

Primary and Distinctive Doctrines

The theological foundations within the following Statement of Faith reflect what distinguishes Commonwealth City Church from other churches who would affirm the historical doctrines (*our expression of these doctrines can be found within the **Baptist Faith and Message** and **Lausanne Covenant***). These distinctives indelibly shape the way that our Family is led and the direction our church is headed. We do not expect all members to embrace all aspects of these distinctives, but members should expect that the distinctives will be maintained in all ministry environments at Commonwealth City Church; members **may not teach contrary to them**. Before joining the family of Commonwealth City Church, a person must affirm the primary truths listed below. Distinctions are not mandatory for membership, but in order **to be entrusted with leadership** in the community, a person must **commit not to teach anything contrary** to both primary and distinctive doctrines. (Guest speakers will also be held to this standard in submission and accountability to the elders of Commonwealth City Church)

This Commonwealth City Church Statement of Faith is a human attempt to summarize and apply Biblical doctrine. This document contains the core of our doctrinal convictions. We must be quick to acknowledge that this is a fallible, human document. The Bible invites further study and the elders of our family commit to pursue greater familiarity and clarity in the Scriptures. Therefore, the Statement of Faith is subject to revision based on the ongoing study of the Elders. Revisions can be made only with the consent of the Elders.

Doctrine of God

Primary:

We believe in one God eternally existing as one essence and three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, each of whom is fully God, yet there is one God.

We believe in one God (Deuteronomy 6:4) eternally existing (Daniel 4:34-35) as one essence and three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Each person is fully, equally and eternally God, yet there is one God. Each person of the Trinity has precisely the same nature and attributes and is worthy of precisely the same worship, honor and praise. The entire Christian faith is bound together with the confession of God's Trinitarian nature (Matt. 28:18-20).

We believe in God the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth. We believe in the Son, God from God, eternally begotten but not made, who in history assumed to Himself a human nature for the sake of our salvation (John 1:14; Heb. 1:3). He is fully God and fully man. Through Him, all things came into being and were created. He was before all things, and in Him, all things hold together by the word of His power (Col. 1:15-20). He suffered, died, was buried, resurrected, ascended and sits at the right hand of the Father until He returns for the final judgment and consummation of the Kingdom. We believe in the Holy Spirit who eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son and is sent by the Father and Son to give new life (John 15:26-27). The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth and dwells within the regenerate (Eph. 1:13-14). The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son who, in turn, came to glorify the Father. He will lead the Church into a right understanding and rich application of the truth of God's Word. He is to be respected, honored and worshiped as God, the third person of the Trinity.

The triune God, Father, Son and Spirit, is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible. As the immortal and eternal Creator, He sovereignly rules over all of His creation (Ps. 24:1).

(Genesis 1; Exodus 15:11; Deuteronomy 4:35; 6:4–5; 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:2; 1 Kings 8:60; Psalm 24:1; Isaiah 45:21–22; Isaiah 44:6–8; Daniel 4:34–35; Matthew 28:18–20; John 1:4; 15:26–27; Ephesians 1:13–14; Colossians 1:15–20; Hebrews 1:3)

Doctrine of Revelation

Primary:

God has made Himself known to the world in Jesus Christ, the Scriptures and creation.

We believe that God has made Himself known to His creation. He has revealed Himself to us in His Son, the incarnate Word (Heb. 1:1–2), in Scripture, the inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:16), and in creation (Ps. 8; Rom. 1:20)

We believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the perfect revelation of who God is. Jesus Christ is the “image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15), “the exact imprint of his nature” (Heb. 1:3) and a perfect reflection of God the Father (John 5:19).

We believe the Scriptures, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, are the inspired Word of God and are therefore without error in their original writings. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and free from error. The Scripture is sufficient for all that God requires for us to believe and do and is therefore to be believed, as God’s instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God’s command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God’s pledge, in all that it promises (Is. 40:6–8). As God’s people hear, believe and obey the

Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the Gospel (Rom. 10:14-17).

(Psalm 8, Isaiah 40:6-8; 55:11; Matthew 5:17-18; John 5:19; 10:4,35; Romans 1:16-20; 10:14-17; 1 Corinthians 1:15-21; Ephesians 1:17-18; 3:10,18; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:12-13; 2 Peter 1:21; Jude 1:3)

Doctrine of the Church

Primary:

We believe that the Church is the body of Christ sent into the world to shine forth the glory of God.

God, by His Word and Spirit, creates the Church, calling sinful humanity into the fellowship of Christ's body. By the same Word and Spirit, He guides and preserves that newly redeemed humanity. The Church is made up of those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ, have personally appropriated the gospel, and have devoted themselves to one another out of reverence for Christ. The Church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The ministry of the Church is an extension of the ministry of Jesus in the power of the Spirit.

The ultimate mission of the Church is to bring glory to God by making disciples. The Church is called to make disciples through worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, observance of the ordinances, fellowship, the exercise of our gifts and talents, and the proclamation of the Gospel both in our community and throughout the world, teaching all who believe in Christ to obey him.

Commonwealth City Church Distinctive:

We believe there are two ordinances of the Church. One is that of believer's baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the other is the Lord's Supper.

Water baptism is only intended for those who have received the saving benefits of Christ through the new birth of the Holy Spirit. In obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the Church, oneself and the world, believers are baptized by immersion into water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that a former way of life has been put to death and vividly depicts the release from the mastery of Satan, sin and death.

As with water baptism, the Lord's Supper is to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ. This ordinance symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood on our behalf and is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. As we come to the table with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body.

(Eph. 1:7-14, 3:10-12, 4:4-16, 5:18-21; Rom. 6:4-10, 8:1-14, 8:26-27; Ezek. 36:26-27; Isa. 43:6-7; Matt. 5:16, 26:26-29, 28:18-20; John 6:35,51-56, 14:12-13; 1 Cor. 11:23-29, 12:4-31)

Doctrine of Sin

Primary:

We believe that sin has fractured all things, leaving the world in desperate need of salvation.

Through the temptation of Satan, humanity transgressed the command of God and fell from their original holiness and righteousness (Gen. 3). Now the entire human race inherits a corrupt nature that is opposed to God and His law (Rom. 3:9-20). Therefore, all humans are under condemnation. This depravity is radical and pervasive. It extends to the mind, will, body and affections. Unregenerate humanity lives under the dominion of sin and Satan (Eph. 2:1-3). He is at enmity with God, hostile toward and hateful of God.

(Genesis 3, Romans 3:9-25, Romans 5:12-21, Ephesians 2:1-3)

Doctrine of Salvation

Primary:

We believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

We believe that, due to universal death through sin, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless born again (John 3:5-8); that salvation is only by grace through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ; and that all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ through faith are declared righteous by God and become children of God (Heb.10:19-25).

We believe the Scriptures teach that regeneration, or the new birth, is that act of God by which the Holy Spirit imparts a new nature and a new spiritual life, not before possessed, and the person becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus (Gal. 2:20). The mind is given a holy disposition and a new desire to serve God, the dominion of sin is broken, and the heart is transformed from a love of sin and self to a love of holiness and God.

Commonwealth City Church Distinctive:

Before the foundation of the world, God elected His people, setting His affection and grace upon them (Rom. 8:29-30). In love God predestined His people for adoption (Eph. 1:4-6). Faith is a gift of grace that is given by the mercy and pleasure of God, so that no one may boast (Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation is understood through the lens of triple imputation; the sin of Adam is imputed to all of collective humanity (Rom. 5), our sin is imputed in the substitutionary atoning work of Christ (Rom. 3), Christ's righteousness is imputed to those that believe and place their trust in Him (Phil. 3:9). Apart from this intervention of God, humanity cannot choose of his own accord to worship God and pursue righteousness (Rom. 3; Eph. 2:1-3). God's sovereignty in salvation is comprehensive: from first to last; all of salvation is the work of God.

(John 1:12-13; John 3:5-8, 16-18; 6:37-44; 10:25-30; Acts 13:48; 16:30-31; Romans 3:1-4:25; 8:1-17, 29-39; 10:8-10; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Titus 3:3-7; Heb. 10:19-25; 1 John 1:7-9)

Ordered Equality

Commonwealth City Church Distinctive:

Men and women are absolutely equal in essence, dignity and value but are distinct by divine design. As part of God's good created order, men and women are to have different yet complementary roles and responsibilities in the home and church. As it relates to the church, men and women are both expected to lead; however, the office of elder is reserved for qualified men.

Both men and women are together created in the divine image and are therefore equal before God as persons, possessing the same moral dignity and value, and have equal access to God through faith in Christ.

Men and women are together the recipients of spiritual gifts designed to empower them for ministry in the local church and beyond. God's intent for the church is for both men and women to be encouraged and equipped to minister and serve in accordance with the gifts He has given them.

In the home, both husbands and wives are responsible to God for spiritual nurture and vitality, but God has given to the man primary responsibility as the head of the household along with his wife in accordance with the servant leadership and sacrificial love modeled by Jesus Christ.

The Elders have been granted authority under the headship of Jesus Christ to provide oversight, set an example of what is normative for the church and serve the church through prayer and equipping. The office of Elder is restricted to men who are an example of what a godly man looks like leading a household.

(Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18; Acts 18:24-26; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 3:1-7; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7)

The Gifts and Work of the Spirit

Primary:

The Holy Spirit is fully God, equal with the Father and Son, whose primary ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. He also convicts unbelievers of their need for Christ and imparts spiritual life through regeneration (the new birth).

We have been adopted as sons and daughters and by the indwelling Holy Spirit cry out "Abba, Father." The indwelling Holy Spirit graciously sanctifies, lovingly leads, comforts, convicts, and empowers all who are brought to faith in Christ so that they might live in obedience to all Christ commanded. The Holy Spirit empowers the mission of making disciples.

The model for our reliance upon the Spirit is the Lord Jesus Christ himself who was filled with the Spirit and entirely dependent upon His power for the performance of miracles, the preaching of the kingdom of God, and all other dimensions of His earthly ministry.

The Holy Spirit who indwelt and empowered Christ in like manner indwells and empowers believers. Additionally, He has bestowed spiritual gifts on believers for the work of ministry and the building up of the body of Christ. All of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are still available today, but not one of them in particular is required to give evidence of the baptism or filling of the Spirit. The gifts are divine provisions central to spiritual growth and effective ministry and are to be eagerly desired, faithfully developed, and lovingly exercised according to biblical guidelines.

Holy Spirit empowered ministry is often embodied in corporate prayer and is essential in worship, mission and discernment. Commonwealth City Church is learning desperation, learning to acknowledge our weaknesses and coming increasingly to believe we do our best work in prayer.

Commonwealth City Church Distinctive:

The gifts of the Holy Spirit that we see on display in the New Testament are still active within the life of the church. These gifts did not end with the close of the New Testament or the death of the last apostle.

(Matthew 3:11; 12:28; Luke 4:1, 14; 5:17; 10:21; John 1:12-13; 3:1-15, 34; 14:12; 15:26-27; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; 2:14-21; 4:29-30; 10:38; Romans 8:9, 15, 26-27; 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-13; 12:28-31; 14:1-33; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 3:1-5; 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 5:18)

Baptism

Primary:

The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) is the explicit command to make disciples by the teaching of the word and baptism. The rest of the establishment of the New Testament church is centered on the application of this command; repent, believe, be baptized.

Commonwealth City Church Distinctive:

The precedent we find in the New Testament is baptism following conversion by immersion into water. Baptism by immersion is meant to symbolically depict the believer's real union to Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-14). *(For more information about being baptized at Commonwealth City Church, please contact us to set up a baptism interview with one of our elders.)*

(Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38-41; Acts 8:12, 26-38; Acts 10:47-48; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:4-6; Colossians 2:12)

Communion

Primary:

The Church of Jesus is commanded to remember the death and resurrection of Christ in partaking of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-27; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)

Commonwealth City Church Distinctive:

We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the church in which gathered believers eat bread, signifying Christ's body given for His people, and drink the cup of the Lord, signifying the New Covenant in Christ's blood. We do this in remembrance

of our Lord, and thus proclaim His death until He comes. Those who eat and drink in a worthy manner partake of Christ's body and blood, not physically, but spiritually, in that, by faith, they are nourished with the benefits He obtained through His death, and thus grow in grace. Those who eat and drink are also encouraged to examine themselves prior to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, in light of Paul's warning from 1 Corinthians 11:27-32. (Commonwealth City Church extends an "open" Communion table, meaning the invitation to receive communion during our Sunday gathering is offered to any follower of Christ, regardless of membership at Commonwealth City Church, denominational affiliation, or spiritual tradition.) (Matt. 26:26-27; 1 Cor. 11:17-34)

Final Thoughts

We do not believe that all things in this statement of faith are of equal weight, some being more essential, some less. We do not believe that every part of this document must be believed in order for one to be saved.

Our aim is not to discover how little can be believed, but rather to embrace and teach—the whole counsel of God. Our aim is to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fullness of its truth, and the glory of its Author.