

The
Sola 5
Handbook

Sola 5
2006

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INTRODUCTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ is establishing his kingdom in this world through his church for the glory of God the Father. We are privileged to be living in these New Covenant days of Christ's victorious reign at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

And yet we see ungodliness and immorality all around us as our society departs further and further from faith in God and obedience to his word. Not only is this understandable in the case of society in a fallen world, but it is alarming to see its destructive effect upon Christ's church. The time has undoubtedly come for God's true people to stand up and be counted, for individual believers and local churches to unite in truth and righteousness, and for the kingdom of God to be seen, heard and felt as together we unashamedly proclaim the truth and put forth our salt and light.

Sola 5 is focussed upon bringing together biblically-minded, God-centred churches and believers to encourage one another to meet this need throughout the whole southern African region. True churches and believers who have been disillusioned and disheartened by the definite weakening of the church need not feel isolated and frustrated. As he had in Elijah's day, we are persuaded that God still has his people today who are willing to speak up and confront our man-centred culture. Like-minded local churches *can* be linked together in productive and supportive association without the development of cumbersome ecclesiastical structures and without the cultivation of personalities that engage in destructive power-plays and pragmatic politics. It is clear that local churches and individual Christians are searching for identity, and direction and an escape from man-centred administrative structures and mindless tradition. Practically, isolated local congregations and individual believers are yearning for answers to questions such as:

- ♦ What is the local church really here for?
- ♦ How ought we as a church family to relate to other church families?
- ♦ If we are not meant to lead an isolated and independent existence as local churches, on what basis can we co-operate and associate with other groups of believers?
- ♦ Where can I find a genuine New Testament church?

Sola 5 is an association of like-minded congregations that straddles country borders to embrace churches in the whole southern African region, including Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland and South Africa. It enables committed local churches to benefit from (*inter alia*):

- ♦ an unambiguous shared identity;
- ♦ fellowship;
- ♦ prayer;
- ♦ accountability;
- ♦ theological education;
- ♦ mutual support in church planting ventures;
- ♦ co-ordination of missionary activities;

- ♦ a usable internet website; and
- ♦ economies of scale in the publishing of sound literature.

The beliefs, values and principles of association within Sola 5 are set out in our Confession of Faith, Core Values, and Constitution. These documents are included in this *Handbook*.

Sola 5 is a baptistic association, but it is our hope that the Lord will enable us to cooperate with like-minded, non-baptistic church associations as we strive to be channels of God's grace to our society.

Finally, a word about our name: Sola 5. The passing of time erodes and changes the meaning of words. One word that has lost its meaning in the postmodern world is the word "evangelical". In the spirit of the Cambridge Declaration of 1996, we want to affirm our commitment to historic confessional Christianity by reasserting the vital notions of the authority of Scripture, of Christ-centred faith, of gospel grace, of justifying faith, and of God-centred life. The fivefold Reformation creed of *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), *Solus Christus* (Christ alone), *Sola Gratia* (by grace alone), *Sola Fide* (by faith alone) and *Soli Deo Gloria* (glory to God alone) summarizes the urgent need of the hour; these convictions must drive the church again as they once did. All five of these convictions are necessary in order to be faithful to what God has revealed. Hence our name, Sola 5.

THE SOLA 5 CONFESSION OF FAITH

Adopted 30 September 2005

1 GOD

- 1.1 There is one living and true God,^{1,2} who exists in three distinct Persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.³ Each Person is fully God, yet the Godhead is one and indivisible.⁴
- 1.2 God's existence derives from himself,⁵ and He is set apart from all his creatures.⁶ He is pure spirit,⁷ having no body or unstable emotions.⁸ God is infinite in his being and perfections: changeless, eternal, almighty, most holy, all-knowing,

most wise and free.⁹ He is most loving, gracious, merciful, compassionate and forgiving;¹⁰ He rewards those who seek him,¹¹ but hates sin and is perfectly just in the punishment thereof.¹²

- 1.3 God is sovereign and works all things according to his own righteous will, for his own glory.¹³ From all eternity God decreed everything that would ever happen in time;¹⁴ He did this in perfect wisdom and holiness.¹⁵ Furthermore, God sustains and governs all his creatures by his supremely wise and holy providence. In so doing He fulfils the purpose for which they were created, in order that his own attributes and glory may be praised.¹⁶
- 1.4 In the providential outworking of his decree, God ordinarily works in an orderly, regular way, so that cer-

¹ Scripture texts are given to support the statements in this Confession. The aim in doing this is to give expression to the Confession's own conviction that the Bible alone is our final authority in all matters of faith and practice, and to encourage readers to ground their own convictions directly on the Scripture. This Confession is not based on a superficial approach to theology whereby texts are used in isolation from their contexts to support statements by means of superficial verbal parallels. Rather, it is built on a responsible exegesis of the relevant texts in their literary and historical contexts, with due regard for the theological unity of Scripture.

² Deut 6:4; Jer 10:10; 1 Cor 8:4–6; 1 Thess 1:9.

³ Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14.

⁴ Exod 3:14; John 14:11; 1 Cor 8:6; Acts 5:3–4; 1 Cor 3:16–17.

⁵ Isa 48:12; Acts 17:24–25.

⁶ Ps 113:4–6; 1 Tim 6:16.

⁷ Deut 4:15; John 4:24.

⁸ Num 23:19; Ps 33:11; Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17.

⁹ Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17; Ps 90:2; Rev 1:4; Isa 6:5; Rev 1:8; Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8; Ps 139:1–6; Rom 11:33–34; Dan 4:35; Rom 11:35–36; Eph 1:11b.

¹⁰ Exod 34:6–7; Ps 103:8–10.

¹¹ Jer 29:13; Heb 11:6.

¹² Neh 9:32–33; Ps 5:4–6; Hab 1:13; Rev 16:5–6; 19:11.

¹³ Rom 11:33–36.

¹⁴ Prov 16:4; Isa 46:10; Eph 1:11b; Rom 11:33–34; Rev 15:3–4.

¹⁵ Rev 15:3–4.

¹⁶ Ps 104; Matt 10:29–32; Acts 17:25–28; Ps 145:7; Isa 63:14; Rom 9:17; Eph 3:10.

tain causes consistently produce the same effects. (This we call ordinary providence.)¹⁷ However, God is also free to work differently so that the normal relationships of cause and effect are temporarily suspended.¹⁸ (This we call extraordinary providence.) Recognizing God's ordinary and extraordinary providence is essential to the proper exercise of human responsibility in humble dependence on God.

- 1.5 God has revealed himself generally to all people in creation, in providence, and in their inner consciousness and conscience. This revelation does not lead to a saving knowledge of God but does leave people without excuse for their failure to glorify him as God and to give him thanks.¹⁹ God in grace has revealed himself savingly in Christ and through the Scriptures.²⁰

2 SCRIPTURE

- 2.1 God has revealed himself and his gospel fully and finally in the Person of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.²¹ This revelation is preserved for us in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments—the Bible.²²
- 2.2 The Bible in its original autographs is a supernatural, verbal revelation, given by the plenary inspiration of

the Holy Spirit. God is its Author and it is therefore infallible, inerrant and authoritative.²³ By God's singular care and providence his word to us has been faithfully preserved through the centuries.

- 2.3 All of God's special revelation to man in the present day is found in the Bible.²⁴ The Bible is sufficient, revealing all we need to know for salvation and godly living.²⁵ Nothing must be taken away from Scripture and nothing added to it. The Bible alone is our final authority in all matters of faith and practice; our consciences are bound by it alone, not by any council, creed, individual or supposed new revelation.²⁶
- 2.4 We recognize that our interpretation of Scripture is not infallible; nevertheless, we may gain a true and valid understanding of God's

²³ Exod 20:1; 2 Sam 23:1–2; 2 Kgs 17:13; 2 Chr 34:21; 36:21; Neh 9:30; Isa 8:20; Jer 1:9; 36:1–2; Ezek 1:3; Zech 7:12; Mal 4:4; Matt 21:42; 22:31–32,43; 26:54,56; Mark 12:24,36; Luke 1:70; 24:44; John 1:23; 5:39; 10:34–35; 14:26; 16:13; 19:36–37; 20:9; Acts 1:16; 3:18; 7:38; 13:34; 28:25; Rom 1:2; 3:2; 4:23; 9:17; 15:4; 1 Cor 2:12–13; 6:16; 9:10; 14:37; Gal 1:11–12; 3:8,16,22; 4:30; 1 Thess 1:5; 2:13; 2 Tim 3:15–17; Heb 1:1–2; 3:7; 4:12; 9:8; 10:15; 2 Pet 1:18–21; 3:16; 1 John 4:6; Rev 14:13; 22:19.

²⁴ This statement is supported by the Biblical Theology of revelation; the following references should be read in relation to one another: Heb 1:1–2; Acts 1:21–22; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:7–8; Eph 2:20. See also §6.2.

²⁵ Isa 8:20; Luke 16:29–31; Eph 2:20 2 Tim 3:16–17.

²⁶ Deut 4:2; 12:32; Isa 8:20; Matt 15:1–9; 22:29, 31–32; Acts 17:11; 28:23–25; Rev 22:18–19.

¹⁷ Ps 104; Isa 55:10–11; Acts 27:22, 31, 44.

¹⁸ Exod 3:2–3; 2 Kgs 6:6; Dan 3:27; Luke 1:34–35; Rom 4:19–21.

¹⁹ Ps 19:1–6; Rom 1:19–21; 2:14–15.

²⁰ Ps 19:7–14; John 1:14, 18; Rom 1:16–17.

²¹ John 1:14, 18; Heb 1:1–3.

²² Luke 24:25–27, 46–47; Rom 1:1–2; 2 Pet 1:12–21; 1 John 1:1.

mind revealed in the Scripture.²⁷ To this end, our interpretation must be governed by the author's original intention and the context of the Scripture itself. Therefore, in seeking to understand a text, we depend on the illumination of the Holy Spirit, use the normal grammatico-historical rules of interpretation, and are assisted by the understanding of the true church throughout the ages.²⁸

3 CREATION, THE FALL AND SIN

- 3.1 In the beginning the Triune God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, by the power of his word, in six days according to Scripture.²⁹ God created everything good and perfect for the glory of his own name.³⁰ God created mankind, male and female, in his own image.³¹ The whole human race is descended from Adam and Eve, the first man and woman.³²
- 3.2 God also created angels as moral, personal and spiritual beings.³³ Some of the angels rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven, thus becoming evil spirits called devils or demons; the chief among them is Satan.³⁴ Within the limits of God's permission, these creatures have a certain capacity to influence

the world and oppose the work of God.³⁵

- 3.3 Adam and Eve wilfully and freely broke God's commandment.³⁶ By so doing they lost their original righteousness and communion with God.³⁷
- 3.4 Since Adam was appointed to stand in the place of all mankind, each of his descendants inherits the guilt of his sin,³⁸ to which is added guilt for sins personally committed.³⁹ Furthermore, all people inherit a corrupt nature from their original ancestors, Adam and Eve. Thus, all people are by nature subject to God's wrath, to death, and to temporal and eternal misery unless the Lord Jesus sets them free. The corrupt nature inclines them away from all good and is the cause of all sin actually committed.⁴⁰ Apart from the regenerating work of the Spirit, man is dead in sin and therefore unable to turn himself towards God, or to exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ.⁴¹
- 3.5 Sin is rebellion against God and his law.⁴² It expresses itself in acts of disobedience by doing what he prohibits and failing to do what he requires.⁴³

²⁷ Ps 19:7–11; Prov 2:1–11.

²⁸ 1 Cor 2:6–14; Eph 4:11–13; 2 Pet 3:15–16.

²⁹ Gen 1:1–2:3; Heb 11:3.

³⁰ Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; Ps 104:31; Rom 11:36.

³¹ Gen 1:26–27.

³² Gen 1:28; Acts 17:26.

³³ Col 1:16.

³⁴ Rev 12:7–9.

³⁵ Job 1:12; 2:6; Rev 12:10–17.

³⁶ Gen 3:1–19; Rom 5:14.

³⁷ Gen 3:10–11, 22–24;

³⁸ Rom 5:12–19.

³⁹ Rom 3:10–20.

⁴⁰ Ps 51:5; Rom 3:10–19; Eph 2:1–3.

⁴¹ Matt 11:27; 16:17; Rom 8:7; 1 John 5:1.

⁴² Rom 1:21; Eph 2:1–3; 1 John 3:4.

⁴³ Eph 2:1.

4 REDEMPTION, THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

- 4.1 Although mankind, through Adam's fall, became dead in sin and unable to save himself, God was pleased to provide a way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ alone.⁴⁴ In order to inherit eternal life, it is essential for a person, by the sovereign intervention of God, to be taken out of Adam and united with Christ.⁴⁵ Salvation is in Christ and in him alone. God's work of redemption proceeds from God's grace alone, on the basis of Christ's mediatory work alone, through faith alone.⁴⁶ In the deepest sense, all the initiative in salvation lies with God, and the glory for salvation belongs to God alone.⁴⁷
- 4.2 God's salvation is revealed in the gospel, which forms the central focus of both Old and New Testaments.⁴⁸ In the Old Testament, the gospel was proclaimed through the promises, types and prophecies, which predicted the "sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow";⁴⁹ the New Testament proclaims the fulfilment of God's redemptive purposes through the life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.⁵⁰ Thus, believers of all ages receive salvation through their union with Jesus

Christ, the only mediator between God and man.⁵¹

- 4.3 God calls all men to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and freely promises to all such people that they will be redeemed from sin and inherit eternal life.⁵² Furthermore, God has promised to give his Holy Spirit to all of his elect, in order that they may be made willing and able to repent and believe.⁵³ The elect constitute a great multitude of men and women whom God appointed to eternal life before the foundation of the world.⁵⁴ God's election was not based on anything seen or foreseen in the elect; it proceeded from his free and sovereign grace alone.⁵⁵ Furthermore, God the Father entrusted the elect to his Son, who undertook to redeem, call, justify, sanctify and glorify them.⁵⁶
- 4.4 In order to give effect to God's eternal purpose, the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, took on human flesh: He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and in this way two whole, perfect, distinct natures—divine and human—were inseparably joined together in one Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁷ Being thus true God and true man, unchangeably sinless,⁵⁸ the Lord Jesus

⁴⁴ John 5:39; 14:6; Acts 4:12.

⁴⁵ Rom 5:12–19.

⁴⁶ Rom 1:2–4, 16–17; Eph 2:8–9.

⁴⁷ Rom 11:33–36; Eph 3:1–14; Rev 5:9–10; 7:10.

⁴⁸ Luke 24:26–27, 44; John 20:30–31; Rom 1:1–4.

⁴⁹ Heb 10:1–12; 1 Pet 1:10–12

⁵⁰ Acts 13:38–39; Gal 3:16–22.

⁵¹ Rom 4:16, 23–25.

⁵² Isa 55:1; John 3:16; Rom 9:33; Rev 22:17.

⁵³ Ps 110:3; John 6:37, 44; Acts 13:48; 16:14.

⁵⁴ Eph 1:4; Rev 5:9–10.

⁵⁵ Deut 7:7–8; Rom 9:11–16; 2 Tim 1:9

⁵⁶ Isa 53:10–11; Matt 20:28; Luke 19:10; John 6:37–40; 10:27–28.

⁵⁷ Luke 1:35; John 1:1,14; Rom 1:3–4; Phil 2:6–11; Col 2:9.

⁵⁸ Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22

Christ was appointed mediator between God and man, prophet, priest and king.⁵⁹

- 4.5 Jesus Christ lived on this earth as a man under God's law, which He perfectly fulfilled.⁶⁰ On the cross, He acted as substitute for his elect, bearing their sins and suffering God's wrath in their place.⁶¹ He died and rose bodily on the third day; forty days after that He ascended to the right hand of the Father, from where He poured out his Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost;⁶² at God's appointed time, He will return personally to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.⁶³ Jesus Christ is thus the Last Adam, through whose sinless life and atoning death believers are reconciled to God.⁶⁴ Through him, also, God is reconciling all things to himself.⁶⁵
- 4.6 By his perfect obedience and the once-for-all sacrifice of himself, the Lord Jesus Christ has brought about reconciliation and purchased an everlasting inheritance for all those given to him by his Father.⁶⁶ His death and resurrection are thus the guarantee of their eternal salvation.⁶⁷ By his present work of intercession, effectual calling, sanctification and sovereign rule, He cer-

tainly and effectually applies and communicates eternal redemption to all those for whom He obtained it.⁶⁸

5 THE APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION

- 5.1 When the time is ripe, the Holy Spirit lays claim to each of the elect through regeneration, enabling them to believe in Christ and thus be united to him.⁶⁹
- 5.2 Saving faith is ordinarily produced through the ministry of the Word.⁷⁰ It requires a knowledge of what God has revealed—about himself, man and the gospel—includes a conviction that these things are true, and comes to fulfilment as the believer accepts, receives and rests upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification and eternal life.⁷¹ Any reliance which a person places in his own morality, good works or ceremonial faithfulness disqualifies him or her—whether that reliance is in place of or in addition to faith in Christ.⁷²
- 5.3 Evangelical repentance is a gift of God which is inseparable from saving faith. In repentance a person perceives that he or she has offended a holy God,⁷³ yet grasps that God in Christ is merciful to peni-

⁵⁹ Luke 1:32; John 1:45 (quoting Deut 18:18); Heb 7:21; 1 Tim 2:5.

⁶⁰ Gal 4:4–5; Heb 5:8–9.

⁶¹ Is 53:4–6; Matt 20:28; 2 Cor 5:21.

⁶² Acts 1:3; 2:33; 1 Cor 15:3–6.

⁶³ 1 Thess 4:16; Heb 9:28.

⁶⁴ Rom 3:22–25; 5:18–19.

⁶⁵ Eph 1:10; Col 1:20.

⁶⁶ John 17:2–5; 2 Cor 5:18–19; 1 Pet 1:3–4.

⁶⁷ Rom 5:9–10; 8:32; Rev 5:9–10.

⁶⁸ Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; John 6:37,39; 10:4,16,27; 17:19; 1 Cor 1:30; Heb 10:10,14

⁶⁹ John 1:12–13; 3:3–8; 1 John 5:1.

⁷⁰ Rom 10:14–17.

⁷¹ John 20:20–31; Rom 10:9–11.

⁷² Gal 1:9; 3:10; 5:2–6.

⁷³ Ps 51:1–6; Acts 2:37–38.

tent sinners;⁷⁴ this leads to a turning from sin towards God, with the full purpose of and endeavour after obedience in all that God has commanded.⁷⁵

5.4 All who are united to Christ through saving faith are justified (declared righteous) by God.⁷⁶ This justification is an objective, legal declaration by which Christ's active obedience to God's law (i.e. his obedience to all of God's commands) and his passive obedience in death (i.e. his submission to the penalty of death) are imputed to the believer.⁷⁷ Justification is thus founded only upon the righteous life and sacrificial death of Christ, having no dependence on the personal righteousness of the believer.⁷⁸ Faith is the instrument of justification because it (from the human side) unites the believer to Christ; it is in no way the basis of God's acceptance of the believer.⁷⁹ In Christ, believers are also adopted as God's children.⁸⁰

5.5 Saving faith and justification will, however, always result in a life of good works characterized by supreme love for God and for one's neighbour.⁸¹ According to Scripture, good works proceed from true faith,

conform to the law of God, and are motivated by a desire for God's glory.⁸² Whereas unbelievers are unable to perform such works, believers have been and are increasingly sanctified by God's Word and Spirit to their performance.⁸³ Though the war with remaining sin continues as long as life in this world, the power of Christ enables believers increasingly to mortify sin and to grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.⁸⁴ Therefore, while good works are not the root of true faith or the ground of justification, they are the necessary fruit—and evidence of the genuineness—of saving faith and justification.⁸⁵ Sanctification is so inseparable from justification that a person who fails to produce good works (as defined above) as a habit of life has no grounds for considering himself a believer.⁸⁶

5.6 Those whom God has regenerated, enabled to believe, justified, adopted and sanctified will certainly persevere in the state of grace to the end and be eternally saved.⁸⁷ Believers may be severely tested by the world, the flesh and the devil, and may even, for a time, fall into grievous sins whereby they incur God's fatherly displeasure and grieve the Holy Spirit.⁸⁸ Yet they

⁷⁴ Is 55:7; Joel 2:12–13; Mark 1:4–5; Luke 15:17.

⁷⁵ Luke 3:8–9; 15:18–20; Acts 26:20; 1 Thes 1:9.

⁷⁶ Rom 3:22, 24; 4:5.

⁷⁷ Is 53:4–6; Rom 4:5–6; 5:18–19; 2 Cor 5:21.

⁷⁸ Luke 18:9–14; Rom 4:4–6; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 2:8–9; 1 John 5:12.

⁷⁹ Rom 6:3–10; Gal 2:20–21.

⁸⁰ Eph 1:5.

⁸¹ Rom 6:4, 14; Eph 2:10; 1 John 5:1–5.

⁸² Ps 112:1; Rom 2:7; 14:23; 1 Cor 10:31; 1 Tim 1:5.

⁸³ Rom 8:3–11.

⁸⁴ John 15:5; Rom 7:14–15; 3–4; 1 Cor 9:24–27.

⁸⁵ James 2:17, 26.

⁸⁶ Matt 7:21–23; 1 John 2:4.

⁸⁷ Rom 8:28–39; Phil 1:6.

⁸⁸ Ps 51:3–12; Matt 26:70, 72, 74.

will certainly be kept by the power of God, who continues to nourish in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope and all the graces of the Spirit.⁸⁹ This wonderful assurance is no encouragement to sin, for the Lord clearly warns that those who persist steadfastly in apostasy prove themselves never to have been true believers.⁹⁰

5.7 While the Word of God places a strong emphasis on God's initiative in the salvation of a sinner, it has an equally strong emphasis on human responsibility in the outworking of certain elements of the process of salvation: faith, repentance, sanctification and perseverance.⁹¹ This requires from the believer absolute commitment to the end of life.⁹² It is of the utmost importance to maintain the biblical tension between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man in the process of salvation.

6 THE HOLY SPIRIT IN REDEMPTION

6.1 The Holy Spirit is from eternity truly God, the third Person of the Divine Trinity.⁹³

6.2 The foundation on which the church is established is God's revelation in Jesus Christ.⁹⁴ This foundation was laid as the Holy Spirit made the truth regarding Jesus Christ known to the apostles, thus

enabling them to bear witness to him.⁹⁵ In this way, the apostles and their intimate co-workers were inspired by the Spirit to put the New Testament message into writing, and so to complete the Scripture.⁹⁶ Since the work of the apostles was unique and unrepeatable, the office of apostle ended when the last of the New Testament apostles passed from the scene.⁹⁷ Ever since the completion of the canon, the Spirit's means of communicating God's truth has been to illuminate the Scriptures which He inspired.⁹⁸

6.3 Although the Holy Spirit was already active in the Old Testament period, He was, according to the promises of the prophets, poured out in matchless abundance on the church after the ascension of Christ.⁹⁹ This happened on the Day of Pentecost, the Old Testament harvest festival. The Holy Spirit is therefore, in a special way, the Spirit of the New Testament harvest, which consists of the elect from the entire human race. His work is largely concerned with their calling and preservation in this life, and is accomplished by mediating Christ to his people.¹⁰⁰ Thus the work of the Holy Spirit in believers is absolutely essential for their salvation.

6.4 The Holy Spirit is the central gift of the New Covenant.¹⁰¹ Ever since

⁸⁹ John 10:28–29; 1 Thess 5:23–24; 1 Pet 1:5.

⁹⁰ Col 1:22–23; Heb 10:26–27.

⁹¹ Matt 23:37–38; Phil 2:12–13.

⁹² Matt 10:22; 24:12–13.

⁹³ Acts 5:3–4; 2 Cor 13:14.

⁹⁴ John 1:18; 1 Cor 3:11.

⁹⁵ John 15:26–27; 16:13–15; Acts 1:21–25; Eph 2:20; 3:4–5.

⁹⁶ 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Pet 1:12–21; 3:15–16.

⁹⁷ 1 Cor 15:5–8.

⁹⁸ 2 Tim 3:16–17.

⁹⁹ Neh 9:20; Isa 63:11; Acts 2:1–39.

¹⁰⁰ John 14:16–18; 16:8–11; Eph 1:13–14.

¹⁰¹ Ezek 36:27; Acts 2:16–21.

Christ poured out the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, believers have received the gift of his indwelling presence immediately upon the exercise of saving faith.¹⁰² Thus, all true believers have been baptized in (or by) the Spirit¹⁰³ and possess the gift of the Spirit—a gift which is not to be patiently tarried for or carnally peddled.

- 6.5 The initial work of the Spirit in illumination and regeneration leads to repentance and saving faith.¹⁰⁴ By the gift of the Spirit, God assures his children of their sonship and eternal life,¹⁰⁵ gives to them a foretaste of what is yet to come;¹⁰⁶ restores in them the image of God, conforming them to the likeness of Christ;¹⁰⁷ instructs them in the words and ways of Christ;¹⁰⁸ liberates them from the bondage of sin and enables them to obey God from the heart;¹⁰⁹ assists them in their prayers;¹¹⁰ mediates Christ's presence;¹¹¹ and unites them to one another.¹¹²
- 6.6 The Holy Spirit resides irrevocably in the hearts of all true Christians from the moment of their conversion, being received once and for all;¹¹³ nevertheless, the same Spirit

continues to be supplied to them throughout their lives. Thus, it is the duty of those already indwelt by God's Spirit both to request further supplies and larger measures of the Holy Spirit, and to be filled continually with (i.e. controlled by) the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁴

- 6.7 It is crucial to recognize the Holy Spirit's work in the individual believer; nevertheless, since believers are baptized by the Spirit into the body, the corporate nature of the Holy Spirit's work should not be ignored.¹¹⁵ The Holy Spirit works within the individual in the context of the community of believers: both the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit assume the corporate nature of the Holy Spirit's work.¹¹⁶
- 6.8 The gift of the Holy Spirit is never completely taken away from true Christians, but He can be so grieved by their rebellions and backslidings, that for a season his presence is greatly withdrawn and his influences largely withheld.¹¹⁷ Therefore, it is the duty of all believers neither to grieve nor to quench the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁸
- 6.9 Each true congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ is charismatic by nature—in the sense that every believer receives a gift (or gifts) and is responsible to exercise it (or them) in practising the priesthood of the believer.¹¹⁹ This does not

¹¹⁴ Luke 11:13; Ephesians 5:18.

¹¹⁵ 1 Cor 12:12–13.

¹¹⁶ 1 Cor 12:4–11; Eph 5:18–21.

¹¹⁷ Eph 4:30.

¹¹⁸ 1 Thess 5:19.

¹¹⁹ Rom 12:3–8; 1 Cor 12:4–11; 1 Pet 4:10–11.

¹⁰² Acts 2:39; Rom 8:9.

¹⁰³ 1 Cor 12:13.

¹⁰⁴ John 1:12–13; 1 Cor 2:6–16; 1 John 5:1.

¹⁰⁵ Ro 8:14–17.

¹⁰⁶ Ro 8:23; Eph 1:14.

¹⁰⁷ 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10.

¹⁰⁸ John 14:26.

¹⁰⁹ Gal 5:16–26.

¹¹⁰ Rom 8:26.

¹¹¹ John 14:16–18.

¹¹² 1 Cor 12:13.

¹¹³ Eph 1:13.

mean, however, that the equipping work of the Holy Spirit is limited to the gifts that are explicitly mentioned in the New Testament. Neither does it mean that all the gifts which are mentioned still appear today. Clearly, the gifts associated with the work of the apostles in the time before the New Testament was completed—especially the revelatory gifts—disappeared with the finalization of the canon, since they were no longer needed.¹²⁰

7 THE CHURCH

- 7.1 The universal church consists of all the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ, its head.¹²¹ This universal church is the bride and body of Christ, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way, and the agency which forms the focus of God's work of reconciling all things to himself.¹²² The universal church may be called invisible with respect to the internal work of the Spirit.
- 7.2 All those who profess faith in Christ and obedience to the gospel, and who do not destroy their profession by unholiness of conduct, are to be regarded as visible saints. A local church ought to be constituted only of visible saints.¹²³ In addition to this fundamental principle, true churches are recognized by their faithful preaching of the gos-

pel,¹²⁴ pure observance of the ordinances in the fear of God,¹²⁵ practice of church discipline¹²⁶ and mutual love.¹²⁷

- 7.3 Christ is the Head of every local church, and He has given to each local church all that power and authority which is necessary for the exercise of worship and discipline.¹²⁸
- 7.4 Although officers are not essential to the existence of a local church, they are necessary for its well-being.¹²⁹ In the present age (i.e. the age after the founding and establishment of Christ's church on earth), Christ has appointed two offices for the government of the local church: elders (also known as pastors, bishops or overseers) and deacons.¹³⁰ It is the particular responsibility of elders to keep watch over the flock as men who must give an account, to provide sound teaching for the edification and strengthening of the saints, and to prepare God's people for works of service.¹³¹ Certain elders may be set apart to labour in preaching and teaching.¹³² Deacons are appointed to attend to ministries of mercy and other practical service, in order to free the elders for prayer and the ministry of the Word.¹³³

¹²⁴ Gal 1:6, 9.

¹²⁵ Matt 28:18–20; 1 Cor 11:23–25.

¹²⁶ Matt 18:15–20; 1 Cor 5:1–9.

¹²⁷ John 13:34–35.

¹²⁸ Matt 18:17–20; 1 Cor 5:4–5.

¹²⁹ Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.

¹³⁰ 1 Tim 3:1–13.

¹³¹ Acts 20:28; Tit 1:9; Heb 13:17.

¹³² 1 Tim 5:17.

¹³³ Acts 6:1–7; 1 Tim 3:8–13.

¹²⁰ See §6.2.

¹²¹ Heb 12:23.

¹²² Eph 1:9–10, 23; 3:6–11; 5:25–32.

¹²³ Matt 18:15–20; Acts 2:37–42; 1 Cor 5:1–9.

- 7.5 All believers are one under the headship of Christ, and it is his desire that they be perfected in unity.¹³⁴ Therefore, when God's providence provides the opportunity, local churches ought to promote fellowship and co-operation among themselves.¹³⁵
- 7.6 In cases of difficulties—whether in matters of doctrine or administration—that concern the churches in general or any one church, it is Christ's will that representatives of the churches meet together to consider the matter and give their advice to all concerned.¹³⁶ It should be understood that the governance of a church is only valid to the extent that it conforms to the will of Christ the Head,¹³⁷ and because Christ's will is not defined by the decisions of a local church or of its leaders, a church may often be helped to follow Christ by obtaining counsel from other churches.¹³⁸ The representatives do not have power to impose their decision on any church or its officers or members, but their counsel must be taken seriously, in the spirit of genuinely seeking the Lord's will; local churches should be aware of the danger of rejecting wise and godly counsel.¹³⁹
- 7.7 Baptism is one of the two New Testament ordinances (sometimes called sacraments). It is the formal

expression of a believer's entry into a saving relationship with God through Christ,¹⁴⁰ and as such is a visible word: from the side of the person baptized, baptism is a visible and decisive expression of his or her repentance and faith in Christ;¹⁴¹ from God's side, baptism is a sign of the baptized person's union with Christ and remission of sins.¹⁴² It follows, therefore, that the only proper subjects of baptism are those who profess repentance and faith in Christ.¹⁴³ The due administration of this ordinance involves immersion in water.¹⁴⁴

- 7.8 The second New Testament ordinance is the Lord's Supper, which the Lord Jesus himself instituted on the night that He was betrayed. The Lord's Supper is observed by eating the bread and drinking the cup which symbolize the body and blood of the Lord, which bread and cup are a visible proclamation of the death of Christ and its benefits for all who are united to Christ.¹⁴⁵ The Lord's Supper is to be observed regularly by all believers in good standing with their local church who, receiving the elements in faith, spiritually receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all the benefits of his death.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ Acts 2:38–41; 1 Pet 3:21.

¹⁴¹ Acts 2:38–41; Rom 6:3–4.

¹⁴² Rom 6:3–4; Heb 10:22.

¹⁴³ Mat 28:19–20; Acts 2:37–41; 8:12–13,36–38; 9:18; 10:47–48; 11:16; 15:9; 16:14–15,31–34; 18:8; 19:3–5; 22:16; Rom 6:3–4; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12; 1Pe 3:21.

¹⁴⁴ John 3:23; 1 Cor 10:1–2.

¹⁴⁵ 1 Cor 11:23–29.

¹⁴⁶ John 6:29,35,47–58

¹³⁴ John 17:23.

¹³⁵ Acts 15:1–4; 2 Cor 8:18–24; Gal 2:10; Phil 1:4–5.

¹³⁶ Acts 15:1–35; Gal 2:2.

¹³⁷ Rev 1:12–20.

¹³⁸ Prov 12:15; 13:10; 19:20.

¹³⁹ Prov. 1:20–33.

8 THE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

- 8.1 It is the fundamental responsibility of all human beings to worship and serve their Creator.¹⁴⁷ Although unbelievers fail in this responsibility,¹⁴⁸ Christians, whose lives are being transformed and renewed by the gospel, are called to live lives of worship by offering themselves as living sacrifices to God.¹⁴⁹
- 8.2 In addition to this worship, which embraces all of life, God's people are called to specific acts of public¹⁵⁰ and private¹⁵¹ worship. These specific acts of worship—including such elements as the preaching of the Word, prayer,¹⁵² observance of the ordinances,¹⁵³ and the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs¹⁵⁴—are to be offered through Christ,¹⁵⁵ in spirit and in truth,¹⁵⁶ and according to the teachings of Scripture rather than in ways devised by man.¹⁵⁷
- 8.3 Christian ethics is controlled by God's Law, which is expressed in the two great commandments (to love God and our neighbour), summarized in the Ten Commandments, and applied to the New Tes-

tament believer by Christ and the Apostles.¹⁵⁸

- 8.4 Christians are members of one another by virtue of their union with Christ;¹⁵⁹ therefore, participation in the fellowship of the Body of Christ through the local church is one of the believer's greatest privileges and responsibilities.¹⁶⁰ This fellowship is one of the most important means of proclaiming Christ to the world,¹⁶¹ as well as one of the believer's primary sources of preservation, comfort and edification.¹⁶²
- 8.5 Christ has commanded his disciples to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.¹⁶³ Believers, therefore, have a responsibility to the world around them—without distinctions of race, language or class—to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ by their actions, lifestyle and words.¹⁶⁴ In this way they are to make disciples of all nations.
- ## 9 CIVIL INSTITUTIONS: THE STATE AND MARRIAGE
- 9.1 As partakers of God's saving grace, believers are the firstfruits of God's new creation.¹⁶⁵ In the church, they begin to experience the fellowship that will characterize the new hu-

¹⁴⁷ Rom 1:19–21.

¹⁴⁸ Rom 1:18–23, 25, 28.

¹⁴⁹ Rom 12:1–2

¹⁵⁰ Acts 2:42–47; 20:7.

¹⁵¹ Ps 119:148; Matt 6:6.

¹⁵² 1 Tim 4:13; 2:8.

¹⁵³ Matt 28:19–20; 1 Cor 11:18, 23–25.

¹⁵⁴ Col 3:16.

¹⁵⁵ 1 Pet 2:5.

¹⁵⁶ John 4:23.

¹⁵⁷ Lev 10:1–3; Deut 12:30–31; Matt 15:3.

¹⁵⁸ Matt 5:17–20; Mark 12:29–31; Rom 13:8–10.

¹⁵⁹ 1 Cor 12:12–27.

¹⁶⁰ Ps 84; Heb 10:25.

¹⁶¹ John 17:21.

¹⁶² Heb 3:13; 1 John 4:12.

¹⁶³ Matt 5:13–16.

¹⁶⁴ Matt 28:18–20; Rom 1:14; Titus 2:11–14.

¹⁶⁵ 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 3:10–11; Jas 1:18.

manity.¹⁶⁶ Yet, believers continue to live in the present world and in human society, which is maintained and upheld by God's common grace.¹⁶⁷ In this human society, God has appointed civil rulers to maintain order and justice, if necessary, by the use of the sword.¹⁶⁸

- 9.2 Civil government is an institution separate from the church; it has no mandate to prescribe the doctrines and practices of any church, or to coerce its citizens into following one religion or another, or to prevent its citizens from practising religion.¹⁶⁹ Although the church has no institutional connection with the civil government, believers have a prophetic responsibility to remind the government of its accountability to God and of those principles of justice which accord with the will of God revealed in Scripture and in the human conscience.¹⁷⁰
- 9.3 God has commanded Christians, within the limits of obedience to God, to submit to their rulers, to participate in the life of their society, and to promote the well-being of their fellow-citizens.¹⁷¹
- 9.4 Marriage is a lifelong covenantal union between one natural man and one natural woman; it must be entered into publicly and formally. It was ordained by God at creation for

the mutual help of husband and wife, and for the propagation of the human race.¹⁷² Marriage is thus the basis of the family, which is the essential building-block of any stable society.¹⁷³

- 9.5 Since marriage is a creation ordinance, its privileges and commitments apply to both believers and unbelievers. However, it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord.¹⁷⁴

10 DEATH, RESURRECTION, JUDGEMENT AND THE FINAL STATE

- 10.1 After death, the human body returns to dust; the spirit, however, is immortal and neither dies nor sleeps.¹⁷⁵ The spirits of the righteous are received into the presence of the Lord in anticipation of their final resurrection and full eternal inheritance.¹⁷⁶ The spirits of the wicked are cast into hell, where they await their final judgement.¹⁷⁷
- 10.2 A time is coming when all the dead shall be raised and their souls united to their imperishable, resurrected bodies forever.¹⁷⁸
- 10.3 After the general resurrection there will be a day on which God will

¹⁷² Gen 1:27–28; 2:20–24; Deut 24:1; Matt 19:4–6.

¹⁷³ Ex 20:12; Deut 6:7, 20–25; Mal 2:15; Eph 6:1–3.

¹⁷⁴ 1 Cor 7:39.

¹⁷⁵ Gen 3:19; Matt 10:28; Luke 16:23; 23:43; 2 Cor 5:6–8; Heb 9:27.

¹⁷⁶ Luke 16:23; 2 Cor 5:6–8; Phil 1:21–23; Rev 6:9.

¹⁷⁷ Luke 16:23–28; Acts 1:25; 2 Pet 2:9.

¹⁷⁸ John 5:28–29

¹⁶⁶ Heb 12:22–23.

¹⁶⁷ Ps 145:9; Rom 2:15; 1 Pet 1:1.

¹⁶⁸ Rom 13:1–4; 1 Pet 2:14.

¹⁶⁹ Matt 5:43–47; Matt 18:15–17; Acts 4:19; 1 Cor 5:9–13; Rom 13:3–4.

¹⁷⁰ Ps 2; 146:7–9; Prov 31:8–9; Rev 18.

¹⁷¹ Jer 29:4–7; Matt 5:38–47; Acts 4:19; 1 Thess 4:11–12; 1 Pet 2:13–25.

judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁹ All people who have ever lived upon earth will be judged in perfect righteousness, according to what they have done.¹⁸⁰ The righteous will receive the reward of eternal joy, everlasting life and imperishable glory in the presence of the Lord; the wicked, who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, will be cast aside into everlasting torments, punished with everlasting destruction, and shut out from the gracious presence of the Lord and the majesty of his power.¹⁸¹

- 10.4 Although the final judgement is according to works, it is not as though the righteous earn or deserve the eternal life which they will receive.¹⁸² Their good works are merely the evidence of God's gifts of regeneration, faith, justification and union with Christ, for whose sake alone they are given their eternal inheritance.¹⁸³ On the other hand, those who will be condemned will be fully deserving of their punishment, since their works arise from a heart at enmity with God and find expression in the rejection of God's kindness, righteous claims and holy law.¹⁸⁴ Thus, the Day of Judgement will glorify God: by the display of his mercy and grace in the salvation of believers, and by the manifestation of his jus-

¹⁷⁹ Jn 5:26–3; Acts 17:31.

¹⁸⁰ Rom 2:5–10; Rev 20:12–13.

¹⁸¹ Matt 25:31–46; Rom 2:6–10; 2 Thess 1:9–10.

¹⁸² Rom 6:23; Eph 2:9–10.

¹⁸³ Rom 5:1–2, 9–10; 6:23.

¹⁸⁴ Rom 1:18–21; 2:1–5; 3:9–20.

tice in the condemnation of unbelievers.¹⁸⁵

- 10.5 God has clearly revealed that the day and hour of Christ's coming are unknown to men.¹⁸⁶ His purpose is that they should shake off carnal security, reject the distraction of date-setting, and keep watch at all times, since they do not know the day or hour.¹⁸⁷ Thus prepared for the glorious appearing of their Lord and Saviour, they will always be ready to say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Rom 9:22–23; 2 Thess 1:10; Rev 15:3–4.

¹⁸⁶ Matt 24:36–41; 1 Thess 5:1–3.

¹⁸⁷ Matt 24:42–25:30; 1 Thess 5:4–11.

¹⁸⁸ Rev 22:20.

THE CORE VALUES OF SOLA 5

Adopted 30 September 2005

1 GOD-CENTREDNESS

God commands us to glorify him in all we do. Furthermore, he requires us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.¹⁸⁹

- Therefore we affirm that our lives in their entirety must be lived before God, under his authority, and for his glory alone. In the light of this, we will endeavour to be focussed on honouring and pleasing God in our personal lives, our worship and all our co-operative activities.¹⁹⁰
- We deny that there is a place for man-centredness or for the promotion of our own popularity, carnal success or self-image.¹⁹¹

2 LOGIC AND REASON

God has created human beings as rational creatures in his own image.¹⁹²

- Therefore we affirm the necessity of logic and reason as tools for the correct understanding of truth, which is not contradictory.¹⁹³
- We deny that faith is illogical or irrational;¹⁹⁴ we further deny that logic apart from revelation or reason apart from the Holy Spirit's illumina-

tion is sufficient for knowing truth.¹⁹⁵

3 AUTHORITY

God is the only being with intrinsic authority; consequently, all human authority is delegated by him.¹⁹⁶

- Therefore we affirm that God has established three spheres of human government, and that He alone defines what their various responsibilities are.

1. *Family government* is for the upbringing and education of children, as well as for the nurturing of orderly human relationships in honour, discipline and love. The family is the basic unit of society.¹⁹⁷

2. *Church government* is for the spiritual well-being and ministry of God's people.¹⁹⁸

3. *Civil government* is for the well-ordering and protection of society; this includes the appropriate punishment of criminals.¹⁹⁹

- We deny that any sphere of government is without accountability to God, and that any government may assume the responsibilities God has assigned to another sphere of authority. This means that, while there

must be a separation of church and state, there is no separation of the state from God.²⁰⁰

4 SANCTITY OF LIFE

God the Creator has the sole right to give and take human life, which belongs to him and is defined by him alone.²⁰¹

Abortion:

- Therefore we affirm that life begins at the moment of conception and that abortion is the taking of a human life.²⁰²
- We deny that abortion is merely an issue of a woman's right of choice over her own body.²⁰³

The death penalty:

- We further affirm the responsibility of civil government to execute the death penalty for premeditated murder, in order to demonstrate the sanctity of life and to deter such crime.²⁰⁴
- We deny that the just execution of a murderer by the God-ordained authorities is itself murder, and that such criminals have a right to life.²⁰⁵

5 MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY

God created mankind male and female, and ordained marriage as a life-long union between a natural man and a natural woman.²⁰⁶

Marriage and divorce

- Therefore we affirm that husband and wife are no longer two but one and that God intends marriage to last as long as both partners are alive.²⁰⁷ We affirm that there are certain circumstances in which Scripture permits divorce;²⁰⁸ nevertheless, divorce always grieves the Lord and hurts those involved.²⁰⁹
- We deny that marriage is merely a negotiated contract which may be terminated at will. We deny that divorce is permissible for any cause not permitted in Scripture.

Marriage and sexual purity

- We further affirm that marriage is by nature heterosexual,²¹⁰ and that any expression of sexual intimacy is holy only in the covenant of marriage.²¹¹
- We deny the legitimacy and permissibility of homosexuality, lesbianism, fornication, adultery, pornography, paedophilia, bestiality, prostitution, incest and other forms of sexual perversion.²¹²

6 DISCIPLINE

God is a God of order and justice, who disciplines those He loves for their good.²¹³

- Therefore we affirm the duty of churches to discipline their unrepentant members, excommunication being the final means of grace for

¹⁸⁹ 1 Cor 10:31; Mark 12:30.

¹⁹⁰ Eccl 12:13.

¹⁹¹ Jer 45:5; Rom 2:29.

¹⁹² Gen 1:27; Ps 32:9.

¹⁹³ Isa 5:20.

¹⁹⁴ Isa 1:18.

¹⁹⁵ 1 Cor 2:6–16.

¹⁹⁶ Rom 13:1; Matt 28:18.

¹⁹⁷ Eph 5:22–6:4; Deut 6:4–9.

¹⁹⁸ 1 Cor 12:12–27; 1 Thess 5:12–15; Heb 13:7, 17.

¹⁹⁹ Rom 13:1–7.

²⁰⁰ Ps 2; Rev 11:15.

²⁰¹ Neh 9:6; Isa 42:5.

²⁰² Ps 51:5.

²⁰³ Ps 139:13–16.

²⁰⁴ Gen 9:6; Rom 13:4; Eccl 8:11.

²⁰⁵ Num 35:30–34.

²⁰⁶ Gen 2:18–25.

²⁰⁷ Matt 19:4–6.

²⁰⁸ Matt 19:9; 1 Cor 7:10–16.

²⁰⁹ Mal 2:16.

²¹⁰ Gen 2:24.

²¹¹ Exod 20:14; Heb 13:4.

²¹² Rom 1:24–27.

²¹³ 1 Cor 14:33; Heb 12:5–11.

their reconciliation.²¹⁴ We further affirm the responsibility of parents to discipline their children in the spirit of loving correction. This discipline may include corporal punishment.²¹⁵

- We deny that all such discipline in the church and the home is unloving or harmful to its recipients when done according to the rules of Scripture and in the spirit of Christ.²¹⁶

7 GENDER ROLES

God our Creator has established a difference in the creation and roles of men and women, which we are not at liberty to change.²¹⁷

- Therefore we affirm the male headship of responsibility in the home and in the church, to be exercised in the spirit of Christlike, sacrificial servanthood.²¹⁸
- We deny that women are inferior to men in value,²¹⁹ and we deny that women may serve in leadership roles as pastors or elders.²²⁰

8 VOCATION

God calls each of his people to serve him in various ways in this world.²²¹

- Therefore we affirm the sanctity of labour and the validity of all vocations which are not contrary to the righteous requirements of Scripture.²²²

²¹⁴ Matt 18:15–17.

²¹⁵ Prov 22:15.

²¹⁶ Lev 19:17; Prov 13:24.

²¹⁷ Gen 1:27; 1 Cor 11:7–9.

²¹⁸ 1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:22–33; 1 Tim 3:1–5.

²¹⁹ Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:11–12.

²²⁰ 1 Tim 2:11–14.

²²¹ 1 Cor 7:20–24; Col 3:22–25.

²²² 1 Thess 4:11–12; 2 Thess 3:6–10.

- We deny that work and business are outside the realm of Christian living, and we deny that they may be performed as something other than service to Christ.²²³

9 RACIAL HARMONY

God has created all mankind in his own image; all people are of one blood, having descended from Adam.²²⁴ Furthermore, God in Christ has broken down every wall that sin has made to separate us, creating one new humanity in Christ.²²⁵

- Therefore we affirm the dignity and human brotherhood of all mankind in addition to the unity of all believers in Christ regardless of race, colour or ethnicity.²²⁶ We will therefore take steps personally and corporately to encourage racial and cultural harmony, expressing this visibly in our communities and churches.
- We deny that there is any basis in reason or in the Bible for racial discrimination by any person against other people.²²⁷

10 CREATION

God is the sovereign Creator of the heavens and the earth.²²⁸

- Therefore we affirm that the account of creation in Genesis is a record of historical events, that God created everything out of nothing, after its

²²³ Eph 6:5–9.

²²⁴ Gen 5:1–3; Acts 17:26–28.

²²⁵ Eph 2:13–18.

²²⁶ Col 3:11.

²²⁷ Rev 7:9.

²²⁸ Gen 1:1–2:3; Heb 11:3.

- We deny that man was specially created in the image of God.
- We deny the philosophy of evolutionism in all its various expressions.

11 ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

God has given mankind dominion over that part of his creation which is not made in his image and needs to be subdued, especially since the Fall and God's subsequent curse.²²⁹

- Therefore we affirm the stewardship of human beings to use animals and the environment for the glory of God and the benefit of humanity within the guidelines of biblical principles of ecology. We also affirm God's ownership of all land and mankind's responsibility to use it for his glory, considering the needs of fellow human beings and future generations.²³⁰
- We deny that animals have rights or value equal to that of human beings, we also deny that the environment is without corruption, is self-determining, or shares in the nature of God in any way.²³¹

12 PLURALISM

The only true and living God is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who has revealed Himself in Holy Scripture.²³²

- Therefore we affirm that He alone is to be worshipped and obeyed in all of life, and that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour for sinners.²³³

²²⁹ Gen 1:26–28; 3:17–19.

²³⁰ Gen 9:1–17; Ps 24:1.

²³¹ Rom 8:20.

²³² Isa 43:10–11; Matt 28:19; 1 John 5:20.

²³³ Exod 20:3; 1 Tim 2:5.

- We deny that any other religion or creed is valid and should be considered a respectable equal to biblical Christianity.²³⁴

13 FREEDOM OF RELIGION

God has ordained civil government for the ordering of society in order to ensure the peaceful co-existence of all citizens irrespective of race or creed.²³⁵

- Therefore we affirm the responsibility of government to ensure that citizens are free to practise and propagate religion according to their consciences.
- We deny that civil government has the right to prescribe or forbid any religion—be that religion Christianity, pluralism, secularism, or any other.

14 EVANGELISM

God has ordained evangelism—the proclamation and teaching of the biblical message about Christ and him crucified—as the primary human activity through which He will call his elect people to salvation.²³⁶

- Therefore we affirm that in this regard our core activity is to unite efforts in God-centred evangelism and missions, through which Bible-believing churches will be established throughout and beyond.²³⁷
- We deny that evangelism is an activity aimed at entertaining the lost and meeting their felt social needs.²³⁸

²³⁴ 1 Kgs 18:21; Acts 5:29.

²³⁵ Rom 13:1–7; 1 Tim 2:1–4.

²³⁶ 1 Cor 1:17–25.

²³⁷ Matt 28:18–20.

²³⁸ 1 Cor 2:1–5.

15 SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

God has revealed all that is necessary for life and godliness in his Word.²³⁹

- Therefore we affirm the complete sufficiency of the Scripture for faith and obedience in all areas of life;²⁴⁰ we also affirm the completion of God's revelation in the sixty-six books of the Bible.²⁴¹
- We deny that any further revelation is being given today through so-called prophets and apostles,²⁴² or through any revelatory gifts.²⁴³ We further deny that human traditions or conventions should be followed without continual evaluation in the light of Scripture, since such things have no intrinsic authority.²⁴⁴

16 EXPOSITORY PREACHING

God has ordained preaching as the primary means by which his people are brought to faith and sanctified.²⁴⁵

- Therefore we affirm the centrality of expository preaching since this best reflects the mind of God and most edifies his people. We place a high premium on a Christ-centred exposition of the Scriptures, promoting it in our churches and theological schools.²⁴⁶
- We deny that things such as films, drama and musical programmes, while having a place in life in gen-

eral, should take the place of the preaching of the Word in corporate worship.²⁴⁷

17 GENUINE CHRISTIANITY

A true Christian is a person whose nature has been transformed by the Holy Spirit from a God-resisting orientation to a God-seeking orientation.²⁴⁸

- Therefore we affirm that all true Christians display certain marks of regeneration, namely: ongoing and continual dependence on Christ alone;²⁴⁹ habitual obedience to His commands and habitual rejection of evil;²⁵⁰ sacrificial love for God and fellow believers;²⁵¹ the ability to overcome the ungodly pressures of a society antagonistic to its Maker (i.e. the "world");²⁵² perseverance in faith and obedience to the end of life.²⁵³
- We deny that a person who makes a mere outward profession of Christianity without displaying the above marks is a genuine Christian.

18 PERSONAL DEVOTION TO GOD

God is a living God who dwells among his people in covenant relationship.²⁵⁴

- Therefore we affirm the individual believer's personal walk with God in all of life, enjoying communion with him in a vital relationship—

²³⁹ 2 Tim 3:16–17.

²⁴⁰ 2 Pet 1:3; Matt 4:4.

²⁴¹ Jude 3.

²⁴² Eph 2:20.

²⁴³ 1 Cor 13:8–13; Heb 2:3–4.

²⁴⁴ Matt 15:1–9; Col 2:20–23.

²⁴⁵ Rom 10:17; Ezek 37:4–6; John 17:17; Jas 1:18–25.

²⁴⁶ Ps 1; Luke 24:27, 44.

²⁴⁷ 2 Tim 4:1–4.

²⁴⁸ 1 Jn 5:18–20.

²⁴⁹ 1 Jn 5:10–12.

²⁵⁰ 1 Jn 2:3; 3:7–10.

²⁵¹ 1 Jn 3:10, 17; 4:7–21.

²⁵² 1 Jn 5:4.

²⁵³ 1 Jn 2:19; Matt 24:13; Heb 3:14.

²⁵⁴ Eph 2:22; Heb 8:8–12.

which includes commitment to a local church.²⁵⁵

- We deny that mere intellectual adherence to an orthodox creed or confession apart from a regenerated heart issuing in good works is truly Christian.²⁵⁶

19 GOOD WORKS AND SOCIAL CONCERN

God has created his people in Christ for good works, which are to be done in obedience to God's commandments as the fruit and evidence of a true and lively faith, for the glory of God.²⁵⁷

- Therefore we affirm the importance of engaging in good works such as helping orphans, looking after widows, caring for the poor and speaking for the dumb (unborn children).²⁵⁸
- We deny that good works are the ground or basis (rather than the evidence) of our salvation.²⁵⁹

20 AUTONOMY AND INTERDEPENDENCY

God has instituted the local church as a self-governing body through which his people will be evangelized, edified and engaged in good works for his glory. He has also revealed in his Word that a local church may co-operate with other local churches.²⁶⁰

- Therefore we affirm the principle of local church autonomy, as well as

that of the interdependency of local churches. We also affirm that local churches may co-operate with each other in order to unite their efforts and resources around common projects.

- We deny the need to form an institution with officers bearing instruments of power that would undermine or even replace the autonomy of any local church. We also deny that any local church should ignore its relationships with other local churches; in particular, no church should receive members from another local church without regard for disciplinary measures taken by that church.

21 THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

God's Word teaches the essential unity of God's people based upon union with Christ, truth and righteousness.²⁶¹

- Therefore we affirm a biblically and doctrinally based co-operation among true churches of Jesus Christ for the purpose of reaching the whole world with the gospel of Christ.²⁶²
- We deny that there is any biblical basis for an ecumenism that calls for an organizational unification of the Protestant churches of the world (and ultimately of all professing Christians) which disregards the essential and fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the virgin birth, the atoning work of Christ, re-

²⁵⁵ Mic 6:8; 1 John 1:3; Phil 2:1.

²⁵⁶ 2 Tim 3:5; Matt 23:25–28.

²⁵⁷ Eph 2:8–10.

²⁵⁸ Jas 1:27; 1 Tim 5:3–16; Isa 58:6–7; Prov 31:8–9.

²⁵⁹ Rom 11:5; Gal 3:10–14.

²⁶⁰ Matt 18:15–20; 2 Cor 8:16–21.

²⁶¹ Eph 4:3–6; 1 Cor 12:12–27.

²⁶² John 17:20–23.

generation, conversion, justification by faith alone and sanctification.²⁶³

22 LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

God in Christ has purchased the liberty of believers, freeing them from the guilt of sin, God's wrath, unbiblical traditions and regulations of men, Satan and the fear of death.²⁶⁴

- Therefore we affirm that believers are bound in their consciences only to God and his Word, not to the impositions of men and of Satan.²⁶⁵ We further affirm that Christian liberty is nothing but freedom to serve God within the boundaries that God Himself has set.²⁶⁶
- We deny that Christian liberty gives licence to sin of any kind.²⁶⁷ We further deny that any church or its leaders have a right to expect obedience from members when they teach things that are contrary or additional to God's word.²⁶⁸

23 HYPER-ORTHODOXY

Our Lord has warned his church against straining out gnats while swallowing camels.²⁶⁹

- Therefore we affirm that in essentials there must be unity, in non-essentials liberty and in all things charity.²⁷⁰
- We deny that our understanding of infallible truth is itself infallible and

that all matters are equally important; therefore we deny that all matters require contention and division among those who differ.²⁷¹

For the purpose of fellowship in Sola 5, we consider non-essentials to be those matters which are outside of our Confession of Faith and Core Values.

²⁶³ Amos 3:3.

²⁶⁴ Gal 5:1; Col 2:8–23; Heb 2:14–15.

²⁶⁵ Rom 14:1–15:4.

²⁶⁶ Rom 6:8–22.

²⁶⁷ Rom 6:1–7.

²⁶⁸ Matt 15:1–9; Col 2:20–23.

²⁶⁹ Matt 23:24.

²⁷⁰ Titus 1:9–11; 1 Cor 8:1–13; Col 3:12–15.

²⁷¹ Matt 23:23.

THE CONSTITUTION OF SOLA 5

*Adopted 30 September 2005 –
with Amendments (underlined), 4 September 2009 (Item 5.2)*

1 INCORPORATION

- 1.1 By the adoption of this Constitution the Association is formed. This Constitution supersedes all previous rules and procedures.

2 NAME

- 2.1 The name of this Association is *Sola 5*, with the subtitle *An Association of God-centred Evangelicals in Southern Africa*. Our name reflects our commitment to the biblical doctrines of the Reformation, encapsulated in the “five solas”: *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), *Solus Christus* (Christ alone), *Sola Gratia* (by grace alone), *Sola Fide* (by faith alone) and *Soli Deo Gloria* (glory to God alone).

3 PURPOSE

- 3.1 The purpose of the Association is to glorify God by:
- a) establishing a God-centred, Christ-focussed and Scripture-based witness;
 - b) uniting and promoting fellowship among local churches and individual Christians in southern Africa who have a passion for such a witness;
 - c) supporting and encouraging local churches and individual believers as they live out this wit-

ness in their own immediate spheres of influence;

- d) facilitating cooperation in projects which will promote the above aims in southern Africa and elsewhere;
- e) nurturing the formation of local churches with these values where no such local church exists.

4 STANDARDS OF THE ASSOCIATION

- 4.1 The ultimate standard of the Association is the Scripture (i.e. the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments). All issues and deliberations must be resolved by appealing to Scripture.
- 4.2 We believe that the Sola 5 Confession of Faith and the Core Values of Sola 5 are faithful interpretations and applications of Scripture; therefore the activities of the Association will be conducted within the framework of these documents.
- 4.3 The Confession of Faith and Core Values may be revised by the agreement of 80% (eighty percent) of the delegates representing member churches at the Annual Business Meeting (ABM). Proposed amendments must be submitted in writing to the Steering Committee (SC) at least ninety days before the

Meeting; member churches must be notified of such proposals at least sixty days before the Meeting.

5 MEMBERSHIP

5.1 The primary membership of the Association shall consist of local churches in southern Africa who subscribe to the Confession of Faith, Core Values and Constitution of Sola 5.

- a) Churches (as defined in the Sola 5 Confession of Faith, section 7) seeking membership of the Association should submit an application to the SC, which will bring the application to the ABM for acceptance. Any church applying for membership should include a copy of its own constitution and statement of faith. Acceptance into membership shall be by at least three quarters (75%) majority of church delegates present.
- b) Provisional membership may be granted by the SC until the next ABM.
- c) Local churches may be members of other church associations in addition to Sola 5, provided such membership is consistent with the doctrine and values of Sola 5.
- d) Member churches are free to have their own confessions of faith in addition to that of the Association, provided such confessions of faith are consistent with the Sola 5 Confession of Faith.
- e) Each member church must renew its commitment to the Association in writing at each ABM. In the absence of such re-

newal, membership will automatically lapse.

- f) A church's membership may be terminated by resignation.
 - g) The Association may terminate the membership of a church which no longer meets the requirements of membership. In such a case, the SC may, after diligently seeking to resolve the issues, suspend membership until the next ABM, at which time the church delegates will make a final decision on the matter. A proposal for the removal of a church from membership must be presented to the member churches, with reasons, at least thirty days prior to the ABM. A majority of at least 75% (seventy-five percent) is necessary for the removal of a church from membership.
- 5.2 Individual residents of southern Africa who do not belong to member churches and who subscribe to the Confession of Faith, Core Values and Constitution of Sola 5 may join the Association as associate members.
- a) The purpose of associate membership is to provide fellowship, encouragement and teaching for believers who are not able to find a like-minded local church in their area; to give them the opportunity of participating in activities of the Association; and to facilitate the process of church planting.
 - b) Associate members are welcome to participate in meetings of the Association, but may not vote nor may they serve on the steering committee.

- c) For associate members, the procedures for joining, renewing and terminating membership shall be the same as those for local churches.
- d) Where associate members are unable to attend the annual conference and AGM, they will be expected to show how they participated meaningfully in the activities of the association in the preceding year before the steering committee can recommend their names for renewal of membership.
- e) Associate members who are not in membership in any like-minded church will be encouraged to seek membership in such a church, if there is one nearby. They are expected to give reason why this may not be feasible or wise at the time, and, based on this, the steering committee will determine whether to recommend their names for renewal of membership as associate members at the next AGM.
- f) Associate members who are in a locality where they cannot with good conscience join any church will be encouraged to join any member church, or at least a like-minded church, outside their locality so that they can receive spiritual oversight. The Association will not take the place of the local church but may encourage member churches to consider the possibility of planting a like-minded church in such a locality where associate members live.

6 MODUS OPERANDI

- 6.1 **Basis of trust.** The aim of the Association is to give expression to the God-given unity of the true Body of Christ. This unity is of an organic, relational nature. Therefore, our relationships and joint activities are upheld by mutual love, respect, trust, loyalty and integrity—rather than by an institutional or legal framework. This is understood to be the basis of all that the Association does.
- 6.2 **Annual Business Meeting.** Decisions regarding the policy and activities of the Association shall be made by representatives of the member churches at the Annual Business Meeting (ABM).
- a) The venue of the ABM should be chosen to facilitate participation from all the member churches.
 - b) The first order of business at the ABM will be the renewal of commitment from members and the identification of those whose membership lapses. A quorum of 30% (thirty percent) will then be needed to conduct business, with the exception of making changes or additions to the Confession or Core Values; for this business a quorum of 66% (sixty-six percent) will be required.
 - c) Each member church attending the ABM shall have one vote, to be cast by its nominee (who must be a member, and preferably an elder, of that church). Member churches may send as many non-voting attendees as they wish.

- d) In all decisions, an understanding of the Lord's will should be sought through unity of heart and mind regarding the biblical teaching relevant to the issue at hand. Where complete unanimity is not possible or necessary, decisions shall be carried by a two-thirds majority of voting delegates—unless a different proportion is specified in this Constitution for the particular issue.
- e) The chairman of the Steering Committee shall preside at the ABM.

6.3 Steering Committee. For the sake of spiritual leadership and continuity, the Association will have a Steering Committee (SC).

- a) The SC will consist of five members (or more, if the ABM so decides), elected from officers of member churches, from the church delegates present at the ABM, or from the associate members. All members of the SC must subscribe to the Association's Confession of Faith and Core Values. It should be borne in mind that the SC's function is not to perpetuate an institution but to facilitate cooperation amongst local churches in the work of God's kingdom.
- b) The Coordinator of the Association (as provided for in §6.8)—if such an official exists—will be an *ex officio* member of the SC, but may not be its chairman.
- c) Nominations for the SC may be made by any member church and must be seconded by another member church. Written nominations must be received

by the SC at least six weeks prior to the ABM; member churches must be notified of these nominations at least four weeks prior to the ABM.

- d) Members of the SC will be elected from the nominees by the ABM. They will serve for a term of not more than two years, with approximately half the members retiring at each ABM. Retiring members of the SC will be eligible for re-election.
- e) After each ABM, the SC will appoint its own chairman, secretary and any other portfolio that may be necessary. No person may serve as chairman for more than two consecutive years.
- f) The function of the SC will be to execute the decisions of the ABM, to provide spiritual leadership, and to coordinate the affairs and activities of the Association.
- g) The SC will meet three times per year (or more if required).
- h) The SC normally takes decisions by consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached, wider counsel should be sought.
- i) The SC has the right to co-opt, should one or more members need to step down. A co-opted member would step down at the next ABM.

6.4 Activities. In order to further its aims, the Association may engage in a variety of activities such as:

- a) conferences;
- b) mutual teaching and edification through preaching, literature, media, personal visits, etc.;
- c) joint projects in mission, training and care for the needy;

- d) church planting;
- e) publication of information via a web site, membership directories, etc.;
- f) other activities for the propagation of the true gospel;
- g) owning assets, which the steering committee will be responsible to administer.

6.5 Execution of joint projects. Joint projects should be executed in such a way as to 1) promote genuine cooperation and joint action in the Association; 2) respect the autonomy of the local church; 3) respect our mutual commitment to one another in the extension of God's kingdom; 4) facilitate the efficient and effective execution of projects within biblical parameters for church structures and activities.

- a) Where possible and appropriate, member churches may, on behalf of the Association, take responsibility for joint projects decided upon by the Association.
- b) The ABM or SC may appoint committees in order to facilitate the activities of the Association. Where the SC has appointed a committee, that appointment must be ratified at the following ABM.

6.6 Church Planting. Church planting is one of the most essential tasks in the extension of God's kingdom. Therefore, the Association wishes to promote the orderly establishment of biblical local churches.

- a) Church planting should be conducted under the guidance and authority of a biblical local church which has its own established eldership.

- b) Before planting a new church, member churches of Sola 5 should consult with neighbouring member churches in order to promote trust and cooperation.
- c) Oversight of a new work should continue until the daughter church is self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. This is the appropriate stage for the new church to seek membership of Sola 5 in its own right.

6.7 Recommended teaching elders. The Association will maintain a list of recommended teaching elders.

- a) In order for a man's name to be placed on this list he should be recommended to the Association by a biblical local church (preferably a member church of Sola 5). The candidate will then be interviewed by a committee appointed for the purpose. If he is recognized by the committee to have the convictions, knowledge, gifts, manner of life, and calling necessary for exercising the office of teaching elder, his name shall be placed on the list of recommended teaching elders—subject to the ratification of the ABM.
- b) In view of the fact that teaching elders have a tremendous influence on their churches (for good or bad), the aim of this list is to assist local churches in finding men who are divinely called and equipped—and who will thus be a blessing in the church. The list does not in any way prescribe to the churches. Recording a man's name on the list should not be confused with ordination, which is the appointment of a

man to actual office in a local church.

- c) Men who have been recognized to have the gifts and graces necessary for teaching elders, but have not yet been ordained to ministry in a local church, shall be regarded as Candidates for ministry. The committee may, in the interests of love, concern and wisdom, recommend that a Candidate undergo a period of internship in an existing local church with an experienced teaching elder (pastor).
- d) The Association recognizes the need for mutual encouragement and accountability amongst pastors, as well as the particular need for inexperienced pastors to receive guidance and support.
- e) If a recommended teaching elder ceases to meet the biblical requirements for office, the Association may, on the recommendation of the committee, remove his name from the list of recommended teaching elders. Due consideration must always be given to the weightiness of this matter in relation to the glory of God, the witness of his church and the reputation of the person concerned.
- f) The name of a recommended teaching elder who no longer holds office in a local church or other similar ministry will be retained on the list for a period of twelve months (or longer, at the discretion of the committee), after which it will be removed.

6.8 **Officials and assistants.** The Association may appoint officials or assistants on a part-time or full-time

basis. When appointing such officials or assistants—as at all other times—it should be borne in mind that the aim of the Association is not to create an institution with authority over the churches, but to facilitate their cooperation for the glory of God and the extension of his kingdom.

6.9 **Cases of difficulty or difference.**

The churches of the Association shall seek to assist each other in cases of difficulty or difference which threaten the peace of one or more churches. The guiding principle for these situations is expressed in §7.6 of the Confession of Faith.

- a) When involved in cases of difficulty or difference, member churches are encouraged to take the initiative in calling for the assistance of sister churches, especially those in membership with Sola 5.
- b) If necessary, the Steering Committee may also take the initiative by organizing the appointment of a church council as envisaged in §7.6 of the Confession of Faith. This council will seek to effect reconciliation consistent with the truth of God's Word. It shall provide counsel and publish its findings in an appropriate and sensitive way.
- c) While accepting the autonomy of the local church, member churches also humbly recognize their weakness and proneness to sin. They and their members are therefore willing to receive biblical counsel and admonishment.

6.10 **Mutual reception of church members.** The churches of the Association shall seek to cooperate with and assist other biblical churches—especially those belonging to Sola 5—in matters relating to membership and church discipline.

- a) Before receiving a person into church membership or open fellowship, member churches of Sola 5 should contact the elders of the applicant's previous church. This is particularly important if the previous church is also a member church of Sola 5.
- b) No member church of Sola 5 should receive into church membership or open fellowship persons who are under the discipline of another biblical church. If any differences exist between the two churches regarding the

validity of such discipline, a concerted effort should be made to resolve them.

7 **AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION**

7.1 This Constitution (with the exception of section 3) may be amended by a three-quarters (75%) majority of the delegates representing member churches at the ABM. Section 3 may not be amended at all.

7.2 Proposed amendments must be submitted in writing to the Steering Committee at least ninety days before the ABM; member churches must be notified of such proposals at least sixty days before the ABM.