

Our Beliefs – Part 2

This morning I want to continue last week's theme - what we believe
I invite questions – thanks for the encouraging words

One of our beliefs is:

Salvation is by grace through faith.

That sounds great but that may have raised some eyebrows – I know it would have 20 years ago in the COC. Salvation is a free gift but it is accepted or appropriated onto someone's life – there always seems to be some act on the person part to receive that gift

Acts 2:37 (NIV84) — 37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Acts 16:30 (NIV) — 30 He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Almost all churches recognize this: Confess, Repent, Make some statement of allegiance

A High View of Baptism – We practice adult baptism by immersion upon a person's confession of faith in Jesus Christ. The New Testament teaches baptism as an act which is connected to our acceptance of God's free gift. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).

Mark 16:16 (NIV84) — 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Acts 2:38 (NIV84) — 38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 22:16 (NIV84) — 16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

- Adult baptism – always seems to be an individual decision – no examples of infant baptism

- Immersion – the word itself means dip, plunge – there is a Greek word for sprinkle – maintains the imagery of baptism as a death and a resurrection

Romans 6:4 (NIV84) — 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

- It is not meritorious – it is an act of acceptance – we do not believe that baptism negates the freeness of the gift any more than confession

In regards to that there are some distinctive practices of the Park Avenue Church but before I address those let me give you a very brief history of the Churches of Christ.

In the middle of the 19th century there were two prominent preachers who independently came to the conclusion that much of Christianity had drifted away from its 1st century roots. Some of the practices didn't align with what you read in the NT. They were troubled at the disunity of the church – all the different denominations. They were disillusioned at all the additional creeds that churches had developed over the years. They just wanted to go back to the 1st century. Go back to Acts and the letters and try to recreate in their day what the apostles taught and practiced.

These two men were Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone

- Their initial desire was to unite all of Christianity – but that didn't work – so they started a new group of believers that came to be known as the church of Christ. Their efforts came to be known as the Restoration Movement – restore Christianity to its original.
- Speak where the Bible speaks. Be silent where the Bible is silent.
- Christians only but not the only Christians.
- How were things done in the first century
- How can we best reproduce the practices of the first century church.
- Here are some of the values they embraced and we continue to embrace.

Congregational Autonomy - Each congregation is autonomous (self- ruled) and is independent of every other congregation. Each congregation is governed locally by a body of elders selected from among the members. These are men who

meet the specific qualifications for this office given in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. We do, however, cooperate with other Christians locally and globally in serving our community and our world as in bringing the love and peace of Christ into the world.

We have no further organization above the local church – there are no councils, conferences, no bishops – each church is overseen by a body of Elders

A Cappella Singing - One of the things people most frequently notice about Park Avenue is that we sing without the use of mechanical instruments of music. This practice most closely resembles the worship of the early church and promotes congregational participation in this important act of worship.

It seems that the early church sang acapella – in the style of the chapel – this went on for several hundred years

Why?

- Encourages congregational participation – everyone has to sing
- Maintains the teaching quality of music above the emotional quality of music

Ephesians 5:19 (NCV) — 19 Speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 14:15 (NIV) — 15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding.

Colossians 3:16 (NIV) — 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

- What did the early church do? History leans to acapella. BTW, we are not the only ones who have taught this. Martin Luther, John Calvin – instruments were worldly
- What practice best reflects the purpose of singing? Never meant to be a performance; never meant to be entertainment.

Weekly Observance of The Lord's Supper - Another place where you may have noticed a difference between Park Avenue and other churches is in the Lord's Supper, or sometimes called Communion. Each Sunday we call our church to remember the life-giving death of Jesus. The Lord's Supper is open to anyone who has gathered with us to honor Jesus as Lord.

Acts 20:7 (NIV) — 7 On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

1 Corinthians 11:17–22 (NIV) — 17 In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. 18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 20 So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. 22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

Seems to be the very reason why people came together

We want to be a Bible based church

- We invite conversations
- We embrace unity in some of the debatable issues
- We invite you to confess Jesus and be baptized
- We invite you to a member of this church
- We continually look to God to lead us and guide us