

September 2005

# Hessel Church

## Doctrinal Statement: What We Believe

**S**ince our earliest beginnings in 1909, Hessel Church has enjoyed a rich spiritual legacy. The faithful saints of our fellowship have demonstrated a never-ending dependence and reliance on the Word of God. Our forefathers understood that God revealed Himself, His plan, His great love and all that is necessary for us in the pages of Scriptures.

Today we humbly embrace our rich heritage and desire to pass it along to all who will follow. We understand that though we are living in a day of rationalism, God's Word will not change, let us down or ever lead us astray. For this reason, we look to it for direction, comfort, help and wisdom. Jesus' words in John 17:17 that God's "... word is truth" is a promise we hold dear and accept as we practically apply it's message to our generation.

The following articles are the doctrine of Hessel Church. Each is based upon our study and understanding of Scripture. According to our *Constitution and By-Laws*, all **members** must accept this doctrinal statement (Art. 6, Sec. 2). We believe that sharing these beliefs is vitally important to our ongoing ministry.

All **leaders** (Pastors, Elders, Trustees,

Mission's Committee Chairman and Corporate Board members) shall align themselves and support the theological positions found here.

All **teachers** of Hessel Church must support and teach these theological positions.

While it is clearly understood that we (finite) followers of Christ will never fully understand our (infinite) God, we embrace these basic doctrines together. ~ **Board of Elders**

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## ARTICLE 1

### **B**ible (Bibliology)

#### Sec. 1 Revelation

We believe that God in loving, merciful concern for mankind, has taken the initiative to reveal and communicate truth about His existence, His attributes and His will through the incarnation of Christ (Heb. 1:3); the Scriptures (Jn. 5:39); creation (Rom. 1:18-21, Ps. 19:1-6); providential dealings (Dan. 4:35); preservation of the universe (Col. 1:17); miracles (John 2:11, Heb. 2:3,4); direct communication (Exodus 3:4); and conscience (Rom. 2:14, 15, 16).

#### Sec. 2 Inspiration

We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scripture. By this we mean that all Scripture is "God-breathed" and that holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit to write the very words of Scripture (verbal inspiration) 2 Pt. 1:20, 21. We further believe that this divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the writings--historical, poetical, doctrinal and prophetic--in their original manuscripts (plenary inspiration) 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. We believe that the Bible is both inerrant (it perfectly communicates what the author intended) and infallible (its words accurately communicate truth).

#### Sec. 3 Scriptures

We believe that all the Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work in His first and second coming, and hence that no portion, even of the Old Testament, is properly read or understood, until it leads to Him. We also believe that all *the Scriptures* were designed for our practical instruction and are to be the Christian's *final authority in faith and practice* (Mark 12:26, 36; Luke 24:27,44; John 5:39; Acts 17:2-3,

18:28, 26:22-23, 28:23; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; Heb. 10:1-10; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

We believe that the 66 books of the Bible represent the complete canon, which has been tested, found satisfactory, and proven to be inspired.

We follow a grammatical-historical form of Biblical interpretation. By this we mean that all interpretation must be gleaned through study of the grammar (how it appears in the sentence and context) and the historical setting and genre of the text.

## ARTICLE 2

### **G**odhead (Trinity)

We believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - and that these three are one God, the Trinity. They have precisely the same nature, attributes, and perfections, and are worthy of precisely the same honor, confidence, and obedience (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 3:16-17; 28:18-19; Mark 12:29; John 1:1-14; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 1:4-6).

We believe that God has both non-communicable and communicable attributes. His non-communicable attributes (those possessed by God alone) are: omnipresence (Ps. 139:7-12), omniscience (Jer. 23:23-25, Is. 46:9-10), omnipotence (Job 42:2, Matt. 19:26), and immutability (Mal. 3:6 and Jam. 1:17). His communicable attributes (those which can be assumed by man through God's Spirit) are essentially four: holiness (Lev. 11:4, 1 Pet. 1:15), righteousness and justice (Ps. 89:14), truth (John 17:3), and goodness (Mark 10:18), which includes qualities such as: love (2 Cor. 13:11),

benevolence (Ps. 145:9), mercy (Jam. 5:11), and grace (1 John 2:2).

### ARTICLE 3

#### **G**od the Father (Theology Proper)

We believe that, according to the Scriptures, the First Person of the Godhead is the One who designed the program of redemption through His Son (Eph. 1:3-6; John 3:16, 14:16; Ps. 2:7-9). He is the ultimate object of all praise, worship, homage and glory (John 15, 17). Scripture also identifies Him as the One by whom both the Son and the Holy Spirit were sent. In the fall of man, it was the Father's divine will which was violated (Rom. 3:23).

### ARTICLE 4

#### **G**od the Son (Christology)

We believe that the Son of God, Jesus created all things, "both in the heavens and on earth" (Col. 1:16). We believe that He was "before all things, and in Him all things hold together." (Col. 1:17).

We believe that the Son of God, though eternally co-existent with the Father, came into this world in precisely the way planned by the Father and prophesied in the Scriptures (John 1:1-2, 1 John 4:14). He came that He might manifest the Father to men, fulfilling prophecy, and become the Redeemer of a lost world (Luke 4:17-21, Heb. 1:3, 1 John 2:2). To these ends He was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14, Matt. 1:23) and

was given a human body and a sinless human nature (Luke 1:30-35), yet He continued to be God.

We believe that, though He faced the same trying, tempting situations that mankind has always faced, He lived sinlessly, becoming the only One qualified to offer the supreme sacrifice for sin demanded by His righteous Father (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:19).

We believe that, in infinite love for the lost, He voluntarily accepted His Father's will and became the divinely provided sacrificial Lamb, taking away the sin of the world, and making a life pleasing to God possible for all who would trust in Him (Phil. 2:5-8; John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:14-15).

We believe Christ lives today, having risen bodily from the grave, and that all believers will receive a resurrected body like His (Matt. 28:6; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 20).

We believe that, on departing from the earth, He was accepted by His Father and that His acceptance is a final assurance to us that His redeeming work was perfectly accomplished (Heb. 1:3).

We believe that He became head over all things to the church which is His body. He is seated at the right hand of His Father, performing His intercessory ministry on behalf of all those who have believed in Him for salvation (Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1). He will return to earth in the same bodily manner in which He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11).

### ARTICLE 5

#### **G**od the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

We believe that the third co-equal member of the Godhead, though omnipresent from all eternity, took up His abode in the world in a special sense on the day of Pentecost. According to divine promise, He dwells today in every believer, uniting all believers in Christ into one body (the church), and is the source of all power and all acceptable worship and service (John 14:16-17; 1 Cor. 12:13, 6:19; Rom. 8).

We believe that the Spirit will never depart from the church, nor from the weakest of saints, but will always be present to testify of Jesus Christ, seeking to fill believers with Himself, and not with themselves or their experiences (Eph. 4:30, 5:18; John 16:7-15).

We believe in the Holy Spirit as the particular divine author of the Scriptures, and as the divine interpreter of the Word (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Certain well-defined ministries are committed to the Holy Spirit today, including: restraining evil in the world; convicting the world in respect to sin, righteousness, judgment; regenerating, indwelling, baptizing, and sealing all believers at the moment of their salvation; and subsequently filling, comforting, and guiding those who subject themselves to His will (John 16:7-13, 2 Thes. 2:7, Titus 3:5, 1 Cor. 3:16, Rom. 8:14).

We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is giving life to the Church (all who believe) and giving to its members gifts for the purpose of edification. We believe that some gifts such as speaking in tongues and miraculous healings are temporary (1 Cor. 13:8). We believe that speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of the baptism or of the filling of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12-14).

## ARTICLE 6

## **M**an (Anthropology)

We believe that mankind (both male and female) was created by God in His own image, and therefore is, like God, a personal, rational, and moral being. God has endowed man with dominion and personality, and has given to him the capacities for love, God-consciousness, and holiness (Gen. 1:26, 27).

We believe Adam was created morally and spiritually perfect, but untested. In his time of testing, and in the exercise of his own free will, he fell from his created position before God, casting the entire human race to follow into the bondage of the sin nature, with Jesus Christ Himself the only exception (Gen. 3:1-19, Rom. 5:12-19).

This sin nature not only possesses no spark of divine life, but is essentially and unchangeably evil apart from God's grace. As a consequence of his sin, man has lost his spiritual life, become dead in trespasses and sins, and subject to Satan's power (Is. 64:6; Jer. 17:9).

## ARTICLE 7

## **S**alvation (Soteriology)

We believe that, because of universal death through sin, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless born again (John 3:3; Rom. 3:23). We hold that no degree of reformation however great, no attainments in morality however high, no culture however attractive and no baptism or other ordinance however administered, can help the sinner to take even one step toward heaven (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). Scripture teaches that a new nature imparted only from above and implanted by the Holy Spirit through the Word is absolutely essential to

Salvation, and only those thus saved are sons of God (2 Cor. 5:17, 21). We believe, also, that our redemption has been accomplished solely by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made to be sin for us, dying in our place (Lev. 17:11; Matt. 26:29; Gal. 3:13). We believe that no repentance, no feeling, no faith, no good resolutions no sincere efforts, and no submissions to the rules and regulations of any church, can add in the very least degree to the value of the blood, or to the merit of the finished work by Christ.

We believe that the new birth of the believer comes only by grace through faith in Christ and that repentance, though a vital part of believing, is in no way, in itself, a separate and independent condition of salvation. There are no other acts, such as confession, baptism, prayer, or faithful service, to be added to believing as a condition of salvation (John 1:12, 3:16, 18, 36, 5:24, 6:29, 16:31; Rom. 1:16-17, 3:26, 4:5).

We believe that when an unregenerate person is saved, he passes immediately out of spiritual death into spiritual life (John 5:24). He is justified from all things and accepted before the Father just as Christ His Son is accepted. He is loved as Christ is loved, having his place and portion as linked to Jesus Christ. He is one with Him forever (John 17:23).

Though the sanctification of the believer is a life long process, his salvation is immediate. At the moment of salvation, the believer comes in possession of every spiritual blessing and is absolutely complete in Christ (Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 3:21-23). He is, therefore, in no way required by God to seek a so-called "second blessing," or a "second work of grace" (Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10; 1 John 4:17, 5:11-12).

We believe that because of the very nature of the divine gift of eternal life, we

and all true believers everywhere, once saved shall be kept saved forever (John 5:24, 10:28, 11:16-17). We believe, however, that God is a holy and righteous Father and that, since He cannot overlook the sin of His children, He will, when they persistently sin, chasten and correct them in infinite love (Heb. 12:5-11). Having undertaken to save them and keep them forever, apart from all human merit, He, who cannot fail, will in the end present every one of them faultless before the presence of His glory and conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29; Jude 1:24).

We believe it is the privilege of all who are born again by the Spirit through faith in Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, to be assured of their salvation from the very day they take Him to be their Savior. This assurance is not founded upon any fancied discovery of their own worthiness or fitness, but wholly upon the testimony of God in His written word, exciting within His children love, gratitude, and obedience (Luke 10:20; 2 Cor. 5:1, 6-8; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 John 5:13).

## ARTICLE 8

### **C**hurch (Ecclesiology)

We believe that all who are united by faith to the risen and ascended Son of God are members of His Church. The Church is universal in nature and is the body and bride of Christ. The Church began at Pentecost and will continue until the rapture (Acts 2:2-4; 1 Thess. 4:16). Affiliation with the organized churches of the world in no way affects one's qualification to be a member of Christ's body, the Church (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:2-4).

We believe in the local assembly, which is organized for: The study of the Word of God, the worship of Jesus Christ, fellowship with

other believers, administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, discipline, and the promotion of the work of Christ throughout the whole world (Acts 2:42-47; Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:3-10; Col. 3:14-15).

We believe that by the same Spirit all believers in this age, whether Jews or Gentiles, are baptized into, and thus become, one body that is Christ's (1 Cor. 12:12-27). Having become members one of another, they are under solemn duty to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all petty differences, and fervently loving one another with a pure heart (Acts 2:42-47; Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:3-10; Col. 3:14-15).

## ARTICLE 9

### **A**ngels (Angelology)

We believe that God created an innumerable company of sinless, spiritual beings, known as angels. One of them, "Lucifer, son of the morning" -- the highest in rank-- sinned through pride, was cast out of Heaven and became Satan (Is. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:11-19). A great company of the angels followed him in his moral fall. Of these, some demons are active as Satan's agents and associates in carrying out his unholy purposes, while others who fell have been "committed ... to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6).

We believe that Satan is the originator of sin, and that, under the permission of God, he, through subtlety, led Adam and Eve into transgression, thereby accomplishing their moral fall and subjecting them and their posterity to his own power (Gen. 3:1-19; Rom. 5:12-14).

He is the enemy of God and the people of God, opposing and exalting himself

above God. In his warfare, he functions as an angel of light and as a devouring, roaring lion, even counterfeiting the works of God by fostering religious movements and systems of doctrine, which in most cases are characterized by a denial of the efficacy of the blood of Christ and of salvation by grace alone (2 Cor. 4:3-4; 11:13-15; ; 2 Thess. 2:4; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 1 Pet. 5:8, Eph. 6:10-12).

We believe that a great company of angels kept their holy estate and are before the throne of God. From there they are sent forth as ministering spirits for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Luke 15:10; Heb. 1:14; Rev. 7:11, 12).

We believe that man was made lower than the angels; and that, in His incarnation, Christ took for a time this lower place that He might lift the believer to His own sphere above the angels (Hebrews 2:6-10; Philippians 2:5-11, Psalm 8:4).

## ARTICLE 10

### **F**uture Things (Eschatology)

#### Sec. 1 Rapture

We believe that, according to the Word of God, the next great event in the fulfillment of prophecy will be the coming of the Lord in the air to receive into heaven both His own who are alive and remain unto His coming, and also all who have died as Christians. This event which we term the Rapture of the Church is the blessed hope set before us in the Scripture, and for this we should be constantly looking (John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14).

#### Sec. 2 Judgment Seat of Christ

We believe that when all believers enter heaven, they will be forever with their Lord. In heaven, they will be righteously judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ which focuses itself on the life works of each believer as to motives, whether motivated by the flesh or by the Spirit of God. Each believer will receive rewards for that which he has done as he was led by the Holy Spirit. Each believer will be denied rewards for those things motivated by pride and the flesh (1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10).

### Sec. 3 **Tribulation**

We believe that the rapture of the Church will be followed on earth by the tribulation. This is the fulfillment of prophecy spoken of as Daniel's seventieth week (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 6:1-19:21) during which the church will be in heaven. This whole period of seven years (divided into two halves three and one-half years each) will be a time of judgment on the earth. The latter half will be a period of unprecedented judgment, which our Lord called the great tribulation (Matt. 24:15-21).

We believe that universal righteousness will not be realized prior to the second coming of Christ to the earth, but that every day the world is moving toward judgment (Matt. 24:21).

### Sec. 4 **Second Coming of Christ and Millennial Reign**

We believe that the period of great tribulation on the earth will be climaxed by the triumphant return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth. He will return with His saints as He went, in person on the clouds of heaven, and with power and great glory (Lk. 21:27) to introduce the millennial age. He will temporarily bind Satan and place him in the abyss (Rev. 20:2-3) and will lift the curse which now rests upon the whole creation (Is. 65:25).

At the end of the thousand year millennial reign of Christ, Satan will be loosed for his final deception of the nations (Rev. 20:7-8), only to be met by Christ's judgment. Satan will be condemned and bound to the eternal punishments of hell (Rev. 20:10).

### Sec. 5 **Eternal State**

We believe that at death the souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation pass immediately into His presence and there remain in a conscious state until the resurrection of their glorified bodies when Christ comes for His own (Luke 16:19-26; 23:42-43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23).

The souls of the unbelieving remain after death conscious of condemnation and in misery until the final judgment of the Great White Throne at the close of the millennium. Then soul and body reunited shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated, but to be punished with everlasting torment separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (Phil. 1:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:11-15).

## ARTICLE 11

### **C**hristian Walk

We believe that we are called with a holy calling, to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. We are to live in the power of the indwelling Spirit in order that we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. The flesh, which in this life is never eradicated, needs to be kept by the Spirit constantly in subjection to Christ, or it will surely manifest its presence in our lives to the dishonor of our Lord. (Rom. 6:11-13, 8:2,

4; 12-13; Gal. 5:16-18; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; 1 John 1:4-7, 3:5-9; Eph. 2:8-10).

## ARTICLE 12

### **P**osition Statements

For the sake of unity and harmony within the Body of Christ, Hessel Church embraces the following position statements. These are not on equal footing with the above mentioned doctrines, however, they are nonetheless very important to the church's continued ministry, fellowship and unity.

#### Sec. 1 Tongues Position

Sec. 1.1 Hessel Church is not a "charismatic" nor a "tongues movement" organization.

Sec. 1.2 We acknowledge that God is sovereign and can give the gift of tongues whenever He pleases. But:

Sec. 1.2.1 We believe that the gift of tongues was a gift of foreign languages for the purpose of telling the Gospel to others, mainly Jews. (Acts 2:5-11, 1 Cor. 14:21-22).

Sec. 1.2.2 We believe that such a gift was neither a requirement to prove the presence of the Holy Spirit nor an indication of deep spiritual experience. (1 Cor. 12, 13, 14).

Sec. 1.2.3 We do not see "tongues speaking" as a normative experience for all believers in the first century church, nor for believers today (1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28-31). Nor do we believe that Christians should be urged to adopt a stereotypical "tongues" experience, but rather we believe that those not having this experience are complete and "full gospel" Christians (1 Cor. 12:13).

Sec. 1.2.4 We believe that Christians are commanded to be filled with

(controlled by) the Holy Spirit, not to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Being baptized in the Spirit (identified in the body of Christ, the Church) is accomplished in people's lives by the Holy Spirit the moment they accept Christ Jesus as their personal Savior (Eph. 5:18; 1 Cor. 12:13). We believe that "speaking in tongues" does not need to accompany the baptism of the Holy Spirit, especially as regards it being proof of salvation, and that insisting on this is divisive and unscriptural. In the same chapter in which we are informed that all are baptized by the Holy Spirit we are told that not all speak in tongues, nor are they supposed to do so (1 Cor. 12:1, 12:30).

Sec. 1.2.5 We believe that no single gift of the Holy Spirit is the indispensable sign that a believer is filled with the Spirit. It is the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23), that gives greater evidence of the Spirit's control. The gifts of the Spirit enable us to expound the Word of God and to expand the work of God (Rom. 12:5-8; Eph. 4:11-16).

Sec. 1.2.6 We believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are just that — gifts; and that one cannot tell another what gifts he must receive. The Holy Spirit is the sovereign Giver and He will distribute "to each one individually just as He wills." (1 Cor. 12:11). Neither does The Holy Spirit need human intervention in order to bestow His gifts.

Sec. 1.2.7 We believe that the silence of almost all of the New Testament writers concerning "tongues speaking"

is significant. Whereas there are many references to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, there is comparatively little information given to “tongues”. There are only three references to this in the Book of Acts (Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-46; 19:1-6), and in only one Epistle (1 Corinthians) is the subject discussed.

Sec. 1.2.8 We believe that “speaking in tongues” is not an “instant entrance” into deeper spiritual life. It is a false assumption to contend that this experience is an evidence of a person’s faith or of spiritual maturity. A mature Christian experience involves worship, a relationship of trust, confession of sin, prayer, Bible study, witnessing, love-filled service, etc. It would appear that seeking sign-gifts often indicates a lack of faith (1 Cor. 14:22; Matt. 12:38-39; John 10:24-30).

Sec. 1.3 It is very important to emphasize that Hessel Church is *non*-charismatic rather than *anti*-charismatic. We see our charismatic brothers as fellow Christians, and therefore love and seek to live in harmony with them.

**Sec. 3 Affiliation Position:**

Hessel Church shall remain an independent, non-denominational fellowship.

We shall affiliate ourselves with the American Missionary Fellowship (AMF), formerly known as the American Sunday School Union. This church-planting mission provided the leadership for our early Sunday School and church development. We cooperatively work with A.M.F.'s leadership in providing our Church with Christian camp and conference programming. We shall support AMF with our finances and our fellowship. We shall be free to have fellowship with

other evangelical Churches and their missionaries.

Hessel Church will not affiliate with the *National* or *World Council of Churches*. We believe that both of the above organizations are not true to the teachings in the Word of God and, therefore, we deliberately separate ourselves from their movement.

This *Doctrinal Statement* document will only be amended after thorough study, deliberation and prayer by the board of elders. Any changes will be immediately communicated and explained to the membership in written and oral form.