends should consider contributions to the work of God.

## **Talents**

Friends believe that all persons have natural abilities and spiritual gifts from God with which they are to make contributions to the work of God (Matthew 5:14-30; Luke 12:42-28). It is therefore our duty to use our particular gifts liberally in the ministry of the church.

## **C. Use of Church Buildings**

Because church buildings have been dedicated to the service of God, and especially as places for His worship, Friends believe that they should be treated with care and respect. At times parts of these buildings may be used as meetings places for fellowship, but even at these times the buildings should be remembered as dedicated to the service of God. The primary purpose of the buildings should always be the worship of God, instruction in the Christian faith, development of Christian fellowship, and Christian service to the community. We encourage Friends to construct and maintain their worship facilities with prayerful consideration of their function, remembering the moderation and simplicity which is becoming to the testimony of Friends and to the Church of Jesus Christ.

## **D. Business Practices**

Friends should seek divine direction in all their business affairs. They should undertake endeavors only after prayer and seeking God's guidance. While it is to be hoped that we will have adequate income, we must nevertheless remember that the search for riches is a threat to the Christian life. Careful attention should be given to all our dealings in order not to bring dishonor to our testimony or to the church. Friends should be especially careful to pay debts and to fulfill all commitments. If business failures occur, we must do everything possible to fulfill all obligations.

# **The Christian Relationship to Government and Society**

## **A. The Poor**

The Christian virtue of love should characterize Friends in caring for the material needs of the poor within our membership. Also, as means are available, such care should be extended to others' needs, remembering that we are admonished to do good to all, especially those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10).

## **B. Schools**

Friends should take real interest in the educational programs affecting their children and all children of our communities. We should work for the election of suitable members of the boards of education, the employment of teachers of Christian character and example, and the development of educational programs which consider the influence of their contents and activities on the children involved.

## **C. Civil Government**

Friends are convinced that the New Testament requires the Christian to hold the government and its leaders in respect, and that the basic principles of government can be directly traced to the Scriptures. Therefore, it is necessary that we obey the laws of the nation insofar as they are not in conflict with our obedience to God. When it becomes necessary for Friends to disagree with the practices and requirements of government, we should do so out of concern for the promotion of righteousness and not out of delight in controversy or strife.

Friends should use the ballot, with prayer for guidance, to vote for candidates and measures which will promote righteousness, giving much consideration to the personal and spiritual qualifications of candidates regardless of political affiliation.

## **D. War and Peace**

During the first 300 years of the Christian church its members abstained from military service as being a violation of the teachings of Christ. This attitude changed only when Constantine made Christianity the state religion and introduced the notion that it was right to fight in support of an officially Christian government. Since that time there has been division in the practice of Christians as to the support of war.

Friends maintain a peace testimony. We understand peace to be much more than the absence of war. "The Prince of Peace" calls His followers to be "peace-makers." We take seriously the admonitions:

Seek peace and pursue it – Psalm 34:11

Live in peace – II Corinthians 13:11

Follow peace with all men – Hebrews 12:14

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men – Romans 12:18

Let us pursue the things which make for peace – Romans 14:19

In order to pursue peace, attention must be given to a course of action which promotes and encourages righteous treatment among individuals and nations. Christians will hear of wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6), but they are not to be the source of hostilities. History bears the grim truth of the results of conflict, violence and war.

Believers are to live by the law of Christ in meekness and long-suffering (Matthew 6:38-45), not seeking retaliation (Romans 12:17,19), but witnessing to the love of Christ which is to rule the heart – by loving and showing kindness to our enemies (Romans 12:20-21).

In this world the Christian is to “be subject to the governing authorities” (Romans 13:1), and in the matter of war this presents a dilemma. Friends respect the conviction of believers as to whether they can in good conscience participate in military service.

## **E. Oaths**

The New Testament (Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12) teaches that for Christians there is no need to swear to tell the truth but that rather, speaking the truth should be their normal continuing practice. For this reason Friends have rejected the often required swearing to tell the truth, and have insisted that merely affirming the intention to tell the truth is sufficient to verify what we are about to state. We are grateful that the civil authorities have long granted us, and all others of like mind, the right to this practice.

## **F. Equality of Persons**

Friends have long been convinced of the equality of all persons and find that Scripture compels us to this view. We are therefore concerned for improvement in the situation of those who are underprivileged, neglected, and victimized by injustice and persecution. Any person should find freedom to worship and participate in the life of our congregations regardless of color, sex, social class, or nationality. In all their dealings with others, Friends should be just, respectful, sensitive, and moved by the love of Christ. Friends support the right of every person to enjoy access to public accommodations, employment on merit alone, use of qualified leadership, and suitable housing. Friends should support such concerns in all ways that are non-violent and that maintain respect for authority and law.

## **Certain Current Issues**

Friends desire to state their beliefs with regard to certain issues, beliefs and practices which are currently of concern to the church.

### **A. Stewardship of the Earth and its Resources**

Friends believe that when God in the beginning gave people dominion over the Earth He did not grant the license to do whatever they might wish with its riches, but that rather He made people the stewards of what was and remains God's by creation and rulership. People therefore are permitted the use of the earth and its resources, but as stewards they must use them wisely, carefully, and as under the eye of their owner. Unplanned increase of population and wasteful and destructive use of the earth's resources to support an extravagant style of life while others must exist in poverty and squalor is contrary to the Scriptures (1 John 3:17). Consequently, both in our own practice and in what we urge upon the governments of the world, Friends should be conscientious examples of acceptable stewardship.

### **B. Abortion**

Friends believe that all life is a gift of God (Genesis 2:7; Job 33:1); therefore when the matter of an abortion is being considered, neither the life of the mother nor of the unborn child is to be lightly treated. We hold that abortion on demand or for reasons of personal convenience, social adjustment, or economic advantage is morally wrong.

## **C. Homosexuality**

Friends are firm in the conviction that the Scriptures make abundantly clear the sinfulness of all homosexual and deviant sexual acts (Romans 1; I Corinthians 6). We believe that homosexual tendencies may be overcome by the grace of God. We also believe that forgiveness for deviant acts may be obtained by sincere repentance and faith in Christ.

## **D. Pornography**

Since pornographic materials promote and propagate a lifestyle that includes activities which are condemned by God's Word and tempt viewers to commit the sin of lust (Matthew 5:27-28; Romans 13:11; II Peter 2:14,18-19). Friends therefore are urged to carefully avoid exposure to such materials.

Because of our responsibility as Christian citizens (Matthew 5:13; Proverbs 14:34) and in view of the evil, exploitative, and destructive effects of pornography on individuals, families, and our society, Friends are encouraged to prayerfully and boldly oppose the production and distribution of pornographic materials in their local communities, as well as at the state and national levels (Ephesians 5:11).

## **E. Cults and Related Practices**

Friends believe that the numerous cults, such as Transcendental Meditation, the Hare Krishna movement, and the Unification Church led by Sun Myung Moon, preach other gospels than that of Jesus Christ and offer other saviors than He. Some are based more or less openly on non-Christian religions such as Hinduism. We also repudiate the false interpretation of Scriptures put forth by such groups as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons (The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints), Unity and Christian Science. We therefore, upon authority of Scripture (Matthew 24:4-5; Galatians 1:8-9) take our stand against all such false teachings.

Friends believe that all access to God is through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and that therefore the use of mediums, clairvoyants, fortune tellers, astrologers, and any other alleged means of extraordinary knowledge or help is contrary to the will of God.

We oppose all dabbling in spiritism, spirit possession and worship, and Satanism, as well as the denial of the reality of Satan. Rather, we believe in the existence of the Evil One, "that old serpent which is the Devil, and Satan," (Revelation 20:2) who tempted our first parents to sin, and through their disobedience brought about the fall of our race, with all its attendant degeneracy, unhappiness, and misery. We believe that Satan has revealed his evil character and purpose in his mighty opposition to Christ in the temptations in the wilderness and to His reign in all ages. But we also believe that his power is limited, and that in God's own time he will be chained and finally cast into the lake of fire (Genesis 3; Matthew 4:1; Job 1:6; Revelation 20:10).

## **F. Differences with Other Christians**

Friends have warm fellowship with groups of Christians with whom we must nevertheless differ in the following matters:

## **Security of the Believer**

Friends believe that the security of the believer, even for eternity, is indicated in God's Word and witnessed to by the Holy Spirit to the individual, but we do not hold this security to be unconditional. As repentance and faith are the human conditions of acceptance of God's free offer of salvation, so obedience and faith are necessary to continuance in that salvation (Hebrews 5:9; I John 2:4).

## **Healing**

We believe that while all healing is divine there are still instances of healing which must be considered so unusual as to be miraculous. Nevertheless we do not believe that it is God's will to heal every illness by miraculous intervention, and we particularly reject that view of divine healing which sees it as a part of the atonement which is as universally available as is the forgiveness of sins. We fear the loss of faith which may result from the belief that the presence of illness proves spiritual guilt or failure. On the other hand, we acknowledge that we have not always availed ourselves as we ought of the prayer of faith which will secure the healing of the sick.

## **Gifts of the Spirit**

The Holy Spirit, in His divine wisdom, bestows gifts upon individual members of the congregation to empower them to fulfill their function as members of the body of Christ. The purpose of these gifts is for the edification of the entire church, and they are to be used as God directs them for their usefulness. The display of gifts which causes confusion, strife and division within the congregation does not honor God or benefit believers. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (I Corinthians 14:33). In the gathering for public worship, we are to let all things be done decently and in order (I Corinthians 14:40). The Holy Spirit is a Gift (Acts 2:38) and He is to be desired more than the gifts He bestows.