

Fellowship Belief Statement

A belief statement is, at best, a summary of the major beliefs a church and people hold. In faith and conviction there is room for nuance and disagreement on disputable matters. Every church, however, has a set of beliefs that define and guide their convictions, decisions, and actions. The purpose of this document is to state and share our views on such major issues of doctrine and belief.

Fellowship Church, a collection of sinners redeemed by the grace of God, loves every person and invites each to join in observation of worship, prayer, and other activities. In this statement of belief some will discover that we believe their life and actions are those of unrepentant sinners. Fellowship Church calls sinners of any and every kind to repent, turn away from their sin, trust Jesus Christ, and join this collection of undeserving beneficiaries of God's love.

God

There is only one God. He is the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all powerful and all knowing. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

(Genesis 1:1,26,27; 3:22, Psalm 90:2, Matthew 28:19, 1 Peter 1:2, 2 Corinthians 13:14)

God the Father reigns with care over His universe, His creatures, and history. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all people. *(Matthew 28:19, John 14:6, John 3:16, Romans 8:15, 1 John 3:1)*

Jesus is God the Son. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. Jesus became human and lived without sin. In obedience to the Father, he made provision for the redemption of all people by offering Himself as the perfect and only sacrifice for sin by dying on a cross. He rose from the dead after three days, demonstrating his power over sin and death. He ascended into Heaven's Glory and is now the one Mediator between God and Humanity. He will return again as Judge of the World reigning as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. *(Matthew 1:22-23, Isaiah 9:6, John 1:1-5; 14:10-30, Hebrews 4:14-15, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Romans 1:3-4, Acts 1:9-11, 1 Timothy 6:14-15, Titus 2:13)*

God the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully God. He illuminates truth and enables people to understand and believe it. He convicts people of sin, righteousness, and judgment – making people aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He lives in every believer from the moment of salvation. He provides believers with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, wisdom in decisions, and gifts for serving. He seals the believer's salvation until the day of eternal redemption. *(2 Corinthians 3:17, John 16:7-13; 14:16-17, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 2:12; 3:16, Ephesians 1:13, Galatians 5:25, Ephesians 5:18)*

Humanity is the special and supreme creation of God, made in his image. God created humans in innocence and with the capacity for good. By free choice humanity sinned against God. All humans are now marred by an attitude and nature of disobedience towards God called sin. Each person, when capable of moral action, sins against God and is therefore under condemnation. It is only by the grace of God that a person can be restored to a right relationship with God. God created humanity male and female and thus gender is a part of the goodness of God's creation. The sacredness of humanity is evident in that God created humans in His own image and that Christ died for humanity; therefore, every person possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. *(Genesis 1:27, Psalm 8:3-6, Isaiah 53:6a, Romans 3:23, Isaiah 59:1-2)*

Salvation is the redemption of the whole person and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior – who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer from their sin. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in and confession of Jesus Christ as Lord. Salvation is a new birth by God’s grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Repentance is necessary for salvation and is the turning from sin to the Lordship of Christ. The saved person is justified by Christ meaning they live in a right relationship with God experiencing his peace and favor through Jesus. Salvation includes the ongoing process of us being made right with God and will culminate in perfection in Heaven for all who believe. (*Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9, John 14:6; 1:12, Titus 3:5, Galatians 3:26, Romans 5:1*)

The Bible was written by people divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to humanity. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction and is the clearest and most objective way to hear from God. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. The Bible is totally true and trustworthy and has been preserved by God through the generations so that humanity might know the principles and truths for life and faith. (*2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21, 2 Timothy 1:13, Psalm 119:105,160, Psalm 12:6, Proverbs 30:5*)

The Church in its broadest use is the name for all who God has saved in all ages and from every tribe, tongue, nation, and people. Church as used in the Bible primarily and predominantly speaks of the local community of baptized people who gather regularly to worship God, instruct and encourage one another in Truth, serve the community, share the Gospel, and observe the commands of Believer’s Baptism and Communion. The instructions for offices, gifts, and accountability taught in the Bible are to be lived out in the local church. All followers of Christ are called to be committed to a local church and invested in its mission and people. (*John 3:16, 1 John 2:25; 5:11-13, Romans 6:23, Revelation 20:15*)

Baptism comes from a Greek word that means to “immerse” or “dip.” It is the act of obedience Jesus commanded of all who believe in Him so that it might show what he has done for all who are saved. It symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and is an outward expression that a believer is dying to sin and being raised to live a new life found in Christ. There are no examples of baptism in the Bible of anyone who has not put their faith in Jesus Christ. (*Matthew 3:13-17 28:19-20, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 22:19-20, John 3:23, Acts 2:41-42, Romans 6:3-5, 1 Corinthians 10:16, Colossians 2:12*)

Eternity is the reality for all of humanity. Our existence does not end at death. Each person will either be wrapped in God’s love or His wrath upon their passing from this earth. Hell is what the place of God’s wrath is called and is described as a terrible place. Those who have been saved will immediately enter the Paradise of God’s presence. There will be a day when their bodies will be fully resurrected and they will spend all of eternity serving the Lord. Everyone will experience eternity the difference in how one spends it will be what they did with Jesus during their life. (*John 3:16, 1 John 2:25; 5:11-13, Romans 6:23, Revelation 20:15*)

Communion (The Lord’s Supper) is a meaningful and symbolic act of obedience. In Communion followers of Jesus eat of bread and drink of the fruit of the vine to remember, appreciate, and celebrate the death of Jesus - their Redeemer - and in anticipation of His second coming. Communion is for those who have publicly confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It should be taken seriously and repentantly so that it is in a manner honoring of the Lord. (*Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-26, Luke 22:19-20, Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 11:23-29*)

The Gathering of the Saints is commanded in, instructed for, and encouraged in the Scriptures.

Traditionally (as learned from the early Church through Scripture) the church gathers corporately on the First Day of the Week (Sundays). This is often known as the Lord's Day. It is important and essential in the faith of all believers that they gather with other believers for worship, exhortation, instruction, encouragement, and fellowship. The day of gathering should be treated with high regard and lived out through the conscience of the individual believer – as guided by Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

(Exodus 20:8-11, Matthew 12:1-12, Mark 16:1-7, Luke 24:1-3, John 4:21-24, 20:1,19-28, Acts 20:7, Romans 14:5-10, I Corinthians 16:1-2, Colossians 2:16, Revelation 1:10)

Evangelism is the sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ. The followers of Jesus have both the responsibility and the privilege of sharing that Jesus lived a life without sin, died on a cross for all sin, was raised from death conquering sin, and that all who believe in and confess Jesus as Lord will be saved. It is the responsibility of every believer to verbally express this good news and of the Church to work together to take this message to the ends of the Earth. *(Matthew 13:18-30, Mathew 28:18-20, Luke 10:1-18, John 14:11-12, Acts 1:8, 8:26-40, Ephesians 3:1-11, Hebrews 2:1-3, 1 Peter 2:4-10, Revelation 22:17)*

Missions is the word believers use to describe the concerted efforts of the Church to be obedient to the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. Every local church has the responsibility to equip, commission, and send people to do this work as evidenced through the local churches of the New Testament sending out teams and laying on of hands in prayer and commissioning of these missionaries. The cooperative efforts of local churches to accomplish this task together is commendable and often wise, but not necessary. *(Exodus 19:5-6, Isaiah 6:1-8, Matthew 9:37-38, Romans 10:13-15, 1 Thessalonians 1:8)*

Grace is essential in all that God has done, is doing, and will do in and for those who believe. It is by grace that anyone is saved. It is by grace that those saved become the workmanship of Christ and it is by grace that believers do good works which God prepared in advance. Grace is the unearned and undeserved favor, love, and action of God towards all of humanity. Grace is freely offered to all people but the effects of grace are experienced by those who respond in faith. God paid the price for all sin when Jesus became the atoning sacrifice for the sins of believers and the sins of all of humanity (the entire world). Grace is a gift that cannot be earned – all good works are the result of God's grace. God's grace is never the result of our good works. God has not limited his grace but, instead, has extended his grace towards all people. The effects of his grace, however, are limited to those who by personal faith receive this grace by trusting in Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord. *(Exodus 19:5-8, Jeremiah 31:31 Matthew 21:28-45, Matthew 25:34, John 1:12-14, John 3:16; John 5:24, Romans 5:9-10; Roman 8:28-39 Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, 1 Peter 1:2-5, 1 Peter 2:4-10, 1 John 1:7-9)*

Stewardship is the honoring of God with all things, both physical and spiritual, that he has blessed us with. Followers of Jesus are under an obligation to serve him with their time, talents, gifts, abilities, and material possessions. This is not only an obligation but is a privilege to the one who truly loves Jesus. Thus believers should give of their means cheerfully, regularly, proportionately, and liberally for the purpose of God's Kingdom on Earth. *(Genesis 14:20, Deuteronomy 8:18, Malachi 3:8-12, Matthew 6:1-4, 19:21, 25:14-29, Luke 12:16-21, Luke 16:1-13, Acts 2:44-47, Acts 5:1-11, Romans 6:6-22, Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 8-9, Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19)*

Cooperation is the intentional sharing of resources by local churches for the purpose of missions and ministry. Such cooperative efforts are exemplified in the Bible and are useful for the spreading of the Gospel to every nation, people, tribe, and tongue. Such association and cooperation should never create authority of an association or denomination over a local church, instead local churches in cooperation should have authority over the association or denomination. Accountability by member churches towards another church for reasons of doctrine or behavior is healthy and desirable as long as the church remains autonomous in governance. (*Exodus 17:12, Ezra 1:3-4, Matthew 10:5-15, Mark 2:3, Acts 1:13-14, 4:31-37, 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, 1 Corinthians 8-9, Ephesians 4:1-16, Philipians 1:15-18*)

In understanding of this belief on cooperation, Fellowship is a member church of the Southern Baptist Convention. (www.sbc.net)

Christian Citizenship is the calling of all followers of Christ to live faithfully as citizens of both the Kingdom of God and in the government of humanity. Christians are called to seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness first. Our highest allegiance is to the Lord. The Bible teaches us to submit to the governing authorities as long as such submission does not require one to live in disobedience to God. Jesus' followers should live as faithful, respectful, and conscientious citizens in this world. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal where every follower of Christ is free to serve the Lord by their own conscious and not required by state to support any religion or belief system they do not agree with. We believe religious liberty is the best stance of any government but do not believe it necessary for faithfulness to Christ. The allegiance of a Christian to Christ will call many to persecution and consequence of law in their free choice to serve Christ with their lives. Every believer is encouraged to be a healthy part of society and government but to place their hope in the eternal Lordship of Christ alone. All political views, personal beliefs, and moral standards should operate from this place of faith in the sovereignty of God and be lived out and stood up for in truth that is loving and love that is truthful. (*Exodus 20:3-17, Psalm 101:5, Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 4:18-21, John 15:12, Romans 12-14, 1 Corinthians 6:1-7, Galatians 3:26-28, Colossians 3:12-17, Philemon, James 1:27, James 2:8.*)

The Family is the foundation for all human relationships and society given and designed by God. Family consists of all persons related by marriage, birth, or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one born biological male and one born biological female in a covenant commitment for all of their life. It is God's gift to us and it reveals the union of Christ and His church and is the only channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards.

Husbands and wives are of equal worth before God, since he created them in His own image. The marriage models the relationship of Christ with his people. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church – giving himself up for her. The wife is to respect and honor her husband as Christians do the Lord. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and inheritance from the Lord. Parents are to guide their children in the truth – setting an example of faith, love, and hope. It is the responsibility of parents to provide the nurture, discipline, and guidance needed so that children may grow in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man. (*Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20, Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15, Psalms 127, Proverbs 5:15-20, 6:20-22, 13:24, Malachi 2:14-16, Matthew 5:31-32, 19:3-9, Mark 10:6-12, 1 Corinthians 7:1-16, Ephesians 5:21-6:4, Colossians 3:18-21, Hebrews 13:4, 1 Peter 3:1-7*)

Sexuality was created with the godly purposes of pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. The scriptural standard for God-honoring, consensual sexual activity is confined to one man and one woman within the lifelong covenant of marriage. Sexual immorality, whether that be lust for someone who is not a spouse (including pornography), heterosexual activity outside of marriage, homosexual activity in any form, or any other sexual deviation, is scripturally defined as sin against God and oneself. (*Genesis 1:28; 2:24, Proverbs 5:18-19, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5,39, Colossian 3:18-19, Hebrews 13:4, 1Peter 3:7, 1 Corinthians 6:13-20, Exodus 20:14, Matthew 5:28, Romans 1:26-28, 1 Corinthian 6:9, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 5:11-12, Colossians 3:5, Hebrews 13:4, 1 John 2:16, Hebrews 3:13, 2 Timothy 4:3, 2 Peter 2:1-2*)

Gender was created by God in two, equally valued and image-bearing, complementary genders: male and female. Each gender is equipped with both gender-specific and non-specific talents, roles, and responsibilities, as instructed in Scripture. All degrees of feminine and masculine attributes reflect their perfect forms in God; therefore, no person should belittle or discriminate against another based on social constructs of masculinity or femininity. Various forms of atypical organ and genitalia development may complicate identification of birth gender. As with other developmental anomalies or disorders, these occurrences may be understood within the general, not individual or specific, consequences of sin upon creation. The rarity of these developmental anomalies serves to further confirm God's plan and purpose for distinct, assigned, binary genders. One who desires to identify as a gender other than one's clearly established birth gender exhibits sinful distrust of God's wisdom and providence. (*Genesis 1:27,28. 2:18, Proverbs 31:10-31, Romans 12:10, Ephesians 6:4, Titus 2:1-8, Job 38:28-29, Psalm 24:8, Proverbs 4:6-9, Isaiah 66:13, Genesis 3:16-19, John 9:1-3, Romans 8:18-21*)