

First Baptist Church

Affirmations and Denials

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Preamble

What we believe gives direction to how we behave. Our behavior in our homes and in our work should be reflective of our behavior as believers in the body of Christ. It should be God-honoring and Christ-exalting, because what we believe should be the basis for how we live. In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul refers to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ as “the household of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.” Most of the letters of Paul are written with attention given first to doctrine or belief followed by teaching the church about duty or behavior. What we believe as a church forms the foundation for how we behave as a church.

The church is the body of Christ made up of all who are joined together under the Lordship of Christ from every people group in the world. The church is universal and invisible. This universal and invisible church is made up of local bodies of believers living out The Gospel in the world in worship, work and witness organized for that worship, work and witness according to the church’s understanding of the Bible as it teaches how the church is to operate.

We believe that the church as a local body of believers is to be led by a Body of Elders¹ who give spiritual oversight to the church by giving attention to the doctrine of the church, the direction for the church and the discipline of her members. This Body of Elders is to be connected with a Body of Deacons² who give oversight to the practical matters of the church with particular attention to the oversight of the budget, the construction and maintenance of the buildings, and benevolent ministries

to the members of the church family who are in need. We believe that both bodies are to work together in ministry to the members of the church and to do their work not as those who exercise authority over the congregation but as those who serve the congregation at the will and with the blessing of the congregation. We believe further that all who serve on the ministerial staff and the body of Elders should serve in full agreement with the following articles of Affirmations and Denials.

Article I – Of Truth

We affirm the reality of absolute truth³ which:

- Exists with full and final authority (Is. 45:19, John 17:17)
- Revealed in the sixty-six books of the Bible (Deuteronomy 29:29, John 10:34-35, 2 Timothy 3:14-17)
- Is inerrant⁴, infallible⁵ and fully-sufficient⁶ (Psalm 119:24-32, Psalm 1, Revelation 22:18-19)

We deny that truth is relative:

- To time, culture, or circumstances (John 1:1-3, John 18:37-38)
 - To the logical reasoning abilities of sinful humans (Isaiah 55:8-9, Matthew 16:17)
 - To only certain parts of the Bible or certain issues in the Bible (Psalm 119:105-112, 2 Timothy 3:16)
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Article II – Of the Centrality of Scripture

We affirm the centrality of expository⁷ preaching in the church with:

- The necessity of the public reading of Scripture (1 Timothy 4:13)
- The centrality of biblical exposition (Acts 2:16-36, Acts 7:1-53, Acts 14:19-23, 2 Timothy 4:2-3)

We deny that God-honoring worship can marginalize expository preaching, such that a church devoid of true biblical preaching cannot survive as a gospel Church. (2 Corinthians 4:1-6)

Article III – Of God’s Nature

We affirm that God is infinite in all His perfections so that:

- God is omniscient⁸, omnipotent⁹, omnipresent¹⁰ and omnisapient¹¹ (1 Timothy 1:17, Malachi 3:6, 1 Kings 8:27, Psalm 90:2)
- God’s knowledge is perfect, eternal, and all-encompassing (Is. 46:10)
- God knows and does all things in accordance with who He is as God (Psalm 135:6, Eph. 1:11)

We deny that God is limited in any way:

- In Knowledge (Ezekiel 11:5, Romans 11:34, Hebrews 4:13)
- In Power (Genesis 1:1, Psalm 147:5, Ephesians 3:20)
- In Perfection (Psalm 119:7-9)

Article IV – Of God as Trinity

We affirm the doctrine of the Trinity:

- As a Christian Essential¹² (Genesis 1:1-3, Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14)
- That the essence¹³ of God is One God in Three Persons¹⁴ (Mat. 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14)
- Expressed as God the Father¹⁵, God the Son¹⁶ and God the Holy Spirit¹⁷ (Matthew 28:19, Revelation 1:1-2, Revelation 1:9-10)

We deny every understanding that makes distinctions in the Godhead:

- In the essence of each in and with the other¹⁸ (John 10:30)
- In the expression of each in relationship to the other¹⁹ (John 14:11)

Article V – Of God as Creator

We affirm one God who is Creator, Sustainer, Sovereign²⁰, and Savior so that:

- God made all that is (Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16)
- God actively upholds all things (Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3)
- God rules over all that is, so that nothing occurs apart from his ultimate will. (Genesis 50:20, Daniel 4:34-35, Isaiah 45:5-7, Romans 9:15-16, Ephesians 1:11)
- God saves sinners and redeems His world for His glory (Genesis 3:15, John 3:16, Colossians 1:19-20)

We deny every understanding of creation that diminishes either the design, the direct action of, or meticulous providence of God including:

- Naturalistic, Darwinian Evolution²¹
- Theistic Evolution²²
- Pantheism and Panentheism²³
- Deism²⁴
- Open Theism²⁵

We deny any understanding of God as Savior of the world that diminishes God's role as Redeemer of His own with whom He will rule over the new heaven and new earth, and His role as Judge over those who reject His salvation, e.g.;

- Universalism²⁶ (Revelation 20:11-15)
- Annihilationism²⁷ (Mark 9:43-48)

Article VI – of Jesus Christ

We affirm that Jesus Christ is truly God, truly man in perfect, undiluted, and unconfused union throughout His incarnation²⁸ and now eternally. We also affirm that Jesus Christ died on the cross as the sacrifice of propitiation²⁹ to God to satisfy His Holy Wrath against sin and as a substitute for sinners, so that Jesus is:

- The fullness of the incarnation (Luke 2:22-24, Luke 8:22-25, Luke 9:28-36)
- The fulfillment of God's plan of redemption as He gave himself as a sacrifice to God and as a substitute for sinners (Romans 3:25)

We further affirm that Jesus Christ rules and reigns as Lord over His Church and that in God's time, He will rule and reign over all the earth in fulfillment of the purposes of God, so that:

- The church is built and maintains its life as it submits in obedience to Christ. (Matthew 16:18, Matthew 28:18)
- Christ is the Living Lord of the universe through His resurrection from the dead, His ascension to the right hand³⁰ as intercessor³¹ and sovereign from where He will come to execute judgement on the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom. (Revelation 11:15)

We deny any understanding of who Jesus is and what Jesus did that minimizes or excludes:

- His full deity and full humanity
- His sacrifice to God and substitution for us on the cross, either of which would bring serious injury to the gospel or even repudiation of the gospel.
- His bodily resurrection from the dead and ascension to heaven as Jesus is the perfect pattern for all who die in the Lord

Article VII – Of the Holy Spirit

We affirm the Holy Spirit coming from God through Jesus to seal, to secure and to sanctify believers in the body of Christ and to call sinners to repentance through convicting and convincing of sin, righteousness and judgment. The Holy Spirit:

- Comes from the Father and the Son (John 15:26)
- Changes the heart, convicts of sin, and calls to commitment to Jesus as Lord (Romans 8:9-11, John 16:8)
- Confirms the believer and conforms the believer increasingly to the image of Jesus (Ephesians 1:13-14, John 16:8)

We deny that the Holy Spirit operates in any way that diminishes the work of God the Father and God the Son so that there is:

- No special sign gift that shows that we belong to God (Galatians 5:6, 1 Corinthians 14:20-25)
- No material blessings or physical healings that are the prerogative of the people of God (Matthew 6:33, John 6:26-27)
- No special group of believers who alone can exercise and express certain spiritual gifts (Galatians 2:20, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Romans 12:4-8)

Article VIII – Of Humanity

We affirm that humans are made in the image of God³² in creation, but with Adam, have fallen into sin as sinners and:

- We are sinners by birth and by nature (Psalm 51:5, Rom. 5:12, Eph. 2:3)
- We are sinners by choice and conviction (Is. 53:6, John 8:34, James 4:17)
- The essence of sin is self-centeredness (Mark 12:29-31, James 1:14-15, Phil 2:3-4)

We deny that humans can recover³³ the image of God by ourselves because:

- We are not basically good by birth or nature (Psalm 58:3)

- We are not born morally, spiritually neutral (Rom. 3:23)
 - We are not changed spiritually by environment or education (Prov. 3:5-6, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, 2 Cor. 3:12-18)
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Article IX – Of Salvation

We affirm that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, and that it is:

- Through Jesus Christ alone (John 14:6, John 3:16-18, Acts 4:12)
- Based on the gospel alone (Rom. 1:16, Rom. 10:8-10, Gal. 1:9)
- By conviction that calls forth repentance and faith (2 Cor. 7:9-10, Prov. 28:13, 1 John 1:9)
- For the glory of God alone (Phil. 1:9-11, Eph. 1:5-6, Rom. 11:33-36)

We deny that salvation is based in any way in who we are or what we do:

- In whatever goodness we possess (Is. 64:6, Rom. 3:23)
 - By whatever good works we do (Eph. 2:8-9, 2 Tim. 1:8-9, Rom. 11:6)
 - Through any means we employ (John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Gal. 2:20-21, Gal. 5:6)
 - In whatever we do or have done that would cause us to have assurance in ourselves apart from the presence and power of the Spirit of God (Eph. 2:8-9, John 6:63)
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Article X – of Unity of Revelation

We affirm the saving purpose of God is the same throughout the Bible so that:

- Those under the Old Covenant look forward toward the promise upon which those of the New Covenant look backward (Genesis 12:15, Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:16-25)
- We are declared right with God by faith in Christ (Romans 3:21-26, Ephesians 2:8-10)
- The righteousness of Jesus is imputed to us (Isaiah 53:4-6, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- The Holy Spirit is imparted to us (Acts 2:38, 1 Cor. 2:12)

We deny any distinction in any way at any time in God's work of saving sinners so that:

- Jews and gentiles are saved by faith alone in Christ alone (Romans 4:13-15, Romans 9:19-25)
 - There is no dual covenant for Jews and Gentiles (Romans 11:28-52, Galatians 6:15-16)
 - What can be known about God is given by God to all so that salvation is through Christ alone (Romans 1:16-23, Romans 2:12-29)
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Article XI – of Church Membership

We affirm that individual assent to Jesus as Lord always leads to membership in a local church so that:

- The church universal³⁴ is not synonymous with the New Testament focus on the local church (Acts 20:17, Romans 1:7, Galatians 1:1-2, and Revelation 2-3)
- The church exists in the world as local bodies of believers consisting of particular people gathered in a precise place for a biblically prescribed purpose (Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:8, Revelation 2-3)
- The true church is made up of local churches, some of which are purer than others (Ephesians 5:27, Revelation 2-3)
- The true church consists of regenerate³⁵ believers, expressed in believers' baptism, who are clearly committed to growth in holiness and going into the world to fulfill the mandate given the church by the risen Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12, Hebrews 12:14; Acts 1:8)

We deny that an individual can pursue a right relationship with God apart from membership in a local church and we also deny that membership in a local church alone is the essence of any right relationship with God so that:

- A right relationship with God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ produces an ongoing change in life that is willingly pursued as a part of a local church (2 Corinthians 5:17-21, 1 Peter 2:9-10);
- Membership in a local church is a sacred privilege and a joyful responsibility as we live in relationship to one another in love and before the world as faithful witnesses to the Gospel (Galatians 5:6, 16-26; 1 John 2:7-11)

Article XII – of Church Associations

We affirm that Gospel-centered congregations are to seek to work together in local communities and beyond for the sake of the advancing of the Gospel toward the saving of sinners and the glory of God (Romans 15:24-27);

We deny any kind of ecumenical³⁶ unions that would take precedence over the claims of Biblical Truth and particularly at the point of the essential meaning of the Gospel.

Article XIII – of Order in the Home and Church

We affirm the Biblical order for the home and church which we believe to be complementarian³⁷, such that:

- Men and Women are equal before God in creation, fall and redemption (Genesis 1:27, Galatians 3:27-28)
- Men and women are made in the image of God, that image is seriously marred in both and can only be restored by the grace of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ when men and women turn in faith to Jesus as Lord and turn from their sinful, self-centered lives (Genesis 1:27, Galatians 3:27-28, 2 Corinthians 3:18)
- Men are to be the spiritual leaders in the home and the church (Ephesians 5:23, Ephesians 6:4, 1 Timothy 2:12)
- Godly men are called to lead their homes and to lead in the church under the authority of the Word of God and the Lordship of Jesus and in the power of the Holy spirit; women are called by God to serve as wives and mothers in the home in response to the godly leadership of the husband, and all who are members of the church are called to serve in the church in response to the godly leadership of the Elders (Ephesians 5:22, 1 Timothy 2:11-12, Hebrews 13:17)
- Only men can serve as Elders and due to the way we use our body of deacons at FBC Waynesboro, only men can serve as deacons (1 Timothy 2:11-12)

We deny any view of women that demeans in any way who she is by creation or redemption, such that:

- Women are to be highly valued and honored in the church and the home (Romans 16:1, Ruth, Matthew 1, Judges 4-5)
 - Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and elders/deacons are to serve so as to honor women and womanhood (Ephesians 5:25, 1 Peter 5:1-3)
 - Women are blessed and encouraged to serve in numerous roles outside the offices of Elder and deacon (Romans 16:1, 16:3, 16:6, 16:15, Luke 10:38-42, Acts 18:24-28)
 - Men and Women serve together in the ministry of the church as heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ, and partners in the work of the Gospel, all to the glory of God (Genesis 1:27-28, Romans 16:3-4)
 - Women are to be valued by men in the spirit with which Christ cherishes His church (Ephesians 5:25-33)
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Article XIV

We affirm that God has called and redeemed the church to display the Glory of His Name in all the earth through:

- The gathering of believers to worship His great Name (Heb. 10:25, Heb. 13:15)
- The intentional effort to be a church with all kinds of diversity (Gal. 3:28, Rev. 7:9)
- Living together in love and unity (1 Cor. 1:10, 1 Cor. 12:4-7, 13:1-4)
- Being a witness to the Gospel in Word and Work (1 Peter 3:15-17, Matt. 5:16)

We deny that any church can be true to the Gospel and thus a true church that:

- Excludes anyone from the worship of the church on the basis of race or ethnicity (Galatians 2:28, Acts 1:8)
- Is involved in doing deeds of kindness without a clear verbal proclamation of the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, James 2:14-17)

- Is engaged in social justice issues apart from the direct declaration of the Gospel (Luke 12:8-13, Ephesians 2:11-22, Revelation 2:1-7)
- Is involved in political causes by way of activity or address that are not first and foremost fundamentally biblical issues (Romans 13:1-7, Matthew 6:24)

Glossary

¹ **Elder** – The office of elder (Gk. *presbuteros*) defines the role of those whom the Bible charges with spiritual oversight of the church body. They do not *rule* the church, but *lead* the church by providing spiritual direction, spiritual formation, and spiritual care of the church members. The Bible commands that this position to be held only by qualified men (1 Tim. 2:12, 3:1-7)

² **Deacon** – The office of deacon (Gk. *diakonos*) defines the Biblical role of those who have been given responsibility over certain practical needs and functions of the church.

³ **"Absolute" versus "relative" truth** – Absolute truth is an expression that defines realities about life which are objectively true, meaning they never change no matter the shifting of circumstances. *Relative Truth* is an idea or belief which is subject to change depending upon other circumstances. (God's word is absolute truth; human traditions are relative truth.)

⁴ **Inerrant** – The Bible does not contain any error of fact on any matter of which it intends to communicate. This should be understood of the original autographs (documents) of the Bible. Although individual manuscript copies of biblical books may contain error but the Bible as originally written does not contain any error.

⁵ **Infallible** – This refers to the impossibility of error in the Bible because of the nature of the Bible as God-inspired truth. God cannot err, the Bible is God's word, therefore the Bible cannot be in error.

⁶ **Sufficiency** – This refers to the power of the Bible to accomplish all that the Bible says it can do, and its lack of reliance upon any external authority for its claims.

⁷ **Expository Preaching** – Expository preaching seeks to tie the main point and applications of the preached sermon to the primary meaning of the Biblical text. This differs from preaching that uses the Biblical text as a launching point to explore ideas not clearly and directly tied to the text.

⁸ **Omniscience** – (from Latin *omni*, "all", and *sceintia*, "knowledge") This attribute of God describes God's complete and detailed knowledge of himself and of creation. He knows all things past, present, future, and all potentials. There is nothing actual or potential of which God is not aware or of which God learns.

⁹ **Omnipotence** – (from Latin *omni*, "all", and *potens*, "power") This attribute of God describes God's infinite power and potential to do anything he pleases consistent with his nature and other attributes as God.

¹⁰ **Omnipresence** – This attribute of God describes the fact that God transcends the created universe but is also always fully present throughout all creation. This implies that God does not occupy physical space and has no shape as does the creation He made.

¹¹ **Omnisapience** – (from Latin *omni*, “all”, and *sapientia*, “wisdom”) – This attribute of God describes God’s infinite wisdom. All that God does is done for the best end by the best means in accordance with all his other attributes.

¹² **Essential vs Peripheral doctrine** – Essential doctrines are those doctrines which define the core of what it means to be a Christian, what someone absolutely must believe in order to be a Christian. Peripheral doctrines are doctrines that may be very important, but they are doctrines in which genuine Christians can disagree. For example, the existence of God is an essential doctrine whereas the proper mode of baptism is peripheral.

¹³ **Essence** – Essence refers to the nature of a thing, describing what kind of a thing something is. God is God because God’s essence is divine (a culmination of all divine attributes). In reference to the Trinity, it is proper to understand that all three persons of the Trinity share the same essence as true God.

¹⁴ **Person** – Person refers to a conscious thinking, feeling, acting thing. God eternally exists as three separate persons, Father, Son and Spirit all sharing the essential essence as God.

¹⁵ **God the Father** – The first person of the Trinity. God in his most primary sense, not primary in essence but primary in role within the Trinity.

¹⁶ **God the Son** – The second person of the Trinity, eternally begotten (generated) of the Father who took on a human nature in the historical person of Jesus and from his resurrection subsists now as the perpetual God-man.

¹⁷ **God the Holy Spirit** – The third person of the Trinity, eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

¹⁸ **Non-distinct essence** – Nothing can be true *in essence* of one person of the Trinity that is not true *in essence* of the others.

¹⁹ **Non-distinct expression** – A way of saying that all persons of the Trinity share one purpose of will. Nothing can be done by one person of the Trinity which is not in complete harmony with the eternal divine will of all three persons of the Trinity.

²⁰ **Sovereign** – This refers to God’s authority over all creation and ability to do with His creation all that pleases Him.

²¹ **Naturalistic Evolution** – Any notion of biological evolution which excludes all forms of divine guidance or supervision over that process.

²² **Theistic Evolution** – Any notion of biological developmental history which confirms both the broad secular view of evolutionary development of life but also proposes some form of divine direction in that process.

²³ **Pantheism and Panentheism** – Two similar worldview systems which teach the idea that the universe is, in some form or fashion, a part of God, denying the clear Biblical truth that God created the world and exists transcendent and external to it.

²⁴ **Deism** – The idea that God exists strictly transcendent to the world, he created the world, but is not immanently involved with the events of the world.

²⁵ **Open-Theism** – A view which denies God’s full omniscience. Open-Theism holds that God is intimately involved with the events of the world, but his knowledge of future events is limited by the free will choices of human beings.

²⁶ **Universalism** – The complete denial of the Biblical doctrine of hell. Universalism holds that God will not ultimately administer his wrath against anyone but will administer his saving mercy to all humanity irrespective of their choices or religious beliefs.

²⁷ **Annihilationism** – The denial of the eternality of hell. Those who do not submit to Jesus as Lord and Savior will ultimately be annihilated from existence.

²⁸ **Incarnation** – The action by which God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, entered into time and space in the womb of the virgin Mary, thereby adding to Himself a human nature in the person of Jesus of Nazareth without diminishing in any way his divine nature. Now in his resurrected state, Jesus remains perpetually the “God-man”.

²⁹ **Propitiation** – The appeasement of God’s righteous anger toward guilty sinners as a result of the perfect atoning sacrifice of Jesus.

³⁰ **“Right Hand”** – A Biblical expression (Eph. 1:20) denoting the place of honor in the eternal realm beside God the Father where the resurrected Jesus is reigning over all the world.

³¹ **Intercessor** – One who pleads the cause of another before a figure of authority. Jesus is our intercessor before the Father, pleading for mercy on the basis of his shed blood on the cross.

³² **Image of God** – A Biblical expression denoting the fact that God made humanity different than all the rest of creation. Human beings are like God in certain limited capacities and they represent God before the world which God created.

³³ **“recover”** – All human beings still possess the image of God even as sinful creatures, but they are unable to “recover” this in the sense that sin keeps us from reflecting God’s image as originally intended.

³⁴ **Church Universal** – This term denotes the church as composed of all believers who are with God now as well as all believers who are now scattered all over the earth.

³⁵ **Regenerate believers** – This term identifies true Christian believers whose faith is a result of having been born of the Spirit of God as distinct from the worldly notion of the “believer” who merely accepts the intellectual facts of the Christian gospel but whose heart has essentially remained unchanged.

³⁶ **Ecumenical unions** – any association, organization, or meeting comprised of two or more differing Christian churches or denominations which may unite for a common purpose.

³⁷ **Complementarianism** – A description of the way in which the Bible reveals the distinct, God-given order of the home and church. It distinguishes roles of authority and submission between men and women, such that men are called under Christ to lead their families and lead the church and women are called to submit to the leadership of their husbands as both men and women are instructed to submit to the male elders of the church. This is in contrast to egalitarianism which argues that the Bible prescribes no established distinctions of authority in role between husband and wife and in the offices of church leadership.