

Immanuel Fellowship Church

Statement of Belief

Introduction

We believe God exists and has revealed Himself to mankind. He has rescued and redeemed a people for Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ. This good news is to be preached to all nations for God's glory and our joy. Therefore we, as the church, exist to glorify God through seeing lives transformed by the gospel. This is true of Immanuel Fellowship Church as much as it is true of all churches that preach the gospel of Jesus Christ

This proclamation & disciple-making ministry is fueled by the Spirit of Jesus himself. Christ saves us, sanctifies us, and empowers us to do the work of ministry. This is why we say that as Christ pours into us, he pours out of us.

Throughout history, the Church has found it helpful to summarize its core convictions in short and succinct statements such as hymns, creeds, and confessions to impart truth, clarify doctrine, prevent confusion, protect against false teaching, and otherwise hold fast to the historic teachings of Jesus.

Christian confession is always merely a response to God's revelation. Thus, the confessions of a church and its individual members must always correspond to the boundaries of biblical truth as God has revealed it. All Christians everywhere say they believe in the authority and teaching of the Bible, but creeds, confessions, and statements help to clarify what exactly it is that we believe about the Bible.

What follows are two distinct but complementary statements summarizing our Core Beliefs and Theologically Distinct Convictions.

A Note on Prooftexts

All our main doctrinal points are accompanied by proof texts from Scripture. Prooftexts are necessary to root our doctrines in scripture, but by the nature of this document, they appear taken out of their context. If you have trouble understanding any of the texts or their direct connections to the listed doctrines, please contact an Elder for further discussion.

1. Statement of Core Belief or Primary Doctrines

This statement is structured around the Nicene Creed and represents what we believe to be the foundational beliefs of Christian orthodoxy from a biblical and historical perspective. It captures the basic nuance of Christian theology. *Anyone pursuing membership and/or baptism within our church must believe and be willing to pursue unity around these core beliefs.*

2. Statement of Theological Distinctives or Secondary Doctrines

This statement captures our convictions in areas that are debated even among Bible-believing, gospel-centered churches. Although agreement with this statement isn't necessary for participation in the life of the church, both members and participants should understand that Elders will preach, teach, and counsel from the perspective of these convictions.

1 - STATEMENT OF BASIC BELIEF

Let's start with the Nicene Creed. It was formulated over the course of several Church councils, with its earliest form dating back to the 4th century. Creeds can often feel stale or rote for folk depending on your personal history with the church, but we have included it very specifically. It's not that the ancient creeds hold special power or are somehow more authoritative than the actual scripture. Rather, when we look upon creeds put together by the faithful ministry of brothers and sisters in the faith who came before us, it roots us in the truth that we are participating in the same gospel message that Jesus himself proclaimed and passed down through the Apostles and through generations of saints right up to us. We can read a statement formulated over 1000 years ago and see how our gospel has not changed or been corrupted. We are standing plainly in line with the gospel-believing Christians who came before us. We are part of a strong and consistent faith that has not changed since Christ brought it to us.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father.

Through him, all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made human. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried. The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.

He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic¹ and apostolic church. We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and life in the world to come.

Amen.

This creed attempts to summarize the core necessary doctrine of the Christian Church. In this succinct explanation of the gospel, we find identity with the historical church which has faithfully handed down the teaching of the Apostles for over two thousand years and a basic structure for what we call “core beliefs.” These are the basic scriptural beliefs one *must* hold in order to be considered within the realm of orthodox Christianity and we see most of them articulated in the above creed.

The gospel message is the hope of the world. As we read the Scriptures, we see the overarching themes of God's providence, power, and provision to reconcile mankind and the created world to Himself through the person and work of Jesus Christ. In light of this, we aim to be explicitly gospel-centered in all that we preach, teach, and practice. Below you'll find a list of our core beliefs as well as scripture references for a more in-depth explanation of each point.

¹The word ‘catholic’ here refers to its literal meaning of “universal” and not the Roman Catholic Church. In other words, the creed is affirming the idea that Jesus has one global universal church made up of all who have received salvation through Jesus regardless of their denomination or individual church membership.

We believe:

God

There is only one true God, Creator of heaven and earth, who eternally exists in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (*Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6; Isaiah 46:9-10; John 17:3; 1 Timothy 2:5; Genesis 1:26; Matthew 3:13-17; Matthew 28:17-20*).

Humanity

All humanity, Christ excluded, is sinful by *both* nature and choice (*Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; 5:8, 12-21; 7:18; Ephesians 2:1-3*).

Sin

The deserved penalty for sin is physical and spiritual death (*Genesis 2:15-17; Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12; 6:23; James 1:14-15*).

Jesus

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, was born of a virgin, and is both fully God and fully human (*Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:52; John 1:1-4, 14; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3*).

Jesus Christ died as the sacrificial substitute on the cross to pay the penalty for sin and imputed his righteousness upon those who have received him in faith.. (*John 1:29; 10:1-18; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 3:18*).

Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will one day physically return to establish final justice and his eternal kingdom. (*Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:1-31; 1 Corinthians 15:12-34; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7*).

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is fully God and worthy of worship. By his power, Christ was resurrected, the church is gifted and empowered, sinners are convicted, and the scriptures are illuminated. He regenerates, baptizes, seals, and indwells all believers unto the day of redemption. (*1 Corinthians 12-14; John 20:21-23; John 14:26; John 3:6-8; Romans 8:12*).

The Resurrection

There will be a future physical resurrection of the dead. Only those who have placed their faith in Christ as evidenced by a turning from sin will be raised to eternal reward. Those who reject Christ will remain dead in their sin and will be raised to an eternal death (*Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15*).

Salvation

Only through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ and repentance from sin can one be reconciled to God and experience true life and joy. Salvation from sin and its consequences is a gift of God's grace, purchased by the death and resurrection of Christ, and received by personal faith in Jesus Christ completely apart from the works, merits, and efforts of man. (*John 3:18, 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:21-26; 1 Timothy 2:5-6*).

All those redeemed are kept by God's power, eternally secure in Christ, and may rejoice in the assurance of eternal life through the testimony of God's Word. (*John 6:37-40, 10:27-30; Romans 8:14-16, 35-39; Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:5; 1 John 5:13*)

The Church

The Universal Church, over which the Lord Jesus is the Head, is a spiritual body made up of all born-again peoples. The establishment and continuance of local churches under the authority of Jesus Christ is clearly mandated in the Scriptures. (*Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Acts 14:27, 20:17; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11; Acts 20:28; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42*)

The Scriptures

The Scriptures are the inspired word of God and are true, authoritative, and sufficient for salvation and life. (*Psalms 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21*).

2 - STATEMENT OF THEOLOGICALLY DISTINCT CONVICTIONS

While the beliefs expressed in the Statement of Core Beliefs are recognized to be universal and primary within the Church, there are a number of secondary doctrines that we are passionate to proclaim. Not all Christians hold these beliefs, but they are nonetheless *important* and *true* as we understand the Scriptures. Complete agreement is not required for the sake of participation in the church, but it should be known that Elders will preach, teach, and counsel in accordance with these convictions.

These distinctives are divided into the following areas:

- The Relationship Between Divine Sovereignty and Man's Will
- The Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- The Complementary Roles of Men and Women

- The Ordinances of the Church
- The Relationship of God's Glory to Man's Joy
- The Offices of the Church
- The Spiritual Realm

What follows are summaries of our convictions on these topics.

The Relationship Between Divine Sovereignty and Man's Will

God is sovereign over all things such that there is no aspect of reality outside of His ultimate control. Though God's rule extends to all things, it is particularly His sovereignty over the work of salvation that is a theological distinctive. Salvation is ultimately grounded in God's eternal decree of election, but there is a mysterious relationship between that decree and the choices of mankind. Though man is responsible for his agency regarding both sin and in responding to God's call to repentance and faith, God is ultimately the one who draws people unto Himself and overcomes their natural resistance to the gospel through the work of the Holy Spirit who reveals & enlightens the human mind & heart to the truth in regard to sin and the need for God's saving grace as provided through the atoning work of his Son. (Psalm 115:3, 135:6; Ephesians 1:3-14, Romans 8:26-9:23; Philippians 1:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

All the manifestations and gifts of the Holy Spirit that we see exercised in the Scriptures have not ceased with the death of the last Apostle or the closing of the New Testament canon. They are available today and are to be eagerly desired and practiced in submission to the Spirit speaking through the Scriptures for the glory of God, the building up of the church, and the proclamation of the gospel to the lost. (*Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:1-16*).

The Complementary Role of Men and Women

Men and women are equal in essence, dignity and value yet have beautiful differences 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, specifically as it comes to headship. Headship in the context of marriage means that the husband should lead his wife through sacrificial love and a dying to self as modeled by Christ's love for the church and the wife is to honor and respect her husband as she does unto the Lord. This does NOT mean the husband is to lord over his wife but is to lead her as a servant exemplifying Christ who himself came not to be served but to serve. In the context of the Church, headship means that while eldership is reserved exclusively for men, women are to still use their gifting and talents both in leadership and service fully unto the Lord and for the benefit of the Church.

Both men and women are equal in the need of divine grace, reception of God's love and Jesus' saving work on the cross, adoption into the family of God, reception, and gifting of the Spirit, call to the church and mission, and divine standing before God. This difference in no way places men above women in importance or vice versa. These differences actually serve to further proclaim the beauty and importance of both masculinity and femininity in God's good design. These role distinctions are God's grace to man and woman and are to be protected, preserved, and practiced for His glory and our joy (*Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7*).

Ordinances of the Church

Baptism by immersion is intended for those who have professed faith in Jesus Christ and can give sufficient testimony to their salvation. We baptize by immersion because it is the original meaning of the word and best symbolizes the reality of which baptism represents: that is our death and resurrection in Christ. As with baptism, the Lord's Supper is to be observed only by those who have placed their faith in Christ as Savior. 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 work of Christ. As we come to the table with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ and signify our unity with other members of the Universal Church.

(*Matthew 26:26-29; 28:18-20; Mark 14:22-25; John 6:53-59; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-11; 1 Corinthians 10:14-17; 11:17-34*).

The Relationship of God's Glory And Man's Joy

The Westminster Shorter Catechism says that the chief end of man is to "glorify God and to enjoy him forever" We believe that man's greatest joy is found only in faithful obedience to God and that our enjoyment of Him is one of the chief means by which He is glorified. This relationship forms a beautiful back and forth within the Christian life wherein our greatest joy is found in God's further glory and vice versa. (Psalm 16:11; 37:4; Matthew 13:44; John 15:11; Philippians 3:8; Hebrews 11:6).

Offices of the Church

We believe that God has prescribed two offices for the care and administration of the life of the church. The office of the Elder/Pastor describes a plurality of qualified men who have been trained and tested to shepherd the church, provide directional leadership, and protect and proclaim right doctrine. The authority of the local church has been vested in these men. The office of the deacon describes qualified men and women who have been trained and tested to provide practical service ministry to the members of the church so as to free up elders for their

main calling of teaching, prayer, and shepherding. In other words, Elders serve the church through their leadership while deacons lead the church through their service. (Acts 3:6; 14:23; 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-16; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5)

The Spiritual Realm

We believe that there is an unseen spiritual reality beyond the physical realm. Both Heaven and Hell exist as literal places within that reality. God has created spiritual creatures called Angels who function to worship and serve Him in Heaven. Some have rebelled against God and fallen and are described in the scripture as demons. Satan is one such angel who led the rebellion and has malicious will and intent against God and the people of God. Thus, spiritual warfare is a present reality for everyone within the Church. (Isaiah 14:12-17; Job 1:6-7; Matthew 4:2-11, 25:41; Colossians 2:13-15; Ephesians 6:10-18)