

## Our Beliefs

Beginning of the year. Good time to remind ourselves of what we believe. What the PACOC is all about. There is an expectation that members know these and are in agreement with these. If you're not a member, it's good to know what we are about if you are considering membership.

We are a Bible based group of believers – we take our beliefs from the Bible, not from tradition or councils. We do not look to a religious leader or a group of leaders to hand down to us what to believe.

I want to review these with you. This may seem unnecessary to some of you.

50 years go these beliefs were commonly held among almost all Christians and were acknowledged as beneficial by non-believers

30 years ago these beliefs began to be questioned among professing Christians and were beginning to be seen as implausible by non-believers

Today, these beliefs are being questioned even more by professing Christians and are now seen by non-believers as destructive to culture. Bigoted. Intolerant.

There's a growing branch of Christianity often called progressive Christianity which is characterized more and more by a departure from the historical core beliefs of Christianity. Some wonder at which point someone no longer can be considered a Christian.

To be a member the shepherds have an expectation that you would affirm these beliefs. If not, you are welcome to attend – we will not refuse anyone the opportunity to worship unless they are causing confusion to the body or bringing harm to our members.

This is what we believe. We encourage questions. I love to talk about these things.

5 Core Beliefs that are common to almost every conservative/evangelical/Bible based church.

**The Bible is the inspired word of God and the primary source of our knowledge of God, our Creator.**

We learn something about God in creation. We learn things about God through experience. But all of these have to conform to the Bible.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NIV) — 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

66 books of the Bible – 39 OT / 27 NT – there are no other inspired works. We believe that these books have been preserved and have been handed down to us by the providential hand of God

**God exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

The trinity. This is a word not found in the NT but we see in the Bible these truths – God is one. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all are divine. This is a mystery and we believe that the doctrine of the trinity best preserves the oneness of God and the divinity of the three persons of the Godhead. Historically tis has been expressed as One Substance expressed in Three persons.

Matthew 28:19 (NIV) — 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Salvation is by grace through faith.**

We do nothing to contribute to our salvation. It is all the work of God through Christ. We cannot earn our salvation. No amount of good works can atone for our sin and we all have sinned.

Ephesians 2:8 (NIV) — 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

**The church is the Body of Christ commissioned and empowered to carry out the work of Christ.**

We believe that the church has been instituted by Jesus and is charged with continuing his work in this world. We believe that the church is essential in God's plan of redeeming people back to himself and in strengthening those who believe. We believe that all those who profess faith in Christ are called to be active members with a body of believers. There are no un-churched believers.

Ephesians 3:10–11 (NIV) — 10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Christ will come again and there will be a judgment of all humans to either entering God's eternal presence, Heaven, or eternal separation, Hell.**

We believe it is clearly taught that each person will stand before God and will experience one of two outcomes. Heaven or Hell.

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NIV) — 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

If you are following along let me skip ahead to our statement on Gender, marriage and sexuality. This was added a few years back seemed apparent that same-sex marriage was to become the law of the land and it did in 2015 in the SCOTUS case Obergefell V Hodges

**Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality** - We believe God wonderfully created two distinct, complementary genders which together reflect the image of God. Rejection of one's biological gender is a rejection of the image of God within that person (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4).

We believe that the term “marriage” has only one meaning: marriage, sanctioned by God, joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive, life-long union as delineated in Scripture (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6).

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between one man and one woman who are married to each other. Therefore, we believe that any form of sexual immorality, whether in flesh or mind, is harmful to the soul and, moreover, is sinful and offensive to God (Matthew 5:27-28; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

This is a teaching that a lot of professing Christians are backing down on.

Some churches have begun affirming same-sex relationships. They see the NT as allowing for committed same sex relationships. We do not. We believe scripture teaches that sex is designed between one man one woman in the committed bond of marriage. One man, one woman, one flesh, one lifetime. Again, we welcome discussions.

I’ve included some books that I have read as I am making my best effort to understand the debate.

***Same-Sex Marriage: A Thoughtful Approach to God's Design for Marriage* By: Sean McDowell, John Stonestreet**

***What Does the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?* By: Kevin DeYoung**

***Holy Sexuality and the Gospel: Sex, Desire, and Relationships Shaped by God's Grand Story* By: Christopher Yuan**

***Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say* By: Preston Sprinkle**

RightNow Media Series – Grace and Truth Preston Sprinkle

This does not mean that someone with gender dysphoria or same sex attraction cannot be a member here. This of course is a current conversation among

Christians, and we welcome these conversations. We truly want to be biblical and compassionate in these and all conversation.

There obviously are some more detailed teachings that would fit underneath these broader teachings – we welcome discussion on any particulars. We bring this before you because it is so relevant to our times. Please, speak to us if you have questions.

Ask you to read through these – Do I really believe these? What does it mean that I believe these things?

In a few weeks I'll talk about those practices that set us apart as the PACOC.

Why even talk about beliefs?

We act based on our beliefs – cold, get a coat; rain, get an umbrella; Bible is inspired, obey it. Beliefs are important

We endure because of our beliefs – resolutions; if I believe eating donuts is bad for me I won't eat them. You're still going to want to eat donuts but your commitment to that belief will empower you to say no. We break our commitments when we stop believing. Going to church. When I stop believing I will stop going. I will stop giving. I will stop serving. Heaven Hell. When I stop believing I will stop sharing with others.

Our beliefs lead us to action and sustain that action.

Without beliefs we drift and we seldom drift into a positive version of ourselves. We never end up anywhere. We allow culture, opinions, others to determine our destiny.

Matthew 7:13 (NIV) — 13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

Ephesians 4:14 (NLT) — 14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.

You only will control your destiny by determining your beliefs.

John 8:32 (NIV) — 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

John 17:17 (NIV) — 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

We think beliefs restrict us when really they free us to be the people we want to be.

Our world there is so much uncertainty – this pandemic – what is true – people use misinformation to control us – people just don’t know what is true – the economy – what’s going to happen – all unknown – all of this has led to high levels of anxiety and stress – it’s like we’re just floating out there with nothing to hold on to

I find it so refreshing and stabilizing to have faith in these beliefs – something to hold onto – these things don’t change

What do you believe may be the most important question you can ask yourself.

I believe there is a God who created us. I believe there is a God who loves us. I believe there is a God who has redeemed us through his son. I believe that he has sent his Spirit to live within me to guide me. I believe he has revealed truth to this world in the word of God. And I believe that he has called me into his service to let others know about Him. I believe that one day he will call me home to live with him in paradise forever.

That is something to hold onto. That gives me hope. That gives me strength.