

Theological Distinctives

Early in the history of the church, it was once stated that in essentials we must be united, in non-essentials we should give room for disagreement, and that in all things we must have charity with one another. We as a church, desiring to unite under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ, have sought to flesh out this principle as a body. We desire to come together around certain Biblical distinctives. Knowing that in all things we will not agree and seeking to be loving in all things, we do hold certain truths from the word of God together.

The following we would present as a listing of theological distinctives we hold as a body, that we believe accurately characterize our commitments. Each of these "Theological Distinctives" is elaborated more fully in our "Theological Distinctive Series" brochures available from the church.

We are Ecclesiastical

To the divine purpose, of bringing glory to God alone, the church has been called, yet we are concerned, that in the fulfilling of it she is missing the mark. The church today is modeling her predecessor the people of Israel, in alarming ways. In the church today, as in the nation of Israel, it is "like people, like priest" (Hos 4:9). The leadership of Israel had taken the nation down a slippery slope of steady decline. As the prophet noted "(the) people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer 2:12-13). Here we see man first abandoning true religion, and then seeking to establish his own system that holds no water of refreshment. What man struggles to create, is never as substantial as what God has made and freely offers being completely finished.

The church needs to return, to be reformed in accord with the will and word of God. She needs to heed the word of the prophet uttered thousands of years ago..."to the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn" (Isa 8:20).

Many will misunderstand our message and therefore it will not be received by all. Others will find our note of warning extreme and therefore dismiss us as radicals that have deviated from "true Christianity." Others will be offended by this word, though we pray we are not offensive in ourselves. The sin of cultural conformity before which the church has frequently prostrated herself, has dulled her sense of discernment in seeking the mind of her Master.

We hope and pray we will be used of God to bring about this reformation of the church of Jesus Christ to the praise of His glory. We desire to come along beside God's church, not stand in judgement of it, and encourage it to "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that her toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1Cor 15:58).

We are Evangelical

"In the course of history words change. In our day this has happened to the word "evangelical." In the past it served as a bond of unity between Christians from a wide diversity of church traditions. Historic evangelicalism was confessional." [[The Cambridge Declaration](#)]

To say that we are "evangelical" in a day such as ours is almost in some sense to say everything and hence say nothing at all. The word "evangelical" is so common on the lips of those in today's church that one can be almost anything and still consider himself to be "evangelical!" The root of the word "evangelical" is the word evangel, meaning "good news." To say that we are "evangelical" is to say that we are committed to the truth of the Biblical gospel - the message of the good news of God's redeeming grace found in Jesus Christ alone. We confess along with those of various traditions in the history of the church of Jesus Christ, the truthfulness and enduring presence of the gospel which "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16 NASB). As a church we are "evangelical" - committed to the historic and Biblical gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are Reformed

To say that we are Reformed may bring up several images in the minds of different people. Let us simply say that as a Reformed church we see ourselves first as being indebted to those who have gone before us. In the history of the church in the early part of the 16th century, an event swept through the halls of the church that left her forever changed. The darkness that had once engulfed the light of the gospel through the perversions of the Roman Catholic Church through the centuries, had been lifted by the grace of Almighty God through the efforts of men the likes of Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli and others. We stand on their shoulders and remain committed to the gospel they loved and preached.

Furthermore, as a Reformed church, we stand committed to the great truths of the gospel that were recovered in the aforementioned period. These truths are laid out in detail in the "Affirmations" section of this packet. We seek as a church to stand on the authority of Scripture alone, to proclaim the gospel message of salvation by grace alone, to hold before men the complete sufficiency of Christ alone, to call them to trust in Him by faith alone, and live all of life to the glory of God alone.

To say that we are "Reformed" may give the impression to some that we are finished or have arrived at our destination. This is far from the case! Being committed to the authority of the

Scriptures we are fully aware that what God has begun in us as a body of believers in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is far from complete. You might say, we are a work in progress. We are to be ever reforming ourselves by the grace of God in accordance with the word of God. This is an ongoing process, that continues to unfold before us as we dig deeper in to the treasure of the Holy Scriptures.

We are God-Centered

This is another way of saying that we are committed to God-centered worship, living *Coram Deo* - before the face of God, in all that we say and do. We seek as a church to have a God-centered ministry, God-centered worship and to live God-centered lives with one another and before a watching world. God has not only communicated to us **who we are to worship** (Him, as He has revealed Himself in the text of Scripture), **how we are to worship** (in the manner He has laid out in His word), but further **why we are to worship in this way** (so that as men watch our lives of worship they will be moved to “glorify God in the day of visitation” (See 1Pet 2:9-12).

We are Confessional

From its earliest days the church of Jesus Christ has been confessional in nature. Its roots were grounded in the doctrine of the Apostles not simply in vague belief about Jesus (Acts 2:42). This “doctrine of the Apostles” is the church’s faith and must be fought for in every generation (Jude 1:4). Because of the importance of this battle we are engaged in for the maintenance and promotion of the faith it has been well said, “A confession of our loyalty to the Bible is not enough. The most radical denials of Biblical truth frequently coexist with a professed regard for the authority and testimony of the Bible. When men use the very words of the Bible to promote heresy, when the Word of truth is perverted to serve error, nothing less will serve publicly to draw the lines between truth and error” than a clear confession of the substance of our faith.

We here at Faith Community believe this and so desire to be a confessional people. It is in no way our desire to supplant our belief in *Sola Scriptura*. It should be noted at this point, that the Reformers, who held to the sole authority of the Scripture, apparently found no “inconsistency” in coupling their belief in Scriptural authority with the publication of numerous creeds and confessions. Thus, we believe, neither should we!

Here at Faith Community we have adopted the historic Baptist confession of faith known as the Second London Confession or The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. In the words of Spurgeon “We hold to its content, not as our authoritative rule, for Scripture alone holds this position, but rather as an aid to us in controversy, a confirmation in faith, a means of instruction in righteousness, and a link with faithful brothers who have gone before.”

We are Elder-Led

Being committed to the authority of the Scripture for all of life, we are committed to the Biblical pattern for leadership in the church as well. God has chosen and so ordained that His Son would give as a gift to the church that bears His holy name, men that would serve together in shepherding His precious sheep. We are committed to a Biblical pattern of church leadership, where God exercises His rule of His church through a plurality of men chosen by Him and acknowledged by the congregation, to exercise His authority in the church in accordance with the word of God. These men are to "Be on guard for (themselves) and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made (them) overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (NASB Acts 20:28). You can read more concerning our commitment to an elder-led church in the section following on our pastors.

We are Servant-Attended

The office and ministry of the diaconate has fallen on hard times in recent years. These "hard times" are the direct result of a lack of attention by the church, to whom they are called to minister, to the teaching of the Scripture, as it relates to their calling and purpose.

Here at Faith Community Baptist Church, we are committed to a Diaconate set apart by God and acknowledged by the fellowship. The deacons of FCBC serve the purpose of ministering through deeds of mercy to the needs of those within our fellowship and touching all with the grace of Jesus. The deacons are distinct from the Eldership of FCBC, yet do provide leadership in the area of ministering to the needs of those allotted to their charge. The deacons of Faith Community function under the direction of the eldership and seek to minister to the body in service.

We are Truth-Driven

You will find that most of our times together revolve around the Scriptures. We see the learning of the word as essential if we are ever to grow into the body of Christ that we are called to be. As the Apostle Paul instructed the church of the Ephesians

"He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (Eph 4:11-16 NASB).

Believing that . . .”*all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work*” we seek to make instruction in the word central to everything we do as a body (2Tim 3:16-17 NASB). Opportunities for Bible study are available on Sunday mornings, evenings, and throughout the week in group and on an individual basis. You can find out more about our current studies by talking to one of our pastors.

We are One-Another-Oriented

Though fellowship, true *koinonia* or partnership, is experienced in worship and the study of the Scriptures, we further seek to focus our attention on the unity of the body in monthly times of fellowship together. Every third Sunday our regular evening service has as its emphasis - fellowship. This involves times of prayer, song, the reading of Scripture, participating together in the Lord’s table, followed by a fellowship meal provided by the members of the church. What rich times these have proved to be in the life of our church!

God has not called us as His children to live in isolation. We as believers are called, even commanded in the Scriptures to come together. *“Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near”* (Hebrews 10:24-25 NASB). The day is certainly drawing near! In the words of the Apostle Paul. . .”*it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed”* (Romans 13:11 NASB). At Faith Community Baptist Church, we believe that our commitment to one-another is fundamentally a Biblical matter. We cannot just “go it alone!” We must have one-another!

We are Missions-Minded

The central theme that runs throughout the ages and on into eternity in the heart of God, is that His eternal, magnificent, and inexhaustible glory be display throughout all creation for the joy of all peoples in the salvation of those He has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is God’s intention to put His glory on display throughout the nations and we seek to join Him in that endeavor by proclaiming the gospel of His redeeming grace in Christ alone. What a joy it will be one day to join with *“men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation”* and sing *“to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever”* (Rev 5:9-14NASB).

We are Associational

We are a Reformed and Southern Baptist congregation. We are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention and are currently pursuing official association with two Reformed Baptist bodies: The Texas Area Association of Reformed Baptist

Churches and the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America. Our church plans to be deeply engaged in these associations of confessional churches. These are voluntary associations and do not hold authority over the autonomy of the our local assembly in which we are overseen by our pastors. We seek affiliation and association with like minded churches for the greater propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the edification of His church. We believe as it states in the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith that:

As each church, and all the members of it, are bound to pray continually for the good and prosperity of all the churches of Christ, in all places, and upon all occasions to further every one within the bounds of their places and callings, in the exercise of their gifts and graces, so the churches, when planted by the providence of God, so as they may enjoy opportunity and advantage for it, ought to hold communion among themselves, for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification.