

PERSPECTIVES ON CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

In our church family there is a great deal of diversity. This is both healthy (we can learn from each other and learn to love each other despite our differences) and Baptist (we believe that individuals have the right to interpret the Bible personally through the guidance of the Holy Spirit).

We hold strongly to the following biblical principles:

- a. In essential beliefs we have UNITY.
- b. In non-essential beliefs we allow DIVERSITY.
- c. In all beliefs we show CHARITY.

We have produced the following statements to give some guidance on the general direction and position of the church in some areas of doctrine and practice where Christians may have differing views. Please note:

- a. These statements are only for guidance. The Bible is our authority and as we submit to Scripture and the Holy Spirit, our viewpoints may change.
- b. These statements do not attempt to cover the areas totally. Further details may be available from our pastors.
- c. Because of the diversity of our church and our adherence to the Baptist principle that Christians should read and interpret the Bible themselves, people in our church may disagree with some of the statements below. That's okay. Uniformity in belief is not a condition of membership. We do not see any of these beliefs as essential to the foundations of Christian faith.
- d. These statements are in random order and not in order of importance.

Gifts of the Spirit

We believe that all the biblical gifts of the Holy Spirit are valid today. No gift has ceased to exist although the Holy Spirit gives gifts as he chooses and some gifts may not always be evident in our church. We encourage the use of all the gifts but do not tend to use the prophetic gift of tongues in our church services.

Women in Leadership

We believe that both men and women can be gifted and called to leadership in the church. We also believe that wives need to submit to husbands and husbands need to love (which involves submission) their wives, so there needs to be agreement about ministry roles in a godly marriage. We encourage women to use their gifts and fulfil their God-given ministry in the church and beyond. For 30 years, we have been taught by both male and female preachers.

Creation

We firmly believe that God created the earth as the Bible states. God as Creator informs our perspective on all of creation and life. We believe that the Bible does not clearly record over what period God created the world, but we support Christian scientists who research the scientific basis of God's creative work.

Corporate Worship

We believe that corporate worship should be in spirit (*touching the spiritual realm and aided by the Holy Spirit*) and in truth (*in sincerity and in accordance with the Scripture*). The Bible describes many different styles of corporate worship, all of which involve the mind, emotions and body. In our corporate worship, we encourage both freedom (*it's between you and God*) and love (*don't do something that will severely inhibit the worship of your brothers and sisters*).

The Supernatural

We believe that Satan and his demons are actively trying to influence God's world and destroy his kingdom work. We believe that prayer has a key role in the defeat of Satan. We pray for healing and deliverance and have seen God answer many of our prayers. We also pray for a greater release of God's power in revival. However, we recognise that what we want is not always what God wills and we do not believe that God chooses to heal everyone now.

Divorce

We believe that divorce was never God's intention for his people so we work hard to maintain and grow our marriages and are concerned with the lack of valuing of marriage in our society. However, we believe that Jesus allowed for divorce in some circumstances and that he forgives and heals us from our brokenness. There are many divorced and remarried people who have found a home in our church.

Same-sex Relationships

We believe that God created and intended sexual relationships for committed, heterosexual marriage. We believe that same sex attraction (along with many other human challenges) came as a result of a broken world but is not sinful in itself. We believe that God does not want people (whatever their orientation) to engage in sexual relationships outside of monogamous, heterosexual marriage. However, we take seriously Jesus' call to love our neighbour, so sexual practice is never a barrier to our offering love and care.

Alcohol

The Bible clearly states that drunkenness is sin, but is generally positive regarding the controlled consumption of alcohol. We neither encourage nor discourage the use of alcohol, but because the abuse of alcohol is responsible for damage in our society and some in our church have been impacted by this, we do not allow alcohol to be consumed in our church grounds.

Money

We live in a society that tends to venerate money and possessions. Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and money," and he taught more on money and possessions than on any other subject. We therefore talk freely about money, tithing and giving. We teach that Christians should give in a generous, sacrificial way and live lives that reflect godly stewardship of all they have. We believe that generous giving brings God's blessing, however, these blessings are often spiritual. We will not pressure people to give.

Social Justice

As followers of Jesus we are committed to standing against attitudes, structures and laws that oppress and disadvantage the poor and struggling in our society and in our world. We believe we should challenge the status quo when it hurts those whom God would protect. We believe that our faith must include a heart for social concern/justice.

Other Denominations

We believe that there are Christians in all Christian denominations and we want to work together with these our brothers and sisters. We are definitely Baptist by conviction, but we do not believe that we have an exclusive claim to biblical truth. We seek to learn from the emphases of other Christian denominations and are prepared to cooperate in ways that expands God's kingdom. We believe that this is not the time for God's church to squabble over minor doctrinal differences but to work together in love.

Abortion and Euthanasia

We are pro-life in that we believe that God gives life and only God has the right to take it away. We regard the lives of unborn infants and the dying as precious to God and therefore oppose any intervention that will end their lives prematurely. We accept that there may be very limited circumstances when a life may be ended or allowed to end prematurely for a greater good (e.g. to preserve the life of a mother, to allow a person whose brain has ceased to function to die).

Second Coming

We believe that Jesus is returning as Judge and Lord and that through his intervention we will live forever with him in a new heaven and earth. While we are completely confident of Christ's victory, we believe that as the return of Jesus nears, spiritual warfare will increase. We do not subscribe to one particular viewpoint regarding the order of events preceding Christ's return. It is likely that the return of Jesus will be greater than and different from any of our human systems and timetables.