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Core Beliefs & Ethos

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The congregations of the Free Church of Scotland are united in our theological teaching, our evangelistic focus and our desire to serve our God in our local communities. The main emphasis of our beliefs can be summarised in the five headings below:

A BIBLE CHURCH

Perhaps the most obvious feature of the Free Church is the centrality of the Bible in all that we do. The Free Church believes that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Consequently, everything from our patterns of worship to our church structures seeks to reflect clear Biblical teaching. That's why, for example, in our worship we sing only the truths of the Bible, hear them read, explained, and applied to our lives in a sermon, and pray for God's promises in the Bible to be fulfilled in our various circumstances.

A GOSPEL CHURCH

The central focus of the whole Bible is to be found in a person – Jesus Christ. Because the Free Church is a Bible Church it is also a Jesus-centred Church, a Gospel Church. Of course, the Free Church is historic. It traces its roots to 1843 and the struggle of the Scottish church to remain 'free' from State interference, beyond that to the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, and beyond that again to the Early Church. However, at the heart of the identity of the Free Church of Scotland is a passion for sharing and living the good news about Jesus Christ – the gospel. So, in all our congregations each Sunday you will hear the same wonderful message explained from the Bible and applied to everyday life: Jesus Christ, both fully God and fully human, came into the world to seek out and rescue lost, sinful men and women, by bearing their guilt and condemnation on his Cross and rising again to life in victory over sin and death and hell. Because of him Christians live transformed lives. It is this message, far more than any historic or cultural distinctive, that defines us. This is what we are about.

A MISSION CHURCH

The gospel message is for everyone. Jesus commanded his church to 'go and make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19). The Free Church of Scotland takes that command seriously and seeks to bring the gospel to every person in Scotland, and in partnership with other churches, to the whole world, through:

- The work of 100 local churches across Scotland, five in North America and one in London
- A growing commitment to planting new churches to reach new people
- A far reaching programme of international missionary work in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Africa, Latin America and India
- A comprehensive summer camp programme for children and young people from across the country and from all backgrounds
- A theological seminary in the heart of Edinburgh, training men and women for gospel work and Christian service in our local congregations and throughout the world.

A CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Another result of being a Bible Church and a Gospel Church is that we are a Contemporary Church. The gospel is a 'change-agent', bringing new life and fresh challenges to both the church and our society in every age. That means that while the Free Church continues to prize its heritage and traditions, it also feels compelled to work creatively to bring the good news about Jesus to bear on each generation, convinced that the timeless message of the gospel speaks to your life with up-to-the-minute relevance and power.

A CONNECTED CHURCH

One of the great needs of our day is the need for connection, for a sense of belonging. As a church we believe that every congregation is responsible for the spread of the good news in its own location, and yet we believe that every local congregation is connected to every other, comprising one church, belonging together. The Free Church expresses that connection in a Presbyterian system. That means that each local congregation is led by a group of elders (the New Testament Greek word for elder is presbyter, hence 'Presbyterian'), at least one of whom has been trained and given specific responsibilities for teaching and preaching. Together the local elders are known as the Kirk Session. Each local Kirk Session is represented at a regional level at a meeting called the Presbytery, and each Presbytery is represented at a national level at the annual General Assembly. In this way the Free Church seeks to ensure that we share a common vision, are able to offer support, and remain accountable to one another as members together of the Body of Christ, the church.

Our mission is not to grow an organisation. Nor is it to become just another club or group within the community. We exist because of Jesus Christ. We want to fulfil his commission to us to 'make disciples'. That means we share his message so that men, women, boys and girls who would know, love, follow, worship, confess and serve Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. It is the only message that gives life, a life described by Jesus as lived to the full (John 10:10) and eternal (John 17:3).

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

Ever since the earliest days of the church, Christians have laid out their beliefs in brief 'creeds' or 'confessions' in an attempt to summarise essential Christian truths and to guard the church from error. These statements are always secondary to the Bible but they are enormously helpful. A full summary of our theological teaching is found in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Our beliefs can be further understood by reading the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

[Download Westminster Confession of Faith](#) ↓

[Download Westminster Larger Catechism](#) ↓

[Download Westminster Shorter Catechism](#) ↓

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