



THE SANCTUARY

Essential Beliefs and Doctrine
Approved January 2023

STATEMENT OF FAITH

The ancient church father St. Augustine offers a helpful statement on any church's shared beliefs, "In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In everything, love."

The idea bound up in these few words is that there exist essential teachings within Scripture that the church must be united on if the people are to experience the life of God in the family of God.

Additionally, the church has divided over the years—time and time again—over smaller disputes, for which there should be liberty within the church family to come as far as each member is able, honoring the continual process of belief that we each experience over a lifetime of walking with Jesus. The essentials are the anchors that hold us. The non-essentials are vital, extremely important, but the most loving, dignifying way to hold these teachings in the Christian Church is by liberty.

Finally, in everything, we are a family bound together by love. Right belief, expressed pridefully, is not love. Wrong belief, permitted freely, is also not love. Right belief, championed by love, is what Jesus embodied. We, the Body of Christ, should be a living expression of the same.

THE ESSENTIALS

The beliefs we absolutely share as essential within the family of The Sanctuary: A Neighborhood Church are:

- (1) The Bible: The authority of Scripture and our submission to its living counsel, shown in Jesus Christ as the Word (Logos) of God
- (2) The Gospel: The good news that God is ever-pursuing his original Creation mandate of human flourishing and perfect relationship, culminating in Jesus' sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection
- (3) Salvation: The necessity of salvation by grace for restored relationship with God and one another

THE BIBLE

At The Sanctuary, we believe the Bible (composed of Protestant Old and New Testaments) to be both true and authoritative. We make this claim because we believe God divinely inspired the original authors through the Holy Spirit to write them. (See 2 Timothy 3:15-17 and 2 Peter 1:21)

Whereas we expect God to be present with and in us, always revealing, we do not subscribe to notions that contradicts what the Scriptures have historically written for us in practice and belief. God never contradicts Himself. Therefore, Scripture serves not only as inspiration into the life of God, but also as a guardrail for us to know the will of God and test the veracity of all things.

The Sanctuary is a non-denominational church that believes in the authority of the Christian Scriptures for our life and practice. We hold to the essential orthodox Christian beliefs as best expressed in the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed, as well as the Lausanne Covenant.

The Apostles' Creed

*We believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell.
The third day He arose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
whence
He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic (universal) church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.*

The Nicene Creed

*I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things
visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father*

*before all worlds;
God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God;
begotten, not made, begin of one substance with the Father, by whom all things
were made.
Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered and was buried:
and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures;
and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father;
and he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead;
whose kingdom shall have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life;
who proceeds from the Father and the Son;
who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified;
who spoke by the prophets.
And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one
baptism for the remission of sins;
and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.
Amen.*

The Gospel Statement

The Gospel is the good news that God himself, the Creator, has come to rescue us from sin, and renew all things, in and through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, to establish his Kingdom, through his people in the power of the Holy Spirit.

(Colossians 1:15-20; John 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 1 Peter 2:24-25; 1 Peter 3:18)

Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole person and is offered freely to all who, by faith, confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Salvation is the ultimate sign of God's grace to mankind. Our just reward for sinful living is eternal separation from God.

Christ's death on the cross and His blood serve as the atoning sacrifice that allows sinful mankind to be reconciled to a Holy and Righteous God. This reconciliation is available to anyone who repents of their sin and through faith confesses Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

(Genesis 3:15; John 3:3-21; Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-22; Revelation 3:20)

A Statement on FAQs:

The three most frequent theological questions posed to the leaders of our church tend to revolve around the topics of gender, sexuality, and the sanctity of life. Therefore, we are stating a shared theology on all three—not because there is a biblical emphasis on any that matches the topics covered thus far, but simply out of pastoral response to the questions being asked both within our church and our broader culture.

Women In Leadership

The question of how men and women relate and engage in church leadership offices (particularly pastor and elder) has been a subject of significant debate at various points in church history. There are many considerations within the broader subject of men and women in leadership that are dealt with in the Bible. Here we have included a summary of things we see taught across the arc of Scripture that directly bear on our church's position and practice.

- We believe that women and men are created equal in the image of God.
- We believe that full equality between women and men does not mean women and men are completely the same. There is goodness and beauty uniquely represented in each gender that profoundly reflects and glorifies God.
- We believe God gives leadership in the church on the basis of grace, calling, spiritual gifts, obedience, and character.
- We believe both women and men can and should lead, preach, pastor, and minister within the church. We believe women and men doing this together will

result in a more robust ministry of love and grace than one gender can sustain alone.

- We believe women and men can and should serve in pastoral leadership in the local church.

The Sanctuary believes that men and women are equally gifted and qualified to lead and serve as co-laborers in the church. We do not simply permit, but expressly value, the presence of both men and women in these various facets of church leadership. This is a complex biblical doctrine and one that is being re-evaluated and discussed by our board of directors.

Sexuality

One of the great difficulties in defining a biblical understanding of sexuality in our modern context is the unseen, inner pain a person often carries behind the question. In recent history, the church has mishandled the topic of sexuality from a variety of angles. The church's witness has centered on what forms of sexual expression Scripture is against instead of the dignifying, freeing sexual expression Scripture advocates for. Jesus majored in the latter; the church has emphasized the former.

More personally, while the church has historically held to an understanding of sexuality distinct from the surrounding culture, the application of that belief in recent history has become alienating to those whose sexual expression does not line up with the church's. The tragedy of that shift has been that many have been made to feel alienated by the Christian church because of sexual practice and/or sexual orientation.

Because of the complexity presented by recent history, we will succinctly define both our belief and how we express our belief, which carry equal importance.

Belief

We believe in the historically Christian view of marriage and sexual expression; namely, that marriage is a lifelong one-flesh covenant union between two sexually different persons (biologically male and biologically female) from different families, and that all sexual relationships and expressions outside of marriage are sin.

How we Express Our Belief

The expression of this belief is often the more important question to people in search of a spiritual home: Will I (or one of my loved ones) be welcomed at The Sanctuary? And is there a barrier where that welcome is worn out?

Regardless of sexual practice and/or orientation, The Sanctuary welcomes all to worship with us. Jesus is the head of the church, and Jesus was uncompromising in teaching and calling people to align with his beliefs, a pathway to “life to the full.” (John 10:10)

Another group of rabbis, called the Pharisees, were equally convicted of the truth of their beliefs, and held many beliefs in common with Jesus. So why was it that those who felt alienated by the Pharisees also felt so welcome by Jesus? Because of how each expressed common beliefs: the Pharisees did so in pride, as their primary concern was being right, while Jesus did so in love, as His primary concern was compassion for the person and story behind the belief.

The church is called the Body of Christ. We are a communal expression of Jesus’ heart, so both our beliefs and our expression of those beliefs should mirror Jesus. When it comes to sexuality, we carry three important convictions that inform our expression:

1. Our first responsibility is to be a living display of covenant love and sexuality. The church was not founded to critique the surrounding culture but to form a distinct counterculture where “life to the full” is on display as an invitation to all. However, in many ways (covenant love and sexuality being one obvious example) the church has mirrored the culture more than forming a counterculture. Therefore, our work is not to change anyone else’s mind or critique the world outside of our family, but to live with the sort of fidelity, service, and love within our own singleness and marriage covenants that we become a living witness to the fullest sort of life.
2. We lead with a heart of love and compassion for people. The doors and the arms of our church family are open to anyone, regardless of belief. No one will ever be excluded from worshiping with us on Sundays for any misalignment of belief.
3. We must differentiate between agreement and acceptance. One of the truly fascinating aspects of the life of Jesus is that the very people whose lives least aligned with his ethical teachings were most drawn to him. His dinner company and close friends are made up of people out-of-alignment with his teaching (e.g. Jesus teaches that to even look at a woman lustfully is to commit adultery, then is consistently surrounded by prostitutes who profited on lust; Jesus teaches an ethic of radical generosity, then welcomes a tax collector, whose life was defined by greed, into his inner circle of 12 disciples; etc.). In modern cultural rhetoric, agreement and acceptance are often used synonymously: “If you don’t agree with my ethical choices (belief), you don’t accept me (expression).” However, in Jesus, we observe the opposite phenomenon: Those who felt most accepted in his presence were those most obviously

living in disagreement with his teaching. Therefore, as a church we are committed to becoming a community linked to Jesus in both agreement and acceptance. We are unapologetically aligned with every word of his teaching. Equally, we are uncompromisingly insistent on becoming the sort of community where those out-of-alignment with his beliefs (including sexuality) feel welcome and accepted in our fellowship.

Sanctity of Life

The first three centuries (A.D.) were not pleasant or kind to the Christian Church. These early years were marked by targeted persecution and attacks in an effort to stomp out the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth—who professed to be the Christ. In allegiance to this Savior, this community refused to honor other cultural gods, worship the emperor (a god himself), and remain insulated politically, socioeconomically, and ethnically.

Larry Hurtado, in his ground-shaking book, *Destroyer of the gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World*, identifies five distinct marks that carried the early church's persistence through cultural persecution.

These five marks were:

- A commitment to creating a multi-racial/ethnic community.
- A commitment to the poor, marginalized, and disenfranchised.
- A commitment the sanctity of life.
- A commitment to being a sexual counterculture.
- A commitment to nonviolence.

In the modern-day political realm, two of these values have been claimed by, “the left” as progressive ethics, two values have been claimed by, “the right” as traditional strongholds, and one ethic cannot be claimed by either side as violence has ransacked the West ad nauseam.

It is these five marks that we seek to mirror in the modern day. The cultural resistance we will feel will be similar (though manifested differently) to the cultural resistance the early Church experience some 2,000 years ago. It is in this vein that we hold fast, believing—in unity—that we are pursuing a way of life that brings faith, hope, and love to those surrounding us.

Life is a gift of God. It is sacred. The early Church recognized this not just in their commitment to the unborn (abortion was a relatively rare and dangerous practice at the time) but to infants in general. A common practice was called, “infant exposure” where unwanted infants were literally dumped into garbage heaps to either die or be picked up by slave-traders and sex-traffickers. Early Christians saved these infants and took them in as adopted sons and daughters—mirroring to the rest of the world a practice that God (the Father) has participated in with us (humanity as sons and daughters).

It is not lost on us—however—that recent cultural narratives have sought to vilify women and exonerate men in the weighty responsibility of procreation.

The sanctity of life has been politically charged and aggregated by both extremes of the political spectrum as a weaponized ideal for cultural idols.

Because of the complexity presented by recent history, we will succinctly define both our belief and how we express our belief, which carry equal importance.

Belief

We believe in the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.

(Genesis 9:5-6; Exodus 20:13; Psalms 139:13-16)

How we Express Our Belief

The expression of this belief is often the more important question to people in search of a spiritual home: Will I (or one of my loved ones) be welcomed at The Sanctuary? And is there a barrier where that welcome is worn out?

Regardless of belief, The Sanctuary welcomes all to worship with us. Jesus is the head of the church, and Jesus was uncompromising in teaching and calling people to align with his beliefs, a pathway to “life to the full.” (John 10:10)

The key word we wish to highlight in our statement of belief is *all*. We believe all life is sacred.

In the instance of abortion, we hold equal value for both the unborn and the mother of the child. It is our hope to faithfully, intentionally, and lovingly walk with vulnerable women who may find themselves in the position of an unwanted pregnancy and to provide the requisite support that brings the value of life—for all—into full view.

In the instance of infanticide or euthanasia, we cling to the ethic and value of life that God, Jesus, The Bible, and Orthodox Christianity historically upholds. We believe that

the deliberate termination of a human life is antithetical to God's high view of His creation (humans made in His image).

In the instance of suicide, we hope that any individual struggling with suicidal ideation would feel comfortable enough to seek help and support from our church family. We believe the taking of one's life grieves the heart of God and that—when able to choose between life or death—God always wants the choice to be life.

It is our sincere hope that in all of these facets, we are able to live out what we are working towards forming in us. As followers of Jesus, we seek to practice what we preach, and we recognize the immense pain the hypocrisy of the Church's at large has brought to many individuals. It is for this hypocrisy that we—as a Church body—repent and humbly say we're sorry. We commit to turning around and living a new way. A way of faith, hope, and love towards all.