

Articles of Faith



BACKGROUND

Since its inception, Riverside Baptist Church (RBC) has subscribed to a balanced doctrinal statement of The New Hampshire Confession (NHC) of 1833. A small revision was done when RBC adopted the confession on September 20, 1953. (For instance, the meaning of inspiration is explained. A comparison of the NHC's 1833 and RBC's 1953 will readily reveal where these revisions are applied.) Nonetheless, RBC has retained the balanced biblical statement which the NHC sought to achieve. On December 29, 2019, an augmentation to the RBC's confession (articles XIX through XXVIII) was adopted by unanimous vote with Pastor Christian J. Torres, presiding. While these articles have always been embedded in the Scriptures for millennia, it has become necessary for the 21st century church to clearly articulate them. May the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Head of the church, be glorified!

RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH ARTICLES OF FAITH

I. OF THE SCRIPTURE

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men supernaturally inspired; that it has truth without any admixture of error for its matter; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the age, the only complete and final revelation of the will of God to man; the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinions should be tried.

(EXPLANATORY)

By "the Holy Bible" we mean that collection of sixty-six books, from Genesis to Revelation, which, as originally written does not only contain and convey the Word of God, but IS the very Word of God.

By "inspiration" we mean that the books of the Bible were written by holy men of old, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, in such a definite way that their writings were supernaturally and verbally inspired and free from error, as no other writings have ever been or ever will be inspired. II Tim. 3:16-17; II Pet. 1:19-21; Acts 1:16; Acts 28:25; Psa. 119:160; Psa. 119:105; Psa. 119:130; Luke 24:25-27; John 17:17; Luke 24:44-45; Psa. 119:89; Prov. 30:5-6; Rom. 3:4; I Pet. 1:2-3; Rev. 22:19; John 12:48; Isa.

8:20; Eph. 6:17; Rom. 15:4; Luke 16:31; Psa. 19:7-11; John 5:45-47; John 5:39.

II. OF THE TRUE GOD

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, the maker and supreme ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption. Ex. 20:2-3; Gen. 17:1; I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6; John 4:24; Psa. 147:5; Psa. 83:18; Psa. 90:2; Jer. 10:10; Ex. 15:11; Rev. 4:11; I Tim. 1:17; Rom. 11:33; Mark 12:30; Matt. 28:19; John 15:26; I Cor. 12:4-6.

III. OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person; equal with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature; that He was active in the creation; that in His relation to the unbelieving world He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of judgment and of righteousness; that He bears witness to the truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the agent in the new birth; that He seals, baptizes, endures, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies and helps

the believer. John 14:16-17; Matt. 28:19; Heb. 9:14; John 14:26; Luke 1:35; Gen. 1:1-3; II Thess. 2:7; John 16:8-11; John 15:26-27; Acts 5:30-32; John 3:5-6; Eph. 1:13-14; Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 11:16; Luke 24:49; John 16:13; John 14:26; Rom. 8:14; Rom. 8:16; II Thess. 2:13; I Pet.1:2; Rom. 8:26-27.

IV. OF THE DEVIL, OR SATAN

We believe that Satan was once holy, and enjoyed heavenly honors; but through pride and ambition to be as the Almighty, fell and drew after him a host of angels; that he is now the malignant prince of the power of the air, and the unholy god of this world. We hold him to be man's great tempter, the enemy of God and His Christ, the accuser of the saints, the author of all false religions, the chief power back of the present apostasy; the lord of the anti-Christ, and the author of all the powers of darkness - destined however to final defeat at the hands of God's Son, and to the judgment of an eternal justice in hell, a place prepared for him and his angels. Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:14-17; Rev. 12:9; Jude 6; II Pet. 2:4; Eph. 2:2; I Thess. 3:5; Matt. 4:1-3; I Pet. 5:8; Zech. 1:3; I John 3:8; Matt. 13:25, 37:39; Luke 22:3-4; Rev. 12:10; II Cor. 11:13-15; Mark 13:21-22; I John 4:3; II John 7; I John 2:22; Rev. 13:13-14; II Thess. 2:8-11; Rev. 19:11,16,20; Rev. 12:7-9; Rev. 20:1-3; Rev. 20:10; Matt. 25:41.

V. OF THE CREATION

We believe in the Genesis account of creation, and that it is to be accepted literally, and not allegorically or figuratively; that man was created directly in God's image and after his own likeness; that man's creation was not a matter of evolution or evolutionary change of species, or development through interminable periods of time from lower to higher forms; that all animals and vegetable life was made directly, and God's established law was they should bring forth only "after their kind." Gen. 1:1; Ex. 20:11; Acts 4:24; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 11:3; John 1:3; Rev. 10:6; Rom. 1:20; Acts 17:23-26; Jer. 10:12; Neh. 9:6; Gen. 1:26-27; Gen. 2:21-23; Gen. 1:11; Gen. 1:24.

VI. OF THE FALL OF MAN

We believe that man was created in innocence under the law of his Maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless and happy state, in consequence of which, all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint, but of choice; and therefore under just condemnation without defense or excuse. Gen. 3:1-6; Gen. 3:24; Rom. 5:12; Rom. 5:19; Eph. 2:1,3; Rom. 1:18; Ezek. 18:19-20; Rom. 1:32; Rom. 1:20; Rom. 1:28; Cal. 3:22.

VII. OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten of the Holy Ghost in a miraculous manner; born of Mary, a virgin, as

no other man was ever born or can ever be born of woman, and that He is both the Son of God and God, the Son. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:35; Mark 1:1; John 1:14; Psa. 2:7; Gal. 4:4; I John 5:20; I Cor. 15:47.

VIII. OF THE ATONEMENT FOR SIN

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God, who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin, honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins; that His atonement consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr but was the voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust, Christ, the Lord, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; that, having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in heaven and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection. He is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate and an all-sufficient Savior. Eph. 2:8; Acts 15:11; Rom. 3:24; John 3:16; Matt. 18:11; Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:14; Isa. 53:4-7; Rom. 3:25; I John 4:10; I Cor. 15:3; II Cor. 5:21; John 10:18; Phil. 2:8; Cal. 1:4; I Pet. 2:24; I Pet. 3:13; Isa. 53:11; Heb. 12:2; I Cor. 15:20; Isa. 53:12; Heb. 9:12-15; Heb. 7:25; I John 2:2.

IX. OF GRACE IN THE NEW CREATION

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about in a manner above our comprehension, not by culture, not by character, nor by the will of man, but wholly and solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; that is proper evidence appears in the fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life. John 3:3; II Cor. 5:17; Luke 5:27; I John 5:1; John 3:6-7; Acts 2:41; Acts 16:30-33; II Pet. 1:4; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1; II Cor. 5:19; Col. 2:13; John 3:8; John 1:12-13; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9.

X. OF THE FREENESS OF SALVATION

We believe in God's electing grace; that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but their own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated

condemnation. I Thess. 1:4; Col. 3:12; I Pet. 1:2; Titus 1:1; Rom. 8:29-30; Matt. 11:28; Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17; Rom. 10:13; John 6:37; Isa. 55:6; Acts 2:38; Isa. 55:7; John 3:15-16; I Tim. 1:15; I Cor. 15:10; Eph. 2:4-5; John 5:40; John 3:18; John 3:36.

XI. OF JUSTIFICATION

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done; but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood. His righteousness is imputed unto us. Acts 13:39; Isa. 53:11; Zech. 13:1; Rom. 8:1; Rom. 5:9; Rom. 5:1; Tit. 3:5-7; Rom. 1:17; Hab. 2:4; Cal. 3:11; Rom. 4:1-8; Heb. 10:38.

XII. OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH

We believe that repentance and faith are solemn obligations, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God; thereby, being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-

sufficient Savior. Acts 20:21; Mark 1:15; Acts 2:37-38; Luke 18:13; Rom. 10:13; Psa. 51:1-4; Psa. 51:7; Isa. 55:6-7; Luke 12:8; Rom. 10:9-11.

XIII. OF THE CHURCH

We believe that a church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers associated by a covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His Word; that its officers of ordination are pastors or elders and deacons, whose qualifications, claims and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures; we believe the true mission of the church is found in the Great Commission: First, to make individual disciples; Second, to build up the Church; Third, to teach and instruct as he has commanded. We do not believe in the reversal of this order; we hold that the local church has the absolute right of self government, free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel; that every church is the sole and only judge of the measure and method of its cooperation; on all matters of membership, of policy, of government, of discipline, of benevolence, the will of the

local church is final. Acts 2:41; Acts 2:42; I Cor. 11:2; Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 4:11; I Cor. 12:4,8-11; Acts 14:23; Acts 6:5-6; Acts 15:23; Acts 20:17-28; I Tim. 3:1-13; Matt. 28:19-20; Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23-24; I Pet. 5:1-4; Acts 15:22; Jude 3,4; I Cor. 8:23-24; I Cor. 16:1; Mal. 3:10; Lev. 27:32; I Cor. 16:2; I Cor. 6:1-3; I Cor. 5:11-13.

XIV. OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer; in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Saviour, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation and to the Lord's supper; in which to commemorate together the dying love of Christ; preceded always by solemn self-examination. Acts 8:36-39; Matt. 3:6; John 3:23; Rom. 6:4-5; Matt. 3:16; Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; Acts 2:41-42; Matt. 28:19-20; I Cor. 11:23-28.

XV. OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their preserving attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and that they are kept by the power of

God through faith unto eternal salvation. John 8:31-32; Col. 1:21,23; I John 2:19; Matt. 13:19-21; Rom. 8:28; Matt. 6:30; Psa. 121:3; Heb. 1:14; I Pet. 1:5; Phil. 1:6; John 10:28,29; John 16:8; Rom. 8:35-39.

XVI. OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked, and under the curse, and this distinction holds among men both in and after death, in the everlasting felicity of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost. Mal. 3:18; Can. 18:23; Rom. 6:17-18; Prov. 11:31; I Pet. 4:18; Rom. 1:17; I Cor. 15:22; Acts 10:34-35; I John 2:29; I John 3:7; Rom. 6:16; I John 5:19; Cal. 3:10; Rom. 7:6; Rom. 6:23; Prov. 14:32; Luke 16:25; Matt. 25:34,41; John 8:21; Luke 9:26; John 12:25; Matt. 7:13-14.

XVII. OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ; who

is the only Lord of the conscience, and the coming Prince of the Kings of the earth. Rom. 13:17; II Sam. 23:3; Ex. 18:21-22; Acts 23:5; Matt. 22:21; Tit. 3:1; I Pet. 2:13,14; I Pet. 2:17; Acts 5:29; Acts 4:19-20; Dan. 3:17-18; Matt. 10:28; Matt. 23:10; Phil. 2:10-11; Psa. 72:11

XVIII. OF THE RESURRECTION AND RETURN OF CHRIST AND RELATED EVENTS

We believe in and accept the sacred Scriptures upon these subjects at their face and full value. Of the Resurrection, we believe that Christ rose bodily "the third day according to the Scriptures;" that He ascended "to the right hand of the throne of God;" that He alone is our "merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God;" "that this same Jesus which was taken up from you into Heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven" -- bodily, personally and visibly; that the "dead in Christ shall rise first;" that the living saints "shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump;" "that the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David;" and that "Christ shall reign a thousand years in righteousness until He hath put all enemies under His feet." Matt. 28:6-7; Luke 24:39; John 20:27; I Cor. 15:4; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:2,4-6; Acts 1:9; Acts 1:11; Luke 24:51; Mark 16:19; Rev. 3:21; Heb. 8:1; Heb. 12:2; Heb. 8:6; I Tim. 2:5; I John 2:1; Heb. 2:17; Heb. 5:9-10; John 14:3; I Thess. 4:16,17; Matt. 24:27; Matt.

25:13; Matt. 24:42; Heb. 9:28; I Cor. 15:42-44; I Cor. 15:51-53; Phil. 3:20-21; Luke 1:32; Isa. 9:6-7; Acts 9:29-30; I Cor. 15:25; Isa. 11:4-5; Psalms 72:8; Rev. 20:1-4; Rev. 20:6.

XIX. OF SEPARATION

We believe that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord. God commands His people to separate from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices, and associations; and to refrain from all immodest and immoderate appearances, piercings, and bodily markings. Rom. 12:1-2; 14:13; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11; Lev. 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:19-20.

XX. OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. Gen. 2:24, 19:5, 13, 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1: 26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4.

We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman. Gen. 2:24; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23.

In keeping with our beliefs regarding human sexuality as expressed in this statement of faith, we have the following practical policies:

All people are welcome to attend our regular worship services. Those who attend may not display behavior that is indicative of the sinful behaviors listed in Article XX in church services, at church functions, and on the church grounds.

Church representatives are not to display overt disrespect for those who are involved in the sinful behaviors listed in Article XX.

The pastor of the church will preach consistently against all forms of sinful behavior as listed in Article XX, as well as other sinful behaviors.

XXI. OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and in the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home, and men are to be the leaders

(pastors and deacons) of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination by the church. Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:4-5, 12.

We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. The wife is to submit herself to the Scriptural leadership of her husband as the church submits to the headship of Christ. Children are an heritage from the Lord. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values and leading them, through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline, including Scriptural corporal correction. Gen. 1:26-28; Ex. 20:12; Deut. 6:4-9; Psa. 127:3-5; Prov. 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; Mark 10:6-12; 1 Cor. 7:1-16; Eph. 5:21-33; 6:1-4, Col. 3:18-21; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 3:1-7.

XXII. OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

We believe that God disapproves of and forbids divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. Although divorced and remarried persons or divorced persons may hold positions of service in the church and be greatly used of God for Christian service, they may not be considered for the offices of pastor or deacon or those administrative positions within the

church that would consist of pastoral duties. Mal. 2:14-17; Matt. 19:3-12; Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6.

XXIII. OF ABORTION

We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. Abortion is murder. We reject any teaching that abortions of pregnancies due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the physical or mental well being of the mother are acceptable. Job 3:16; Ps. 51:5; 139:14-16; Isa. 44:24; 49:1, 5; Jer. 1:5; 20:15-18; Luke 1:44.

XXIV. OF EUTHANASIA

We believe that the direct taking of an innocent human life is a moral evil, regardless of the intention. Life is a gift of God and must be respected from conception until natural death. Thus we believe that an act or omission which, of itself or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder contrary to the will of God. Discontinuing medical procedures that are extraordinary or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be a legitimate refusal of over-zealous treatment. Ex. 20:13, 23:7; Matt. 5:21; Acts 17:28.

XXV. OF LAWSUITS BETWEEN BELIEVERS

We believe that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander. 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Eph. 4:31-32.

XXVI. OF MISSIONS

We believe that God has given the church a great commission to proclaim the Gospel to all nations so that there might be a great multitude from every nation, tribe, ethnic group, and language group who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. As ambassadors of Christ we must use all available means to go to the foreign nations and not wait for them to come to us. Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20.

XXVII. OF GIVING

We believe that every Christian, as a steward of that portion of God's wealth entrusted to him, is obligated to support his local church financially. We believe that God has established the tithe as a basis for giving, but that

every Christian should also give other offerings sacrificially and cheerfully to the support of the church, the relief of those in need, and the spread of the Gospel. We believe that a Christian relinquishes all rights to direct the use of the tithe or offering once the gift has been made. Gen. 14:20; Prov. 3:9-10; Acts 4:34-37; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 John 3:17.

XXVIII. OF LOVE

We believe that we should demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow believers, but also toward both those who are not believers and those who oppose us. We are to deal with those who oppose us graciously, gently, patiently, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the taking of revenge, or the threat or the use of violence as a means of resolving personal conflict or obtaining personal justice. Although God commands us to abhor sinful actions, we are to love and pray for any person who engages in such sinful actions. Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:44-48; Luke 6:31; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:9-10; 17-21; 13:8-10; Phil. 2:2-4; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Titus 3:2; 1 John 3:17-18.

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

1. You must understand that God is holy and righteous. "For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You" (Psalm 5:4). "For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright" (Psalm 11:7).

2. You must understand that humanity is morally corrupt, guilty and condemned. The Bible teaches us that although humankind was created good (Genesis 1:26, 31), all humans have fallen into spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1). Jesus said, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19). "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Examine yourself.

3. The great dilemma is : if God is good, what will He do with those of us who are not? "God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked everyday" (Psalm 7:11). What will a good and righteous God do with human beings who are self-centered, inclined to evil, and disobedient? "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

4. God's answer to our dilemma is the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus took our place. "But God demonstrates His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Christ bore our sin. He suffered our curse. Christ suffered the wrath of God for us. He died in our place; buried, and resurrected from the grave—as full payment for our sin.

5. What is your response? Repent of your sins, and place your life's trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ! He said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Take God at His word. Call out to Him now. "For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).

LET US KNOW OF YOUR DECISION SO WE MAY REJOICE WITH YOU AND FURTHER ENCOURAGE YOU IN YOUR NEW LIFE AS A BELIEVER OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.