

Doctrinal Distinctives

1) **Sufficiency of Scripture**

The Bible contains all we need in order to know God and the way of salvation. We need no further 'inspired verbal revelation' (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Psalms 19:7-11).

So we need to listen to God speaking to us through the Scripture read, preached, prayed and sung. We are committed to systematic, consecutive, expository preaching of Scripture as our staple diet (2 Timothy 3:15 - 4:5).

2) **Baptism**

Baptism is for believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and is both an act of personal obedience and a sign of personal identification with the Lord Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection, and also a sign of the washing away of sins. However, we welcome into membership any believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who subscribes to the Basis of Faith but who on grounds of conscience has not been baptised as a believer, provided that they satisfy the Elders that they have given serious and prayerful consideration to the Biblical basis for believers' baptism, and are unreservedly supportive of believers' baptism as the practice of the church.

So we offer baptism, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, to all who publicly profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but only to such people. We normally baptise by immersion in water.

3) **Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper is a rich remembrance and celebration in which Christian believers share bread and wine. The bread and wine are symbols which represent the body and blood of Christ, taken as a reminder of his death for his people and what it accomplished. The Lord Jesus Christ is spiritually present at a celebration of the Lord's Supper, as indeed he is at all gatherings of the local church.

So we will celebrate the Lord's Supper on a regular basis and offer it both to members of the church and to other believers in attendance. We expect participants to have expressed their faith in baptism (according to the conventions of this or another church).

4) **Election, the Sovereignty of God and Evangelism**

God is sovereign in the salvation of men and women. For anyone to come to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith requires God to choose them and draw them to himself. Knowing this truth leads to humility and assurance of salvation among believers. It does not imply that believers should be inactive in evangelism. Far from it – proclaiming the gospel is the means by which God's chosen ones are brought to salvation.

So while we look to God to bring new life by his Spirit, we are committed to seeking and taking every opportunity to share the gospel with others, in obedience to the commission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5) **Leadership in the Local Church**

The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the church. A local church is to be led by a group of elders. Further, although God created men and women with equal worth and richly equips both men and women for active ministry, leadership in the context of the

church (as in marriage and the family) is the functional responsibility of men. Such men are to operate as under-shepherds of Christ, loving and serving the members of the church and striving for personal godliness.

So eldership in the church is male and plural. Elders are qualified by character and gifting, and undertake their role in appropriate humility and love. Members of the church agree to submit to their leadership in the church in so far as that leadership is exercised in a manner consistent with the Bible.

6) **The Mission of the Church and the Kingdom of God**

We believe that the mission of the church is to make disciples from all nations. The church bears witness to the Kingship of the Lord Jesus, proclaiming the forgiveness of sins available through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The primary purpose of the church is to rescue individuals from the kingdom of Satan and transfer them to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ through the message of the gospel. Individual Christians are encouraged to serve in whatever context they think right before God, but the church as church is not concerned primarily to change the social, economic or political order of the present world, or to solve the problems of poverty, sickness, social inequality and race relationships in the world. God will do all this when his Kingdom comes in its fullness at the return of Jesus the King in power and glory.

So in our ministries we focus as a church on our mission to make disciples.

7) **Marriage and Divorce**

Marriage is a God-given blessing whereby a man and a woman may enjoy lifelong union, intimacy and mutual support picturing the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. Divorce is a departure from God's purpose in marriage and is permitted explicitly only in the case of adultery or of desertion by an unbelieving partner – and even in these cases, only as a last resort where there is no repentance and reconciliation proves impossible.

So we celebrate marriage and endeavour to assist couples as they prepare for and live out godly marriages. Where divorce or remarriage is being considered by a church partner, we will seek to understand the individual circumstances to determine if it is biblically permissible and counsel those involved accordingly.