

Articles of Faith and Practice

ARTICLES OF FAITH

About The Bible

We believe that the Bible, consisting of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is the divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy; and only final authority in all matters of faith and conduct. The Bible, as originally written under the inspiration and supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit by human authors, is the Word of God, the supreme source of truth for Christian belief. The Bible reveals who God is, exposes who we are in light of His holiness, proclaims God's merciful salvation and teaches and trains Christ's followers how to grow in relationship with God and others.

Psalm 119:105; Matthew 4:4; John 17:17; II Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; II Peter 1:20-21

About God

We believe in the one true, living and holy God who is a self-existent, eternal, personal Spirit eternally existent as a trinity of three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These persons are distinct but inseparable, one in essence, power, and glory. God is the transcendent and immanent Creator, Sustainer and Ruler of all things visible and invisible.

Genesis 1:1-2; Isaiah 44:6-8; John 1:1-3,14; I Corinthians 2:9-12; Colossians 1:15-16, 2:9; Hebrews 1:3

We believe that the Father is eternally the Father of the Son, the author of salvation, and now the Father of all who are born again into new life through faith in Christ.

Gen. 1:1. Ps. 90:2. John 13:3; Eph. 1:2-4; I Pet. 1:2-4.

We believe in Jesus Christ in whom the divine and human natures are inseparably united. He is truly God and truly man, the eternal Son of God in the flesh, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin, Mary. He came to reveal the Father, announce the arrival of God's Kingdom with word, miracles and deeds, and to offer Himself up as a sinless atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. He was physically raised from the dead and then exalted to the right hand of the Father.

In fulfilling the earthly mission of His first coming, Jesus demonstrated a life of victory on our behalf over Satan and sin, provided the only way for people to be rescued from sin, and opened the way to live a holy life as participants in the Kingdom of God. He continues now as the only Mediator between God and humanity. Jesus will, at the Father's appointed time, come again in power and glory.

Matthew 1:18-25, 4:17, 23; Luke 23-24; John 1:1-18, 6:37-47, 10:10; 14:6; I Corinthians 15:3-8; Hebrews 4:14-15, 9:14-15; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 2:4-6a.

We believe in the Holy Spirit - who is fully God and, while not to be confused with the Father and Son, remains one with the Father and the Son in being, majesty, and glory. The Holy Spirit convinces of the need of a saving relationship with God and engages every person who trusts and follows Jesus in a life-giving relationship.

Through His indwelling presence the Holy Spirit gives the believer spiritual life, assurance of salvation, understanding and guidance in all truth, and power to live out the Christian life. The Holy Spirit gives all believers the ability to accomplish God's purposes for their lives with spiritual abilities and gifts to use for God's glory and the service of others.

John 1: 12,13; 3:5-8, 16:7-14; Romans 8:5-17, 26-27; I Corinthians 2:10-12, 12:4-11; Ephesians 3:16-21; Galatians 5:22-25; Ephesians 6:10-18

About Humanity

We believe that God created humankind in His image, male and female, to enjoy a loving relationship with Him and with one another. God specially created humankind as the climax of His creative work on earth and established the family, based on covenant marriage between one man and one woman, as the building block of human community. We believe individual human lives are to be valued from conception, because God loves each one at every stage of life and desires that each one will come to know and love Him.

Through human rebellion against God we have fallen and have come to be marred by a sinful nature. Humanity, apart from Christ, is now spiritually dead and, unless born again through Christ, cannot see the kingdom of God. We, in our own strength, without divine grace, cannot do good works pleasing and acceptable to God or bring glory to Him as we were designed to do.

Through the finished work of Christ and God's grace experienced in the influence and empowering of the Holy Spirit individuals are enabled to exercise their will to accept God's gift and will.

Personal acceptance of Christ's redemptive work results in a restored relationship with God and freedom to fulfill our created purpose through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gen. 6:5. John 3:3-7; Rom.3:10, 18, 23; Eph. 2:1-3; Titus 2:11-14.

About Salvation

We believe that in spite of our rebellion, God still loves all of humanity and has mercifully extended His life-giving grace toward us. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, people who believe in Him are forgiven of sin and declared righteous (justification), are made spiritually alive (regeneration), and are set apart into a never-ending relationship with Him as holy people who are being renewed in the image of God (sanctification).

True belief will be evidenced by heartfelt repentance from and godly sorrow for sin, complete trust (faith) in Jesus Christ as Saviour, and surrender to His will as Lord. Spiritual life will result in spiritual fruit in a life increasingly marked by love for God, fellow believers and the lost.

Salvation is God's gracious gift, to be accepted through faith, through which the believer can be assured of personal salvation which speaks to the past in the forgiveness of sins, to the present of a continuing walk with Christ, and to the future with the promise of resurrection life. Our assurance is in our continuing relationship with Christ by faith. As a result of the saving grace of Christ, the believer can experience a Spirit-filled, Spirit-gifted, and Spirit-led life of victory over sin. In submission to the Spirit the believer's life will show increasing alignment with the Great Commandment and Great Commission of Jesus.

Matt 10:22; 22:37-40; 28:18-20; John 3:16-21; 15:4; Acts 2:22-42; Romans 5:1-2, 6:11,19-23; II Corinthians 5:14-6:2; Ephesians 2:8-10

About The Church

We believe that the true Church consists of all people everywhere who have been reborn through personal participation, by faith, in the death and resurrection of Christ, being called out to become part of the body of which Christ is the Head. The Church is visible to the world when believers gather in community and when they are active in serving and blessing others in Jesus' name. The Church is the evidence of God's saving work and a strategic part of God's plan to reflect His grace, proclaim His truth, and extend His care to the world. The people of God have been sent on mission to the world – to love and worship God in a spirit of unity, to teach the Word of God, to celebrate Baptism and Communion, to encourage all people to follow Jesus, and to participate in the ever-growing kingdom of God.

Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:19-22, 3:8-1, 14-21; 4:1-16; Colossians 1:18-23

ABOUT THINGS TO COME

We believe that God intervenes in the affairs of this world. At the time of God's choosing, Jesus will bodily return to the earth in power and glory to judge and rule the world, as God's Kingdom is fully and forever established.

We believe the promise of Scripture that God will create a new heaven and a new earth which will be the eternal dwelling place of those who have been made righteous in Christ.

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all humanity to stand before God for final judgment. Those who have not accepted His life-giving grace will be raised to experience eternal punishment, being separated from God and all that is good. Those who have trusted in Christ will be raised to live eternally in God's presence and receive the promised reward.

Matt 16:27; 25:31-46; John 5:24-29. 14:1-6; Acts 17:31; Rev. 20:11-15; 21:1-9.

ARTICLES OF PRACTICE

ORDINANCES

The Christian ordinances are two in number, baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are the outward rites appointed by Christ to be administered in each local church, not as means of salvation, but as visible signs and seals of its reality.

Baptism - Baptism by water is the symbol of one's union by faith with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection. It constitutes the public confession of these spiritual realities to the world and is the answer of a good conscience toward God(1). Baptism is administered, preferably by immersion, to those who have been born again by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and who give evidence of the genuineness of their salvation(2).

(1) Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:36-41; Rom. 6:3-5. (2) Acts 8:12-13,34-39.

The Lord's Supper - The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ himself on the night of His betrayal(1). It is a memorial of Christ's death, a centre of communion and fellowship, a testimony to saving faith, and a visible token of Christ's redemptive covenant. It is observed only by believers and consists in partaking of the consecrated emblems of bread and the fruit of the vine, which symbolize the death of Christ for the remission of our sins and our continual dependence upon Him for life and sustenance until He comes(2). While the Lord's Supper is open to all true believers, we are strongly exhorted to examine ourselves "and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup(3)."

(1) Matt. 26:26-30. (2) I Cor 11:26. (3) I Cor. 11:26.

DIVINE HEALING

God is able to heal, therefore we ought to pray for the sick(1). Although healing cannot be demanded of God, it should be sought according to Scriptural instruction. God heals in three ways:

- through the natural processes of the human body which may be aided by medical help;
- through the supernatural intervention of God bringing healing to the body; and
- through the death and resurrection of the body to a glorified state.

(1) Matt. 12:15,22; James 5:13-16.

THE LORD'S DAY

The Lord's Day(1), which commemorates the resurrection, is for private and public worship and for rest from unnecessary work. It should be devoted to spiritual development, Christian fellowship, and service(2). It is essential to the permanence and growth of the Christian church and important to the welfare of society.

(1) Matt. 28:1; I Cor. 16:2. (2) Isa. 58:13-14; Heb. 10:25.

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

In recognition of God's ownership of all(1) things believers should practice systematic and proportionate giving, adopting the tithe as a minimum expression of their stewardship(2). They should regard Christian liberality as a privilege and sacred duty, and freely give of their substance for the spread of the Gospel at home and abroad, for the maintenance of the local church, and for the support of the agencies and enterprises of the denomination.

Believers should also dedicate themselves, their time, talents, and substance to God and to the advancement of His kingdom. Christians are encouraged to spend time in Bible study, prayer, and in sharing the gospel(3).

(1) Gen. 1:1, 14:18-23. (2) Mal. 3:8,10. (3) II Cor. 5:14-15, 8:9-12, 9:6-8.

DEDICATION OF CHILDREN

God is concerned for the well-being of children(1) who are under the atonement of Christ(2). We encourage the formal dedication of children in a public service of the church.

(1) I Sam. 1:24-28; Matt. 19:13-15; Luke 2:21-22. (2) Mark 10:13-15; John 3:16-19; Rom. 5:13.

MARRIAGE, SINGLENESS AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

As human beings, men and women, we are created in the image of God. God saw that his creation of humankind was very good. As a result we have intrinsic worth and are found to be equally valued by God.

We believe God has established the church as a family of faith in which we are each sons or daughters. It is within this family of faith that we are established, rooted, fulfil our ministry, and find maturity in Christ.

We also believe the family of faith is where the goodness of being either single or married is to be honoured. We recognize that God has created human beings for relationship with him and with each other. God's intention is for people to be blessed through families: both the family of faith and the family into which God has placed us. God created the family to be the cornerstone of social order.

The home is a divinely established institution(1) in which the husband is the head(2) but serves its members by the law of love, and in which husband and wife are to work together to raise their children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord."(3) Obedience to parents is to be rendered by children in the spirit of mutual respect and love.

Marriage is part of God's design in establishing the family. We believe that marriage is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman. This heterosexual union⁽⁴⁾ is the only appropriate relationship within which the joy of sexual intimacy is to be expressed. We affirm such marriage as God's design for a lifelong loving relationship, sexual intimacy, and the birth and nurture of children. Christian marriage is intended for those who share a common faith in Christ⁽⁵⁾. Such a marriage is blessed of God.

Since the EMCC believes the Bible defines marriage as being a covenant union of one man and one woman, the EMCC only recognizes covenantal heterosexual unions as marriages.

Therefore, ministers are forbidden to perform ceremonies or make any public comment that would give any indication to the contrary.

(1) Gen 2:23-24. (2) Eph 5:22-25, 28; Col 3:18-21. (3) Deut 6:4-9. (4) Gen 2:23-24. Rom 1:26-27. (5) Deut 7:3; II Cor 6:14-17.

DIVORCE

Divorce is viewed in the Scriptures as contrary to God's will⁽¹⁾. Christians should seek by forbearance and forgiveness to preserve the marriage bond.

(1) Gen. 2:24-25; Mal. 2:15-16; Matt. 5:31-32, 19:3-12; I Cor. 7:10-16.

Persons divorced and remarried who give evidence of being genuinely born again are eligible to be received into membership in the church.

Divorce between members of the church is an occasion of great tragedy. Such conduct brings the teaching and reality of Christian reconciliation under reproach and offenders are to be disciplined.

The church board shall provide counsel and take proper disciplinary action giving consideration to appropriate aspects of local church discipline.

Care should be exercised that such action be as redemptive as possible for all parties involved.

Ministers are to refrain from performing marriage ceremonies where one or both parties are divorced. However ministers are permitted, at their discretion, to solemnize the marriage of a person whose previous marriage partner committed adultery, who is recognized as living a genuine Christian life, and where there is good evidence that a true Christian marriage is intended.

PRACTICES AND CONDUCT

Believers are not to be conformed to the view and lifestyle of the world of which they are a part⁽¹⁾, but, on the contrary, are to function as salt⁽²⁾ to prevent the spread of moral

corruption, and as light to dispel spiritual darkness. High standards should therefore be set for their personal and collective life including the following:

their disposition and attitudes be characterized by godliness and the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control(3);

their social relationships bear witness to Christ, their entire conduct reflecting the spiritual ideals of Christianity rather than the world; they shall not engage in sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage; shall not marry unbelievers, shall not hold membership in oath-bound secret societies, and shall not compromise Christian principles in partnerships(4);

their bodies be treated as temples of the Holy Spirit(5) thus making it inconsistent with both Christian testimony and sound principles of health to compromise their influence and injure their bodies through inappropriate practices or substance abuse(6).

(1) Rom. 12:1,2. (2) Matt. 5:13. (3) Gal. 5:22-24. (4) II Cor. 6:14-16. (5) I Cor. 3:16,17, 6:19,20. (6) I Cor. 6:12-20.

ATTITUDE TOWARD CIVIL GOVERNMENT

Civil government is ordained of God(1) for the welfare of society to promote and protect the good and to restrain and punish evil(2). Therefore, we consider it the duty of Christians to pray for rulers and for those who are in authority over them and to give due loyalty, respect, and obedience to them(3). Christians are also encouraged to take an active interest in government at all levels. Where the demands of civil law would militate against the supreme law and will of God, Christians should obey God rather than man(4).

(1) Dan. 4:17. (2) Rom. 13:1-5. (3) I Tim. 2:1-4. (4) Acts 4:13-20, 5:27,28.

ATTITUDE TOWARD STRIFE AND MILITARY SERVICE

Believers are to love their enemies, do good to them that hate them(1), overcome evil with good, and, as much as possible, live peaceably with all men(2). Therefore, it is not fitting for the Christian to promote strife between nations, classes, groups, or individuals.

(1) Matt. 5:43-48. (2) Rom. 12:14-21, 13:1-4.

Sincere Christians have conscientious differences as to their understanding of the teaching of the Word of God with reference to their responsibility as Christian citizens to human government both in times of war and times of peace. We are, therefore, to exercise tolerance and understanding, and respect the individual conscience with regard to participation in wars.

OATHS

A Christian's life should be so transparent in its honesty and integrity that his or her word can be fully trusted without swearing on the Bible in judicial situations(1) or taking the Lord's name in vain(2).

(1) Matt. 5:33-35,37; James 5:12. (2) Ex. 20:7.