

A Statement of Convictions and Guiding Principles

In the early nineteenth century there was a spiritual awakening on America's frontier. At that time the idea arose, among a few gospel preachers, of unifying the various denominations by abandoning divisive creeds so as to be Christians only by restoring the teaching and practice of the early church. As imperfectly as this has been accomplished since then, it remains a goal that we must continue to pursue. There can be no other way to respect Jesus as head of the church than to have as our final authority his Lordship and his will as revealed in the way his apostles directed the church in its infancy. (Eph. 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:4-5)

Common beliefs shared with other Christian churches:

- God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, functioning as one person, described as the Trinity. (Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22)**
- God, our creator, who made us in his image, seeks to draw us into a relationship with him because of his great love for us. (Gen. 1:26-27, John 3:16, Rom. 8:15-17)**
- All of mankind is fallen and sinful. The guilt of this sin separates us from God and the power of sin frustrates our ability to live righteous lives. (Rom. 3:9-18, 5:12, 7:14-25, Eph. 2:11-13)**
- The Word (Logos) of God became flesh and was given the name Jesus, (John 1:1, 14, Luke 1:26-35) who:**
 - 1. was born of the virgin Mary. (Matt. 1:18-21)**
 - 2. lived a sinless life. (2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 4:15)**
 - 3. as God, performed supernatural acts. (John 14:11, 20:30)**
 - 4. died on a Roman cross for our sins. (John 19)**
 - 5. rose from the dead as he promised. (Luke 24)**
 - 6. ascended back to heaven. (Mark 16:19, Luke 24:50-52)**
 - 7. will return suddenly to end time and judge all men. (Matt. 24:36-39, 1 Thess. 4:13-18)**
- Jesus Christ, God incarnate, is alone able to remove the guilt of sin. He made it possible for any willing, obedient believer to be reconciled to God because of his sinless life and willingness to die on the cross as the Lamb of God. (Rom. 5:10-11, 2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 4:14-15, 7:25-28)**
- We can know God, (though our knowledge of him is incomplete) through what he has revealed to us in the scriptures. The scriptures are inspired by God and are the final authority for faith and practice. (Rom. 3:2, Gal. 1:12, 2 Tim. 3:16)**
- The church began on the feast of Pentecost and will function to do Christ's work until he returns. (Acts 2, Eph. 3:10)**
- The church is a body of believers – Christ's body and bride. It is not a building. (Eph. 1:22-23, 5:25-30, Col. 1:24)**
- The Holy Spirit dwells in each Christian, enabling him/her to live godly, giving him/her enabling gifts for service, and seals him/her unto the final day of**

redemption when Christ returns. Supernatural gifts of tongues and prophecy ended in the first century. (Rom. 8:9-11, 2 Cor. 1:21-22, Gal. 5:22-23, 1 Cor. 13:8)
·We can receive the benefits of reconciliation made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection as a gift of grace through obedient faith as did the first Christians. (Rom. 5:2, 8:3-4, Eph. 2:4-9, 1 Cor. 1:21)

As a congregation of the Churches of Christ we believe that:

·We can be reconciled to God, be saved from the guilt of sin, and become his children – heirs with Christ:

1. by being born again, turning from a life of self-centeredness to a life focused on serving Christ, accepting his grace through obedient faith, convinced that he is God incarnate, and trusting him to save us and to lead us. (John 3:1-8, Eph 2:1-10, Col. 1:15-20, Rom. 3:21-26)

2. as believers we must repent of our sins, forsaking sinful habits with his strength. (Luke 15:17, Acts 2:38, 17:30, 1 John 3:6-9)

3. by being willing to confess him initially in a public way and throughout life. (Rom. 10:9, 1 Tim. 6:12, James 5:16, 1 John 1:9)

4. by being immersed in water as a public expression of our faith in his death, burial and resurrection we have our sins washed away. (Matt. 28:18-20, Rom. 6:1-6, 1 Peter 3:20-21, Acts 22:16, Eph. 5:25, 26)

·God, at that point, adds us to the church, Christ's body, for whom he died. We then, live for him, trusting him, obeying him, and receive strength from him to do whatever he has in mind for us. (Acts 2:41, 47, Eph. 2:10, Heb. 6:10)

·Once we are added to his church, Jesus expects us to bear fruit, using the gifts and blessings he has given us to become servants to our brothers and sisters and to those who have yet to submit to his will. (John 15:1-8, Matt. 25:14-30, Gal. 5:22-23, Heb. 6:10-12, Rev. 14:13) There are great rewards and serious consequences involved in our choice.

·Each local congregation of the New Testament church was autonomous, led by elders and served by deacons. Each congregation functioned independently. (Acts 14:23, Rom. 16:3-5, 16, Titus 1:5-9) Woodland Trace and all other congregations of Churches of Christ remain autonomous.

·The early church met on the first day of the week for worship. (Acts 20:7) The focal point of their worship (as is ours) was the communion, or Lord's Supper. This was, and is now, done according to Jesus' command. (1 Cor. 11:23-29) The other items that were (and are now) practiced as worship are as follows:

1. a cappella singing (There is no record of any instruments of music used in worship for several centuries.)

2. prayers (Public prayers were not and are not a substitute for a life of individual prayer.) (Eph. 6:18, 1 Tim. 2:1)

3. giving (Cheerfully giving back to God a liberal part of what he has given us.) (1 Cor. 16:1-2)

4. God's Word (Public reading and sermons that remind, explain, and exhort to action, etc.) (Acts 20:7, 1 Tim. 4:13, Acts 2:42)

5. as a guiding principle, Jesus said that worship must be in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23-24)

At Woodland Trace Church of Christ, we value:

- 1. The power of God to radically change lives.**
- 2. The cross of Christ as the key message of Christianity.**
- 3. The Holy Scriptures as the foundation for godly living.**
- 4. The attractiveness of a healthy, harmonious, productive church.**
- 5. The beauty of a life lived in obedience to Jesus.**
- 6. The importance of congregational worship experiences that instruct, encourage, challenge, and bless.**
- 7. The importance of a Christ-centered marriage and family.**
- 8. The spiritual development of children and youth.**
- 9. The wonder of prayer as God responds to the faith of his people.**
- 10. Small groups and relationships with one another.**
- 11. The intentional pursuit of those who are now outside of Christ.**
- 12. Help for the poor and needy.**
- 13. The importance of godly masculinity and femininity.**
- 14. Excellence in all things for the glory of Christ.**

Local policies:

- 1. At Woodland Trace we believe that it is appropriate to celebrate nationally recognized holidays (Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving) and others in scripturally appropriate ways.**
 - 2. We believe that it is inappropriate and counterproductive to denigrate other churches from the pulpit.**
 - 3. From the beginning as a church family, clapping has been appropriate at certain times during singing, following baptism, and recognition of achievement of our members. This practice will be continued.**
 - 4. We believe that while instruments were not used in worship, there are occasions when instrumental music is appropriate such as weddings, instruction, or other non worship occasions.**
 - 5. We believe that some traditions are appropriate and useful. However, to continue to hold a tradition that no longer is productive in the functioning of the church is not prudent and often anti-productive. We will always be open-minded to more effective ways of accomplishing the work of Christ in the community.**
 - 6. There are many rewarding roles of service available to women at Woodland Trace. The only limitations in this area are those roles restricted to men by scripture.**
 - 7. In essentials, we have unity.**
- In non-essentials, we have liberty.**
In all things, we show love. (Rom. 14, 1 Cor. 13)