

## **Lamb of God Fellowship**

### ***Common Concerns***

God is renewing his church, calling it back to himself, emphasizing those characteristics he always intended for his people. The Alliance for Renewal Churches is part of that renewal movement and identifies the following distinctives as those to which its church bodies are committed.

#### **ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY**

We are part of the church catholic, and we stand with, not apart from, this church universal which today and throughout the ages is that body of believers founded upon Jesus Christ and his atonement for our sins. Because the church is his creation, its history reveals a common doctrine of orthodox faith and practice. This orthodoxy is reflected in the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist, and in the church's common credal confessions which we also embrace, i.e., the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Chalcedonian Creed. Because these creeds reflect the clear teaching of Scripture, which is God's only written revelation, they provide the benchmark for orthodoxy today.

As part of the church catholic, we remain open and cordial toward all who name the name of Christ and share with us this commitment to orthodoxy as the basis for Christian faith, whether or not we hold in common with them other concerns for the church in our age.

#### **COMMON CONCERNS**

The creeds are the foundation of our common agreement. But God has called us together as churches because we also share certain additional values and hopes. We do not wish to further the splintering of the church, which characterizes our age, but there are certain concerns which we deem important to the life and health of our churches and which we have not always heard clearly voiced by other expressions of Christ's body in our day. We believe that God has placed us together providentially at least in part so these concerns might be expressed.

We do not hold these concerns in such a way that by them we deliberately set ourselves above or apart from the rest of the church. We embrace them as parts of the true gospel of Jesus Christ which are often muted in our day and which need to be expressed anew.

As such, these common concerns are to a certain extent the basis of our relationships together as churches. These concerns provide an objective ground on which we stand together, and they provide practical direction for our relationships. These are the things to which we believe God has called us. These concerns form our lives together in a concrete and tangible way.

Our common concerns, however, are not exclusionary and legal weapons in our hands. Thus, we emphasize their importance to our relationships as churches, but we by no means view them as the sole determinant of those relationships. Our more basic commitment is to love each other as churches and persons in the name of Jesus Christ. These concerns are the occasion of our coming together; they remain the visible sign of our commitment in love. As such we embrace them together with joy.

**GRACE** - Central to the Christian life is the grace of God. God has shown his love for us in Christ, giving himself to us, forgiving our sins, and creating new life in us through Jesus Christ without regard for our works, whether good or evil. Grace and grace alone is the basis of our complete objective righteousness before God. Grace, which is experienced by faith and which produces good works, forms the foundation for all our relationships as Christian people.

**AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE** - The Scriptures are our touchstone for truth in all matters regarding the Christian life. We wholeheartedly affirm the words of the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 in speaking of the place of Scripture in the Christian life, as it says:

"We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We also affirm the power of God's word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. The message of the Bible is addressed to all men and women, for God's revelation in Christ and in Scripture is unchangeable. Through it the Holy Spirit still speaks today. He illumines the minds of God's people in every culture to perceive its truth freshly through their own eyes and thus discloses to the whole Church ever more of the many-colored wisdom of God."

We place ourselves under the authority of the Scripture and submit to that authority in exegesis, theology, and preaching, as well as in the living of our lives both individually and corporately.

**THE EMPOWERING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** - God has given of himself to the church in the person of the Holy Spirit, and by the Spirit God himself indwells every believer. The Spirit applies God's Word to our hearts in power, produces in us new life and victory over sin, and gives gifts to God's people both natural and supernatural for the building up of the church.

We must rely on the Holy Spirit in every aspect of our lives: in ministry, in struggle with sin, and in each area of responsibility to which we are called. We trust the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth, to apply that truth to our lives, and to gift us charismatically in many and varied ways for God's service.

**WORSHIP** - The chief end of men and women is communion with God, and the chief expression of that communion is worship. As a people and as individuals, Christians are to live with the praises of God on their lips, whether in prosperity or in adversity.

Worship is preeminent in our lives before God as individuals and as churches. As the people of God, we regularly gather to sing God's praises and to recount to one another his glorious deeds. Because all believers are priests before God, active participation in worship is essential to the Christian life we share in common.

**UNITY** - The oneness of the church is rooted in the fact that we share the same Spirit who has made us one body in Christ. This unity is created by God, apprehended by faith, and practiced in hope of its more complete realization in this age and the age to come.

We place a preeminent value on unity, seeking to rise above sectarianism for the sake of our brotherhood. We affirm both the unity and diversity of the church, respecting diversity while working toward unity in love and service.

**HUMAN IDENTITY** - Men and women are made in the image of God; therefore, each human being is special and important with individual integrity that must be respected. Each of us was created to find the fullness of our identity in personal fellowship with God, for whom we are made. The present human condition is fallen and abnormal. The corruption of sin has affected all human activities. Nevertheless, substantial healing from this corruption comes through regeneration in Jesus Christ and obedience to him. Complete healing and full restoration will come to those who belong to Christ at the resurrection of the dead.

We show honor and respect to all men and women, young and old, whole and infirm, born and unborn. We honor and respect the dignity of human life from conception. We deplore abortion and euthanasia as commonly practiced and approved in our society today, just as we deplore repressive and abusive treatment of men and women in any sphere of human activity.

**COMMUNITY** - Community is inherent in the nature of the one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is also the matrix and vital core of human life. Nowhere more than in the church are we called to live a life in community because we are members one of another having been given gifts with the express purpose of building one another up in Christ.

We reject the practices of our individualistic culture which breed isolation and alienation. We seek to live in community and with one another in our churches in as many practical ways as possible, living with and near each other, and sharing both the joys and hardships that life brings to us.

**DISCIPLESHIP** - The gospel charges us to make disciples of all people, disciples who follow Jesus Christ in both thought and practice. Discipleship includes a growing, personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ; welcoming Christ's lordship over our lives and our possessions; submitting to the doctrinal and ethical demands of his teaching in the Scripture; maturing in Christian character and godly disciplines; membering ourselves in a local church body; and serving the Lord wholeheartedly in all that we do. The church is the primary vehicle which God has ordained for stimulating and forming discipleship.

We can never be satisfied with a gospel that does not call for and establish a life of obedience to God through Jesus Christ in all areas of life, whether personal, social, or economic. It also means that discipleship flows from a heart warm toward God, so that obedience is not burdensome but is based on our response to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

**AUTHORITY UNDER GOD** - God has seen fit to delegate to certain human authorities a portion of the authority which belongs to him alone. God requires us to submit ourselves to human governments in the world, in the church and in the home. God holds those in authority accountable not to contradict by their actions the divine source and ground of their authority.

We seek to be submissive rather than self-assertive people, living peaceably with one another in the spheres of human authority where God has placed us. This means that we honor and respect

those who serve and lead us in our homes, our churches, and in other human institutions. This also means that when we exercise authority we do so in a spirit of humility and service, being mindful of him who is head over all.

**COVENANT** - The essence of our relationship with God and our relationships with one another is expressed in covenant. God has established a new covenant with us in Christ, and we enter into this covenant of faith through the work of the Holy Spirit. In a similar way, we express the commitment of our lives to one another by establishing covenants.

Just as God has promised our redemption in the form of a covenant, so we too externalize our life together in the form of covenant. We look to the Holy Spirit to empower and lead us that our covenants might increasingly reflect the faithfulness of our God who keeps covenant with us.

**STEWARDSHIP** - The earth is the Lord's as are all of its fruits. Men and women were created to rule the world under God, but sin has corrupted that rule, which has become a selfish acquisitiveness for wealth and an arrogant abuse of the goods of the creation. Our redemption carries with it a call for an attitude of stewardship toward our material possessions and for a conscientious use of the resources of the earth.

We hold our material possessions as stewards only, not as owners. We reject the materialism of our age which amounts to idolatry, and we seek instead to live simply and openly, sharing our possessions as need arises. We also reject the ungodly exploitation of the earth so prevalent in our day, and we seek instead to work toward a use of the earth's goods while treating the good of the earth itself as a value.

**EVANGELISM** - God has given the church the message of reconciliation in Christ, and has committed to us the proclamation of the message to the whole world. The word of the gospel is good news, an announcement of God's self-sacrificial redeeming love made visible in Christ, given for the forgiveness of our sins, and calling us to a redeemed life as God's people.

We embrace our responsibility to carry the good news to all men and women, seasoning all our words with grace, speaking clearly of our need for new life in Christ, and giving an account of our faith when necessary. Because we are but sojourners in this world, we refuse to bind the message of gospel to peculiar political, economic and cultural forms which will not endure.

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY** - Faith without works is dead, and among the works which God considers to be indicative of true faith are helping those in distress, feeding those who are hungry, and ministering to all those who are captives. God is the Creator of all, and in the gospel he has declared his will to be the redemption of men and women from every kind of oppression, whether spiritual, social, economic, or political.

We, therefore, embrace our responsibility to embody God's concern for justice in human society. We recognize that this involvement may take different forms, so we refuse to bind our concern to any one political, economic, or social ideology. But we also refuse to excuse sloth or unwillingness to risk our own security on behalf of God's justice.

**HOPE** - Our Lord Jesus will return to bring the fullness of his kingdom. His kingdom is present now in foretaste, but only in foretaste, and though we see and work toward its advance in this present age, he alone will establish it fully at his coming.

All our thought and practice are conditioned by patient expectation of the return of Christ. We reject the highly specific affirmations of things which the Father alone knows, but we seek to discern the signs of the times. We reject the identification of the kingdom with any human achievement or organization, but we believe in and work for its embodiment in the church and other human relationships under Christ. We reject any underestimation of human sinfulness, but we, nonetheless, appropriate God's reign and its increase personally, politically, and socially.

## **Lamb of God**

### ***Core Beliefs***

#### **EVERY PERSON NEEDS THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST**

The church is called to the world in witness and service. With God's help we tell "our story" of the joy and blessing we have found in Christ. We open our hearts to those who are not yet Christians through sharing the Good News, hospitality, mercy, service, generosity, and encouragement; we go to other parts of the world in mission; and we give generously to world missions.

#### **THE TRUTH WE LIVE BY IS ROOTED IN SCRIPTURE**

We place ourselves under the authority of Scripture and view Scripture as the truth by which we live. The Old and New Testaments are inspired, truthful, and without error. They are the Word of God. The Holy Spirit illumines the minds of God's people in every culture to see scriptural truth afresh and to apply it in that place and season.

#### **VITAL TO OUR FAITH IS A COMMON CONFESSION**

The church has a common confession that is summarized in the ancient and reformational creeds. This core of Christian belief summarizes what the church has always believed as essential. Our unity is built on these truths, and we respect diversity in other areas.

"In essentials unity; in non-essentials, diversity; in everything, charity."

#### **ESSENTIAL TO OUR WITNESS IS THE UNITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE**

We want to stand in unity with the church of history and today's church worldwide. God calls His people to unity as part of our witness in the world (John 17:21).

#### **LOYALTY TO CHRIST SHOULD COME BEFORE OUR DIFFERENCES**

We prioritize loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ and embrace the challenge of diversity as we relate to one another. The scandal of Christianity is that often Christian people are more loyal to issues, institutions, and practices than to Christ, His person, and His work. The areas of our diversity in thought and practice are not unimportant; they are just not most important.

### **FAITH PRACTICED IS AS IMPORTANT AS CORRECT DOCTRINE**

We want our deeds to support our beliefs before the watching world. What we believe will determine how we live. How we live will determine the quality of our effectiveness in witness to the world. A biblical lifestyle characterized by loyalty to Christ, love of our brothers and sisters, purity, faithfulness, and generosity is essential to our role as witnesses in the world.

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS US**

We want our sails to be filled by the wind of the Holy Spirit as He moves in the world today. God indwells us by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit applies God's Word to our hearts in transforming power. The fruit of a Spirit-filled life is Christ-likeness. The charismatic gifts of the Spirit equip us for service and worship. We embrace the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit to enable us to glorify Christ and exalt God the Father.

### **COMMUNITY IS A BIBLICAL VALUE**

We are called to live in community-like relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Rejecting the practices of our individualistic culture which breed isolation and alienation, we seek to build one another up in Christ, to pursue good relationships, and to serve God together with our time, energy, and resources.

### **SERVICE IS EVERY MEMBER'S CALLING**

We believe that every member is called to service in the life and ministry of the church community. This is expressed in worship, pastoral care, ministry to children, administration, and ministry to the surrounding world in mercy and witness. Church leaders are called to equip the members for service. The maturity and health of a church community will be gauged by the distribution of service and ministry among the members.

### **LEADERS ARE ONE OF THE CHURCH'S GREATEST RESOURCES**

We esteem our leaders. They model the Christian life for us. They equip and care for God's people. They teach, pastor, and provide the governmental base for the church community. We recognize that leaders need to be cultivated and nurtured. Therefore, church resources should support the personal development, continuing education, and pastoral care of existing leaders and the development of new ones.

### **PASTORAL CARE IS FOR LEADERS AND MEMBERS**

We are committed to the care and support of church leaders and to a system of pastoral care for church members which utilizes the many pastorally gifted people in the church. Pastoral care can vary in form and intensity from small groups for growth, care, and service to personalized care for leaders. This care should be characterized by friendship, good personal relationships, mutual respect, openness, and humility both in giving of this care and in receiving. It should also support healthy family life.