

Fellowship Baptist Church

Articles of Faith

Section I - of the Scriptures

We believe that the Bible, in its original documents, was verbally inspired of God and is the product of Spirit-controlled men, and is therefore inerrant in all matters and authoritative in all areas of faith and practise. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21)

Section II - of the True God

We believe the one true and living God is one in essence, possessing three eternal, personal distinctions which are revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; equal in every divine perfection, yet executing distinct but harmonious offices. (Exodus 20:2,3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Peter 1:2)

Section III – of Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary; and that He is one Person possessing two natures and thus is true god and true man; that He lived a sinless life and gave Himself as a perfect substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of all men; that He arose in the very body, though glorified, in which He was crucified; and that He is ascended into heaven where He is seated at the right hand of God, interceding for His people; and that He will return to the earth in keeping with His promises. (John 1:1-2; 14:1-3; Ephesians 1:20)

Section IV – of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Triune godhead; that He has been and will continue to be active throughout eternity; that at the time of conversion, He regenerates those who believe, baptises them into the Body of Christ, indwells them, seals them, and then continues to empower and direct them in Christian service. (John 16:8-11, 13; Romans 8:11-14; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:30)

Section V - of the Creation

We accept the Genesis account as being an historic and literal account of the origin of the universe and believe that creation, with all that is in it, was created by God in six periods of twenty four hours and that God created from no pre-existing matter. (Genesis 1; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3)

Section VI - of Satan

We believe that God created Lucifer (now known as Satan or the Devil) and many other angels rebelled against God; that these fallen angels still continue to oppose God; that they will ultimately be cast into the lake of fire to suffer everlasting punishment. (Isaiah. 14:12-15; Jude 6; Revelation 20:10)

Section VII - of Man

We believe that man was originally created in the image of God; that through disobedience, Adam fell from his original state, became depraved in nature, was separated from God, and came under condemnation and the sentence of death; that because of the unity of the human race and the natural headship of Adam, all men (Jesus Christ excepted) are born with sin natures and have come under the same consequences of sin. (Genesis 1-3; Romans 1:18; 5:10-21; 6:23)

Section VIII - of Salvation

We believe that salvation is all of Grace through the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ who paid the full redemptive price, fully satisfied God's righteous demands by suffering the death penalty for man's guilt, and imputed to man His perfect righteousness, reconciling him to God; that salvation is made effective to man only upon his exercise of personal faith in the crucified and risen Christ and such faith is possible only by the foreknowledge and election of God.

We believe that salvation includes justification, regeneration, adoption into the family of God, sanctification, and glorification; that one who is truly born again will, by the grace of God, persevere and be kept saved forever. (Romans 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Jude 24-25)

Section IX - of Christian Living

We believe the Bible teaches that Christians are to lead a life of righteousness and good works — not that these things help us to procure salvation in any sense, but that they are the proper fruit of a saved life (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 2:14; 1 John 3:10).

As Christians we are to obey the word of the Lord (John 14:2) and walk as He walked (1 John 2:6), especially in our responsibility and privilege of proclaiming the gospel to the lost (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

Furthermore, we acknowledge that the believer's life ought to be characterised by separation unto God from the evil ways of the world (Romans 12:1-2); speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), sanctity of the home (Ephesians 5:2—6:4); settling differences between one another in accordance with God's Word (Matthew 18:15-35; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Galatians 6:1); not engaging in carnal strife but displaying a Christ-like attitude toward all men (Romans 12:17-21; Ephesians 4:1-4; Philippians 2:1-8); exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23); and maintaining a life of prayer (Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6).

In all this, we acknowledge that a victorious Christian life is possible as we learn to live not under law, but under grace, freely expressing our gratitude and love for our Lord and Saviour (Luke 7:47; Romans 6:14)

Section X - of the Church

We believe that the universal church, which is His body is composed of all true believers from Pentecost to the Rapture. (Matthew 3:11; 1 Corinthians 12:13, 27; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 21:2)

We believe that local churches are gatherings of believers in given communities, organised for the purpose of united worship, administration of the ordinances (baptism and the Lord's supper), edification, discipline, and effective promotion of the work of Christ throughout the world; that such local churches should be limited in membership to those who are born again, desire to follow Christ and have been immersed; that Christ is the supreme head; that the only offices recognised in such New Testament churches were those of pastor (bishop, presbyter, elder) and deacon; that government is democratic with every member responsible to vote in keeping with his understanding of the will of Christ; that each local church is responsible, directly to Christ and not to some other church or organisation; that there is value in fellowship and cooperation with other local churches of like convictions. (Matthew 18:15-17; 28:18-20; Acts 2:42; 8:38; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 11:26, 28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 8-15)

Section XI - of Things to Come

We believe that the Bible teaches the conscious existence of the dead (Luke 16:19-31; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21-23); the resurrection of the body (John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15); the judgement and reward of believers (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10); the judgement and condemnation of unbelievers (Revelation 20:15) — the eternal life and blessedness of the saved (John 3:16); and the eternal punishment of the unsaved (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:15).

We believe in the imminent, personal, visible, pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory. (Zechariah 14:3-9; Matthew 24:42-43; Acts 1:11; Revelation 19:11—20:6)

Our Teaching Positions

Teaching positions reflect the content or paradigm of sermons and ministry in our services as opposed to core truths that are non-negotiable. We respect the fact that godly people take different views on these matters and don't wish to start a conflict over them. These are distinctives that feature in the total scope of ministry at Fellowship Baptist Church.

Teaching Position 1 – Baptist Distinctives

The "Baptist Distinctives" are unique doctrinal distinctives which have been historically held by Baptist Churches who believe them to be essential Biblical elements for a New Testament Church. In particular, the practise of Believers' baptism by immersion was the distinctive that gave Baptists their name. While there are many other important things a Bible-based Church must teach, we believe these distinctives are scriptural and essential, and they therefore set us apart because we hold to all of them.

An acrostic of the Baptist Distinctives:

- B Biblical authority
- A Autonomy of the local Church
- P Priesthood of all believers

- T Two Church ordinances
- I Individual soul liberty
- S Saved Church membership
- T Two church officers
- S Separation of Church & State

Biblical Authority:

We believe that the Bible is the only Basis for faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16,17), and that the whole Bible is an inspired book written by God through men (Romans 3:1, 2; 2 Peter 1:20, 21). Its authority therefore comes from its divine Author.

Autonomy of the Local Church:

We believe the Bible teaches that every local Church should be self-governing under the headship of Christ alone. This is seen in Acts 15:3, 4 where the Church sent and received Paul and Barnabas at the Jerusalem Council. There, the Apostles and pastors met and discussed privately (Acts 15:6), but the decision was made by the Church (Acts 15:7, 12, 22, 25). The local Church was responsible for missionary activity (Acts 14:26, 27). The Lord Jesus taught that the Church is the final authority in disciplining an erring believer (Matthew 18:15-17), a principle applied later in the epistles (1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15). This is also called "Congregational Church Government."

Priesthood of All Believers:

In the Old Testament, a believer came to God through a priest and a high priest. The New Testament teaches that the middle partition was broken down by Christ (Ephesians 2:14-16) and that every believer enjoys the role of a priest to God (Revelation 1:5, 6; 1 Peter 2:4-10), being able to approach Him on the merits of Christ, our high priest and only mediator (Hebrews 2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6). All believers are equal in Christ (Galatians 3:28) and enjoy the privilege of direct communication with God (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Two Ordinances:

We believe the New Testament teaches that there are 2 ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, neither of which bestow grace.

Baptism - Baptism is a command of Christ (Matthew 28:19, 20), which symbolises his death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3, 4). In the New Testament it is always for believers only (Acts 2:41, 42; 8:12, 35-39; 9:17,18; 10:44-48; 16:30-34). Infant baptism is therefore unscriptural. The believer identifies with Christ in his own baptism - he died with Christ (under the water) and is also raised with Christ (out of the water) to a new life (Romans 6:3-4).

Lord's Supper - The Lord's Supper is a memorial (1 Corinthians 11:25-26) instituted by Christ the night before He died (Matthew 26:26-30). The elements are symbolic of the body and blood of the Lord, given for the New Covenant. Only believers should share at the table (1 Corinthians 11:27-32) who have been obedient in baptism (Acts 2:41-42; Mark 16:15).

Individual Soul Liberty:

We believe that God created each person an individual and that each person is at liberty to read and interpret the scriptures and worship God (1 John 2:27). While man is at liberty to choose right or wrong, he is also fully responsible before God for his actions (John 5:28, 29). God has not hidden the truth, but made plain the way of salvation and the inevitable judgement of wickedness (Acts 17:30).

Saved Church Membership:

The Church of Christ is his body (1 Corinthians 12:13), the local church can therefore not permit a non-believer to be a member (1 Corinthians 6:15-17). Acts 2:41-42, 47 show that people were saved, baptised, added to the Church, shared in the Lord's Supper in that order.

Two Officers:

We believe the New Testament teaches that there are at least two officers in the local Church - Pastors and Deacons (Philippians 1:1)

Pastor - There are numerous words for the role of the pastor each identifying a

characteristic of his duty:

Pastor - 1 Peter 5:1-4, here the elders are to "... pastor the flock (feed)..." Cf. Acts 20:17, 28; Ephesians 4:11

Elder - Titus 1:5-7, note that Elder (v. 5) and Bishop (v. 7) are referring to the same office. He is to be a counselor (an elder).

Bishop - Titus 1:7, the pastor is an administrator of the local church.

Deacons - The deacons are servants of the Church to relieve the pastor of work which might hinder his more spiritual duties (Acts 6:1-7).

Separation of Church and State:

While the local Church and its members are to submit to (Titus 3:1), support (Romans 13:17), honour (1 Peter 2:13-17) and pray for (1 Timothy 2:1-6) the Government and authorities, our principal duty is to God (Matthew 22:21). The Church is not to be united or governed by the state, but is to be separate, set apart to God and the work of the gospel (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Teaching Position 2 – Inter - Church Fellowship

As a church we stand apart from the modern ecumenical movement in all its forms.

We are not linked in any way with the World Council of Churches or the British Council of Churches (Known as Churches Together in Pilgrimage), nor are we members of the local Churches Together.

We do not believe that it is right to engage in any joint activities with other churches which either by their preaching or their practises deny essential truths of the Gospel. On the other hand, we believe wholeheartedly that we may voluntarily fellowship and cooperate with other churches of like doctrine as long as each local church can maintain its own autonomy (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15).

Teaching Position 3 – The Lord's Return

We believe that the Scriptures do foretell certain future events:

Rapture of the Church:

We believe that Jesus Christ will return to the atmosphere of this earth; that the dead in Christ (the Church) will rise first, and together with living believers be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; that the rapture is the next event on the revealed calendar and that no prophecy need be fulfilled before it occurs. (1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:1-9; Titus 2:13)

Tribulation:

We believe that the Rapture of the Church will be followed on earth by Israel's Seventieth Week of Daniel; during this time, men will arise who will deceive men's hearts and sin will run rampant; the nation of Israel will particularly be the subject of intense persecution; that there will be great judgements on men of both a human and supernatural cause; that there will be people repenting of sin during this time in spite of the extreme spiritual darkness; that this period will last for 7 years and lead up to the time of Christ's return to the earth. (Daniel 9:24-27; Joel 1-3; Matthew 24; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; Revelation 6; 7; 8-9; 12-13)

Second Coming:

We believe that following the climactic battles of Armageddon at the close of the tribulation, Christ will bodily descend to the earth with the saints to establish His kingdom on earth; that the first 1000 years will be marked by the devil being cast into the Lake of Fire for the 1000 years; that the nations will be ruled by Christ and a time of world-wide prosperity will ensue; that Israel will have the land and peace promised to their fore-fathers and will follow Christ as their messiah; that, at the end of the 1000 years, Satan will be released to deceive the nations into one last coup which fails miserably. (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:18-21; 17:4-8; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 2; Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:6-9; 13:4-11; 60:4-18; 61:4-6; Jeremiah 30:7-11; 31:31-37; 32:37-41; Ezekiel 38-39; Zechariah 14:1-4, 9, 16-21; Matthew 25:32-45; Revelation 19:11-21; 20:1-10)

Teaching Position 4 - Dispensations

We believe that the dispensations are not ways of salvation. This has always been by grace through faith.

Dispensations are stewardships by which God administered His purpose on earth

toward men. Changes in dispensational dealings depend upon changed situations in which man is found lacking in relation to God due to man's failures and God's holy judgement.

Even though several dispensations may cover the entire history of mankind, only three of these are the subject of extended revelation in Scripture: Mosaic, Grace, and Millennial. These three are distinct and are not to be intermingled or confused. (Genesis 2:7-25; 3:23; 8:20; 12:1; Exodus 19:8-20; John 1:17; Ephesians 1:10)