

Essex Baptist Church Articles of Faith

The Scripture

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction: that it has God for its Author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried. (2 Timothy 3:15, 16, 17; 2 Peter 1:21; Proverbs 30:5, 6; John 17:17; Romans 2:12; Philippians 3:16; 1 John 4:1)

The True God

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent spirit, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption. (1 John 4:24; Exodus 15:11; Mark 12:30; Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; Ephesians 2:18)

The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person; equal with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature; that He was active in creation; that in His relation to the unbelieving world He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and judgement, that He bears witness to the Truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the agent in the new birth; that He seals, baptizes, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies and helps the believer. And that the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance) is the evidence of His indwelling rather than the speaking in tongues and other spectacular demonstrations. (Matthew 28:19; Hebrews 9:14; Genesis 1:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; Ephesians 1:13-14; John 3:5-6; 14:16-17; 15:26-27; 16:8-11)

Satan or the Devil

We believe that Satan was once holy, and enjoyed heavenly honors; but through pride and ambition to be as the Almighty, fell and drew after him a host of angels; that he is now the malignant prince of the power of the air, and the unholy god of this world. We hold him to be man's great tempter, the enemy of God and His Christ, the accuser of the saints, the author of all false religions, the chief power back of the present apostasy; the lord of the antichrist, and the author of all powers of darkness, destined however, to final defeat at the hands of God's Son, and to the judgement of an eternal justice in hell, a place prepared for him and his angels. (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:14-17; Revelations 12:9, 10; Jude 6; Ephesians 2:2; 1 Peter 5:8; Zechariah 1:3; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 1 John 4:3; Revelations 13:13-14; Revelations 20:10)

The Creation

We believe in the Genesis account of creation, and that it is to be accepted literally and not allegorically or figuratively; that man was created directly in God's own image and after His own likeness; that man's creation was not a matter of evolution or evolutionary change of species, or development through interminable periods of time from lower to higher forms; that all animal and vegetable life was made directly, and God's established law was they should bring forth only "after their kind". (Genesis 1:1; Acts 4:24; Hebrews 11:3; Romans 1:20; Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7, 1:11)

The Fall of Man

We believe that man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state, in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint, but of choice; being by nature utterly void of that holiness require by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse. (Genesis 1:27; Romans 5:19; Ephesians 2:1-3; Ezekiel 18:19,20; Romans 3:19, 1:20)

The Virgin Birth

We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten of the Holy Ghost in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a Virgin, as no other man was ever born or can ever be born of woman, and that He is both the Son of God and God, the Son. (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:35; Mark 1:1; John 1:14; John 5:20; Galatians 4:4)

The Atonement for Sin

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God, Who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin, honoured the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins; that, having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in heaven; and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all sufficient Saviour. (Ephesians 2:8; John 3:16; John 1:1-14; Philippians 2:6-8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:21; Isaiah 53:4-6; Hebrews 7:25,26.)

Justification

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood; by virtue of which faith His perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favour with God. (John 1:16; Acts 13:39; Romans 5:9, 17, 19; Titus 3:5-7; Romans 5:12.)

The Freeness of Salvation

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation. (Isaiah 55:1; Romans 16:25,26; John 5:40; John 3:19; Revelations 22:17; Romans 1:15-17.)

Grace in the New Creation

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about in a manner above our comprehension, not by culture, not by character, nor by the will of man, but wholly and solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with the divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel; that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life. (John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Acts 2:41; 2 Peter 1:4; Romans 6:23; John 3:8; Galatians 5:22.)

Repentance and Faith

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby, being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Saviour. (Mark 1:5; Ephesians 2:8; 1 John 5:1; John 16:8; Acts 2:37,38; Luke 18:13; Romans 10:12; Romans 10:9-11; Hebrews 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:12.)

God's Purpose of Grace

We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God; according to which He graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of His free mercy that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:8,9; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14; Acts 13:48; Romans 9:23; 1 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Peter 1:10,11; Philippians 3:12.)

Sanctification

We believe that sanctification has a twofold meaning: (a) that of setting apart of things, days, or persons specifically for God, and that the believer at the time of his regeneration is so set apart by God the Father; (b) the progressive work of the Holy Spirit whereby the believer, obedient to the Work of God, experiences the power of the indwelling Christ for holiness of life and victory

over the old nature, which work will be complete when the believer stands in Christ's presence. (1 Corinthians 1:30; Hebrews 10:10,14; Colossians 1:26-28; John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.)

The Perseverance of Saints

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. (John 8:31; 1 John 2:27,28; 1 John 2:19; Matthew 13:20; Romans 8:28; Jeremiah 32:40; Psalm 121:2; 91:11,12; Philippians 1:6; Jude 24; Hebrews 1:14; John 10:28,29.)

The Harmony of the Law and Gospel

We believe that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government; that it is holy, just, and good; and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin; to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy law, is one great end of the gospel, and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible church. (Romans 3:31; Matthew 5:17; Luke 16:17; Romans 8:7,8; Joshua 24:19; Romans 8:2-4, Hebrews 8:10, 12:14; Jude 20,21.)

A Gospel Church

We believe that a church of Christ is a congregation of immersed believers associated by a covenant of faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His Word; that its scripturally designated officers are pastors (elders) and deacons, whose qualifications, claims and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures; we believe the true mission of the church is found in the great commission; First, to make individual disciples; Second, to baptize them; Third, to teach and instruct, as He has commanded. We do not believe in the reversal of this order; we hold that the local church has the absolute right of self government, free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only superintendent is Christ, through the Holy Spirit; that it is Scriptural for true churches to co-operate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the gospel; that every church is the sole and only judge of the measure and method of its co-operation; on all matters of membership, of policy of government, of discipline, of benevolence, the will of the local church is final. (Acts 2:41,42; 1 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 1:2-23; 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:4; Acts 14:23; 6:5,6; 15:23; 20:17-28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 3:8-13; Matthew 28:19,20; Colossians 1:18; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Malachi 3:10; 1 Corinthians 6:1-3.)