

## **Statement of Faith First Fulshear Methodist Church**

### **THIS WE BELIEVE**

In the early days of the Church, new believers were baptized and welcomed into the faith on Easter Sunday. They would confess their faith before the congregation as the leader asked them to respond to each of the core beliefs of the Christian faith (often taken from The Apostles' Creed). For example, the leader would ask, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, God the Son, as your Lord?" The new believers would respond, "Yes, this we believe." This pattern of affirmation continued for each of the core beliefs of the faith.

Today, we ascend to these same beliefs of the historical Christian faith as given to us by Jesus Christ, the Apostles, and the early church leaders disciples by the Apostles. We join with the great cloud of witnesses gone before us (Hebrews 12:1-2) in affirming the following foundational doctrines of the Christian faith as we too declare, "This we believe."

1. **Authority of Scripture** – The Bible is the inspired Word of God, fully true, and is our authority for all that we believe and do (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matthew 5:17-19).
2. **The Triune God** – There is one true God who exists eternally in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:26; Matthew 3:16-17; Matthew 28:19; John 14:9; Acts 5:4, 9; 2 Corinthians 13:14).
3. **Deity of Christ** – Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human, born of a virgin birth (Matthew 1:18-23; John 1:1, 14; Colossians 2:9). Jesus is divine, not merely a good teacher or a righteous man.
4. **Christ's Atoning Death** – The penalty for sin is death, both physically and spiritually (Romans 6:23). The penalty for our sins was paid by Jesus Christ through his death in the cross (Mark 10:45; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 3:18). The only acceptable payment had to be perfect, complete, and without fault. Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, gave Himself in our place, so that whoever believes in Him will not die (spiritually) but will have eternal life with God (John 3:16).
5. **Resurrection of Christ** – The atoning death of Christ paid for our sins, but our salvation was not complete until Jesus defeated death by being physically resurrected in the same body (Luke 24:39; Romans 4:25; Romans 6:4-9; Romans 10:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:3-6).
6. **Christ's Second Coming** – Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus was taken up or bodily ascended into heaven where He now sits at the right hand of the Father (Luke 24; 50-51; Acts 1:9-10; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1). Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead (Matthew 24-25; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 19-22). True

believers will live with Christ forever while unbelievers will be separated from God's goodness forever. Jesus is coming again and we should be ready (Luke 12:40).

7. **Salvation by Grace through Faith** – Because of our depravity, there is nothing we can do to save ourselves (Romans 3:10-11). It is by God's grace alone that salvation from eternal separation from God is possible. Undeserving as we are of God's goodness, by God's mercy and grace, those who put their trust and faith in Jesus Christ will avoid judgement and be united with God for eternity (John 1:12, John 3:16; John 15:5; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7). Faith is trusting that only God can and will save us (Hebrews 11:6).

## **About Beliefs**

### ***Convictions, Persuasions, and Opinions***

Our beliefs are at the very core of who we are as a person and as a society. Our beliefs shape us, define who we are, and guide us in how we see and understand the world around us. They shape our reality by influencing our behaviors, our interactions with others, and how we live in relationship to others (God, our spouse, children, friends, coworkers, etc.). Everyone has political, social, cultural, and religious beliefs.

When it comes to our faith or religious beliefs, it may be helpful to recognize there are three levels of belief in the Christian faith. Dr. Alan Scholes, a theologian, developed this idea when he demarcated beliefs into convictions, persuasions, and opinions.

**Convictions** are our non-negotiable beliefs. They are so critical that we would be willing to die for them or break fellowship over them. They are clearly taught in many passages of the Word of God and confirmed by Church history with a general if not perfect consensus. The core beliefs outlined in "This We Believe" are convictions deemed essential to salvation. Other prevailing beliefs long held by the Church and repeatedly affirmed in Scripture can also be considered convictions or core beliefs (e.g., matters related to human sexuality, marriage, and the sanctity of life).

**Persuasions** are beliefs about which we are personally certain, but we can still fellowship with others who disagree with us since they are not core, central beliefs. Persuasions are matters to which the Scriptures speak but are not among the main themes of God's Word. We can have firm persuasions and argue them respectfully, but we should accept others whose viewpoint on the belief differs from ours.

**Opinions** are beliefs that are not clearly taught in the Scriptures or which may legitimately differ among believers. Our opinions can change frequently as they are usually on subjects we may not have personally studied or on which the Bible is silent or ambiguous.

The Church's central beliefs or convictions have been declared in creeds for two millennia. Creeds are a statement or declaration of convictions. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed are the best known and among the oldest creeds of the Church. Of the 150 creeds officially recognized across the Church, others that are universal (i.e., not specific to one denomination) include the Athanasian and Chalcedonian Creeds.

The historic Christian faith is determined by Holy Scripture, affirmed by its creeds and confessions, and enriched through centuries of doctrinal heritage. *It is not the product of personal opinion, individual experiences, or human knowledge.* Through its steadfastness, it offers the world something much more life-giving than the limited and constantly shifting wisdom of the world. It offers us a transformational relationship with the living God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

### ***The Apostles' Creed***

*Circa 200-400*

*I believe* in God, the Father Almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth,

*I believe* in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day He rose again;  
He ascended into heaven,  
is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

*I believe* in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

### ***The Nicene Creed***

*Circa 325*

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,

eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son  
is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic\* and apostolic church.  
We acknowledge one baptism  
for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

## **The Sacraments**

### **Observed and Practiced at First Fulshear**

We believe there are two sacraments ordained by Jesus Christ as symbols and pledges of God's love for us: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.

#### ***Holy Baptism***

Baptism is our initiation into the Church of Jesus Christ and our identification as children of God. God initiates this relationship and chooses us as daughters and sons, thus beginning our life-long journey of faith. God's choice happens regardless of age or our response. Because God chooses us once and for all, the act of Holy Baptism should not be repeated. Those who were baptized as infants or young children do not need to be baptized again. When baptized as infants or young children, the child must later make the choice to confirm their belief in Christ to continue as members of the Church. This is traditionally done through the act of Confirmation which follows a period of study and reflection in the Christian faith. At First

Fulshear, we conduct Confirmation classes each year for youth in Grade 6 and up. We practice baptism by pouring or immersion, depending on the age and preferences of the person being baptized. Please contact the Church Office if you have questions or would like to register for baptism.

### ***Holy Communion***

Holy Communion or The Lord's Supper is regularly observed at First Fulshear. On the night before His death, Jesus celebrated a special meal with His disciples. He charged His Church with regularly observing this feast in order to remember His sacrifice for us and to celebrate our new life through His death and resurrection.

Holy Communion is a time for us to renew our relationship with Jesus Christ. It exemplifies our union with Jesus Christ as well as with each other. God offers this relationship to everyone, so anyone, regardless of age or church affiliation, who desires to receive Holy Communion is welcome to participate. Jesus invites to His table all who love Him, all who seek to live in peace with their neighbor, and confess their sins to the holy and living God.

We believe Christ is spiritually present in the elements of bread and wine (we use an unfermented kind so that it can be received by everyone without concern) but not that it becomes the actual body and blood of Christ upon consecration.