

## How We Use Our Statement of Faith

Churches have historically used confessions and statements of faith in order to summarize and clearly identify what they believe. Many historical confessions have been preserved, and are used by churches to this day. We have chosen a two-tiered approach. First, we have adopted the "Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689" as our broad confession (\*with minor exceptions noted). Second, we have summarized the core beliefs of this confession in a concise "Statement of Faith" contained herein. It must be remembered that while the confession of faith and the statement of faith are represented in two distinct documents, they are inherently linked and function as a unified whole. Listed below are several important things you should understand about the purpose of our statement of faith, and about the way it will be used.

1. Our statement of faith, which has its roots in our confession, will be a helpful introduction to the doctrines we will teach, giving you assurance that we will remain solidly biblical in our convictions. While we strongly believe that the doctrines set forth in our statement are an accurate summary of biblical truth, we do not require everyone joining our church to understand and affirm the statement at every point.
2. We may invite guest speakers who do not agree with every point of doctrine in our statement of faith. There are many faithful ministers of the Word who do not hold to the exact expression of our convictions. Though our statement will guide us in selecting those we choose for guest speaking, it will not preclude those who are in complete agreement in the essential areas, while differing somewhat on secondary issues.
3. We do expect conformity to the statement of faith from our Elders and teachers, those most associated with the shepherding duty of teaching the truth. This does not imply that every teacher must have a thoroughly formulated understanding of every aspect of the statement. It does mean, however, that they are willing not to knowingly teach contrary to the established doctrine of the church while working out the finer points. Certain doctrines are so clear and so necessary that a teacher or potential leader would have no reason to be in confusion over them (e.g. the inerrancy of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the nature of saving faith, the sovereignty of God in election, etc.). However, certain difficult points of doctrine may take even good students some time to work out (e.g. the extent of the atonement, the precise relationship between the covenants, etc.). Since any teaching is a pastoral extension, the Elders will decide which points of theology, on a case by case basis, may remain suspended in the mind of a teacher or potential leader. Pains should be taken, however, to remove the confusion and to come to a solid conviction and doctrinal unity.
4. If a teacher comes to a conclusion contrary to the statement of faith, he is required to inform the Elders about his conflicting belief. The Elders will work with his concerns until there is unity in understanding. If an issue in the statement is found to be in error when compared with the confession of faith and then compared with Scripture, a correction will be made to the statement. If unity is unattainable, then the Elders and the individual must fall back on the statement of faith as correct, until proven otherwise. In this case, the teacher will be asked to discontinue teaching until there is a better resolve. It is possible that at some point, an Elder or teacher may completely apostatize (i.e. disbelieve certain essential doctrines once held true). In that special case, church discipline is in order and all teaching responsibilities will be terminated.
5. Our statement of faith is subservient to our confession of faith, which is subservient to Scripture alone. Neither the statement of faith nor the confession of faith has authority equal to that of God's Word. They are authoritative only in a limited sense, as far as, they accurately reflect the meaning of Scripture. We view them and use them as tools to promote, achieve and maintain doctrinal understanding, purity and harmony.