

ourbeliefs

open*door*

STATEMENT OF FAITH



We Believe

- ...in the inspiration and authority of the Bible.
- ...in one God who is equal Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- ...Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human; was crucified, died, buried and bodily resurrected to reconcile the world to God and give new life to those who by faith participate in His death and resurrection.
- ...the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, reveals Jesus Christ, gives the life of Christ to those who repent of sin and trust in Jesus and sanctifies and empowers those who believe.
- ...all persons are created in the image of God, designed for fellowship with God but are separated from God by sin and in need of salvation.
- ...all who receive the message of Jesus Christ are participants in His eternal life. Water baptism and communion are powerful and active symbols of His life, message and our life-change.
- ...there is one universal Christian Church consisting of all who receive the good news of Jesus Christ.
- ...Christ will return and all humans will be judged on the basis of their acceptance or rejection of God's salvation through Christ.

VISION / MISSION / PURPOSE / VALUES



Our Vision

Preparing a people for *next*, committed to the same purpose, the same mission, and to each other.

Our Purpose

To be a community of faith radically committed to spiritual transformation for the glory of God, for the abundance of our own lives, and for the sake of others.

Our Mission

To invite people to pursue the struggle of becoming fully alive in God.

Our Values

1. We are a people who root ourselves in the Story of God.

We anchor ourselves in the Scriptures, recapturing and proclaiming its central message of grace, truth and resurrection.

2. We are a people of the Kingdom.

In a world full of individual kingdoms which compete and divide, we choose to unite around Jesus in building His Kingdom, submitting to what He wants done in our lives and in the world.

3. We are a people of the Spirit.

We are completely dependent on the gifts that the Spirit gives to do what we could never do on our own: to bring life where there is death.

4. We are a people who call out life.

We are committed to seeing, naming and calling out the life of God, which is embedded within each of us.

5. We are a people of grace.

We are all broken people who are desperate for the grace that not only saves us, but sustains our lives and gives us hope. We eagerly receive this grace from God and offer it to others.



Repentance and Forgiveness

We believe God created us to be in relationship with Himself. However, because of our sin, we were eternally separatedfrom Him and condemned to death and hell. But God loved us and redeemed us through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. When we come to the end of our own effort to save ourselves and we realize our brokenness and need, then we can enter into relationship with God. We enter this relationship by receiving the gift of His forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Deliverance and Cleansing

We believe the devil and his demons exist and our sinful choices give them access to our lives. Entering into the new life of Christ means we choose to forsake and renounce the sinful, evil, and idolatrous life patterns in which we have engaged. God, through the blood of Christ, delivers us and cleanses us from sin and evil, both inside and out. We must daily choose to walk in the life and pattern of Christ rather than in our own strength and desires.

Baptism

We believe baptism is an important and vital step in the formation of Christ in us. Jesus was baptized and commanded all who believe in Him to be baptized. Baptism is an act of obedience to the command of Christ, practiced by individuals who are fully devoted followers. In the New Testament, when a person believed in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, he or she was baptized.

It is a public profession of our faith that signifies our union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection and our fellowship with His church. "So through baptism, we are buried with Him in death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glorious power, so we too should live an entirely new life" (Romans 6:4).

Communion

We believe God is present with us in the celebration of communion which we partake in of obedience to the command of Jesus. We believe the elements of bread and wine symbolize the body and blood of Christ who is the final and complete sacrifice for our sins. In some mysterious way, God's life is received by us when we receive communion in faith and God's life is shared among us as we partake together. We invite all people who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to share in this Table with us. We believe communion is more than a cognitive remembering of what is symbolized; we believe by receiving the symbols in faith, we are entering into the realities the symbols represent.

Infilling by the Holy Spirit

We believe God comes to live in us through the indwelling Holy Spirit. In this way God is present with us individually, and, even more powerfully, when we gather together. When we believe in Jesus Christ, we receive the Holy Spirit and we continually ask Him to fill (immerse or baptize) us with His fullness, His power, and His love. Through the Holy Spirit we receive healing, power, comfort and all we need to live Christ-like in this world. As we cooperate with His work in our lives, we are continually transformed from the inside out into the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each of us as he determines for the purpose of helping one another and introducing the lost to Christ. When we minister to each other, we anoint one another with oil as a symbol of the work and power of the Holy Spirit.

Inspired Word

We believe we grow in our relationship with God through dialogue with Him. God speaks to us through His written Word, the Bible. We take the preaching and teaching of God's Word very seriously because through them we experience His presence and hear His voice. We have found that as we receive and respond to God's voice in the preaching and teaching of God's Word, the realities that are being preached and taught are recreated in us individually and corporately. We believe prayerful study and meditation on the Word of God are necessary for spiritual growth. Though our interpretation of God's Word is subject to error, the Bible remains our most clear and objective means of hearing the voice of God.

Spirit-Led Worship

We believe we have been created to worship God and enjoy Him forever. Worship is our response to God's initiating love. It is a means of embracing the presence of God and expressing our gratitude for His love, our awe of His beauty and faithfulness, and our desire to know Him more. Through worship we touch God and are touched by Him. Forgetting ourselves and looking only at Him, we are filled with His love.

Listening Prayer

We believe God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit in a variety of ways: sometimes through prayer, inner prompting, dreams, visions, or words; sometimes through other believers; sometimes through the orchestration of circumstance; sometimes through nature. All of these things can be used by God to speak to us, but they are subject to the influences of human desire and supernatural evil. Therefore, we believe that as we listen for the voice of God, we must test what we hear; it must be confirmed by the Word of God and the community of faith.

Spiritual Disciplines

We believe the spiritual disciplines (such as giving, fasting, fellowship, silence, and solitude) facilitate our ability to hear and respond to God's voice. They are not means of salvation or of earning God's love. When we respond to His love for us in worship, prayer, repentance, and grateful obedience, we are changed from the inside out and we come to love him more deeply.

Christian Character

We believe that a believer in Jesus Christ, who perseveres in following the will of God and engages in the Spiritual Disciplines, will develop Christian Character and the fruits of the Spirit. As we live our lives in holy community we will remain mindful that all are in process and have different journeys. We value authenticity and brokenness above performance, but acknowledge the exercise of the will is necessary for growth.

A Holy Grace-Filled Community

We believe loving relationships with other believers are necessary for spiritual wholeness and maturity. As children of God, we are called to model Christ, not only as individuals, but also as a community of believers. We desire to create a community where God's grace is pervasive and preserve it by holy living. We make every effort to extend compassion and acceptance without tolerance of sin. Women and men, in the partnership of mutual submission, are called to model the full nature and character of God in the leadership of their families and the church community. We expect every believer to live his or her life in spiritual, sexual and emotional purity. We encourage and expect open, honest, loving, and direct communication.

We Are Called and Gifted

We believe, as members of the community of faith, every family and every person is called, gifted, and equipped by God to serve. We acknowledge God's total ownership of our money, time, and gifts. Our calling is to partner with God through the stewardship of these resources for the purpose of building His kingdom.

We Are Not Alone

We believe Church of the Open Door is a local expression of the larger community of Christian faith. Just as individuals need the church community, so Open Door needs the gifts, correction, and wisdom of the larger community. We believe God is working through other congregations of believers, and He has and will continue to minister to us through them. We are called by God, as individuals and as a church community, to minister to and provide resources for others outside of our own congregation.

We Can Change the World

We believe we are called as a church, and as members of the Body of Christ, to bring the message of grace and demonstrate the love of Christ to those around the world who don't know Him personally. Following the example of Christ, we seek to minister to the evident needs of the individual as a means of reaching the whole person for Christ.

EXPANDED BELIEFS



Statement of Faith (Expanded)

THE BOOK

I. The Bible - We believe in the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

THE CHARACTERS

- **II. The Trinity** We believe in one God who is equal Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the eternal community of perfect love. God's love is freely and graciously revealed through God's activity in the creation, salvation and promised future consummation of the world.
- III. The Son, Jesus We believe God's love is definitively revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, lived a life of complete surrender to the Father, was crucified, died, buried and bodily resurrected to reconcile the world to God and give new life to those who by faith participate in his death and resurrection.
- **IV.** The Holy Spirit We believe the Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin and reveals Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit gives the life of Christ to those who repent of sin and trust in Him. The Holy Spirit sanctifies and empowers those who believe.
- **V. Humankind** We believe that all persons are created in the image of God, and that, among other things, this means that all persons are designed for fellowship with God. We believe that all persons are sinners estranged from God and in need of salvation.

THE PLOT

- VI. Salvation We believe that all who receive the message of Jesus Christ and trust in him are baptized into his death and raised to new life in him; these are made participants in the eternal life and perfect fellowship of God through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Water baptism and the sharing of the Lord's Supper are the two commands of Jesus Christ given to the Church as powerful and active symbols of his life and message.
- VII. The Church We believe that although it has multitudes of diverse expressions, there is one universal Christian Church consisting of all who receive the good news of Jesus Christ. This good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the source of the Church's existence and the basis of its life.
- VIII. The Future We believe that all human beings will be bodily resurrected when Christ returns in glory to bring human history to its climax. Those who have been reconciled to God through Christ will be resurrected to eternal life and fellowship with God. Those who have chosen to reject the salvation of God through Christ will be resurrected to judgment and eternal separation from God.

Partnership of Women and Men in Ministry

We believe the Bible teaches that God created men and women and they equally bear His image (Genesis 1:27). God's intention was for them to share oneness and community (Genesis 2:23-24), even as the Godhead experiences oneness within the Trinity. Each had a direct relationship with God and they shared jointly the responsibilities of rearing children and having dominion over the created order (Genesis 1:26-28). However, human oneness was shattered by the Fall. The struggle for power and the desire to "rule over" another is part of the result of human sin. Genesis 3:16 is a prediction of the effects of the Fall rather than a prescription of God's ideal order.

It is God's intention for his children to experience the oneness that exists between the Father and the Son (John 17:11, 20-23). This means that old divisions and hierarchies between genders and races are not to be tolerated in the church, where all are "one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

In the formation of the church at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on women and men alike, as had been predicted long before the coming of Christ (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:18). In the New Testament, women as well as men exercise prophetic and priestly functions (Acts 2:17-18; I Corinthians 11:4-5; I Peter 2:9-10). Further, the Spirit bestows gifts on all members of the New Community sovereignly, without giving anyone preferential treatment based on gender (Acts 2:1-21; I Corinthians 12:7,11). Every believer is to offer her or his gifts for the benefit of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:4-8; I Peter 4:10-11). To prevent believers from exercising their spiritual gifts is to quench the work of the Spirit.

Baptism – Adult

At Open Door, the Bible is the source of our beliefs, including our views on baptism. Throughout the New Testament, baptism is the means by which followers of Christ are identified.

We believe baptism is an important and vital step in the formation of Christ in us. Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:13-17) and commanded all who believe in him to be baptized (Matthew 28:19-20). Baptism is an act of obedience to the command of Christ, practiced by individuals who are fully devoted followers. It is a public profession of your faith that signifies our union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection and our fellowship with his church. In the New Testament, when a person believed in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, he or she was baptized.

Baptism does not produce salvation in the person being baptized because salvation comes through faith in Christ. "So through baptism, we were buried with Him in death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glorious power, so we too should live an entirely new life" (Romans 6:4; II Corinthians 5:17)

We believe the immersion mode of baptism best illustrates the work of Christ. While validating the convictions of Christians who have a different understanding, the only form of baptism we practice is believers' baptism by immersion. We invite those who have been baptized as infants to re-affirm their baptism through immersion. When infants are baptized, the intent of their parents is to bring them up in the Christian faith and life so they will become a follower of Christ. A believers' baptism reaffirms a parents' original desire for their child's life and expresses the individual's choice to follow Christ.

Baptism - Child

Throughout the Bible there are several references to children, the development of their faith and capacity to believe. We desire and pray that children will make a decision to believe in Christ. A child's decision to believe in Christ is not diminished by his or her age or childlike faith. Parents and guardians have a responsibility to affirm a decision that is appropriate for a child's stage of faith development. When a child expresses a sincere desire to be baptized, serious consideration needs to be given to their desire.

Child Dedication

We believe that child dedication is an invitation to the Spirit of God to work in the heart and life of a child, to bring him or her to faith in Christ. Dedication does not produce salvation, but is the beginning of the journey toward faith. For Christian parents, child dedication is a sacred act of intentionally placing their child in the hands of the loving God. By dedicating their child they are affirming that only in God will their child find fullness of life.

In the Bible we find parents bringing their children to Jesus. He held them, prayed for them, and told his disciples to welcome them. We believe that bringing a child to others in the faith community for prayer and blessing affirms the importance of the relationship between family and the church. As a church we desire to bless children and stand with a parents desire to see their child grow in faith and the knowledge of the Lord. We pray with families for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to raise their children in love and truth.

The Sanctity of Human Life

Church of the Open Door firmly believes that all life is sacred and is, in its broadest definition, prolife. The fetus, infant, child, youth, adult, elderly, disabled, variety of races, poor, rich - all humans born and unborn, are bearers of God's image. We support personal and social responsibility for all human life.

Marriage and Sexual Purity

Church of the Open Door believes that marriage is sacred and represents the relationship between Christ and the believer (Ephesians 5:22-33). Therefore, marriage can only exist within the bonds of moral commitment and be sustained in an environment of purity and holiness. The heterosexual union expresses the plan of God for marriage and expresses the nature of God.

We believe that sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage is sin. God's plan for a strong marriage requires living within the Biblical boundaries of moral fidelity. We also believe that singles are to live out their lives within the Biblical boundaries of abstinence.

Divorce and Remarriage

Because God has established marriage as an indissoluble union, and since it is an earthly copy of the relationship between God and His people, it is to be kept inviolate. However, because of the fallenness of human nature, the Scriptures permit divorce in the following cases as an accommodation to human sin for the protection of the innocent party:

- Divorce for the cause of immorality with the understanding that the obligation to maintain or reinstate the marriage may not be imposed upon the betrayed spouse.
- Divorce for desertion desertion being defined as behavior equivalent to abandonment of the marriage relationship. In such cases, the betrayed or abandoned spouse is not bound. He or she is free to remarry in the Lord (though seeking repentance and reconciliation should always be the first recourse).

The remarriage of believers may not be approved when:

- Divorce is being used as a vehicle to seek a different mate, since such pre-intent makes the divorce adulterous.
- There is no evidence of repentance and brokenness over the circumstances that caused the divorce.
- Restoration of the original marriage remains a viable option.

The above concerns do not apply to divorces that have occurred before conversion.

In light of the above, each case of divorce or remarriage is dealt with on an individual basis from the perspective of God's inexhaustible capacity to forgive human sin and to restore broken lives. Church of the Open Door believes that a new relationship should not be pursued until the potential of a healthy reconciliation has been exhausted and time for personal recovery has passed. Therefore, we recommend that premarital counseling and class process not begin until at least one year has elapsed from the time the divorce was made (legally) final. We strongly encourage couples to go through a divorce recovery program before seeking enrollment in remarital education.

Christian Giving

In the Old Testament book of Genesis, chapter 14, Abraham personified the spirit of giving that is taught in both the Old and New Testaments. We have come to refer to this spirit or attitude toward giving as the "spirit of the tithe," and it is characterized by the following:

1. A belief that everything I have belongs to God.

Abraham said, "Lord God most high, possessor of heaven and earth, everything I have belongs to you...." In this spirit, Abraham gave a tenth of what he had to the Lord because a tenth in that culture was symbolic of the whole. The Scripture teaches that we are caretakers of the earth and its resources which belong to God, and we will be held accountable for how we use these gifts.

In the Old Testament God required the Israelites to give a considerable amount, much of it the first fruits of their harvest, to symbolize their gratitude, their dependence, and their trust in Him to provide for them. This discipline of giving was designed to keep their devotion centered on God as their loving provider, rather than on the material things themselves which lead to idolatry and greed. This required giving was also the means by which the needs of the people as a nation were provided for.

In the New Testament this principle of giving remains the same. The parables of Jesus repeatedly illustrate that we are not owners but stewards and heirs, entrusted with the

resources of the kingdom of God. We will be held accountable for how we manage these gifts. The discipline of giving continues to keep our focus on God as our loving provider and our only hope both spiritually and physically, and breaks the bondage of materialism (idolatry) and greed. The discipline of giving a tithe is not for God's benefit, but for ours. God has need of nothing, but he wants us to be in relationship with Him and with others. Giving generously and sacrificially reconnects us to our dependence on God and His gifts to us; it also connects us with the needs and lives of others.

In the New Testament, the discipline of giving is also the means through which the needs of the people in the community of faith are met. We are commanded to care and provide for one another, for our spiritual leaders, and for the poor. What is not needed to provide and care for our families is to be used to provide for and minister to the needs of others, the church, and the advancement of the kingdom of God.

This belief has practical applications for how we live as believers. First, we must endeavor to live simply, and without debt as much as possible so that we are free to give and to go where God calls us. Second, we give, not only of our money, but also of our time, our talents, our expertise, our bodily strength and energy in service to God, who gave all of Himself to us. Third, we give priority in giving to the church as the community or family that cares for us, like we care for our own families, and we give to other organizations and individuals seeking to minister to the needs of others so that the sacrificial giving message of the Gospel is declared in both word and deed. Fourth, a very practical, legitimate, biblical way to affirm and maintain this "spirit of the tithe" is to tithe - to give a tenth as a symbol of the whole.

2. A celebratory attitude of gratitude.

As Romans 12:1 instructs, we give everything we have - our very selves - in response to the great mercy and love of God which He pours out on us in Jesus Christ. For a believer the act of giving is one of deep thanksgiving and praise. It is an acknowledgment and celebration of our dependent relationship with God and his generous and extravagant provision. It is an expression of our faith and an act of worship.

Conflict in the Church

Elders, staff, lay leaders, members, and attendees of Church of the Open Door may experience relational conflict within the community at some time. Conflict is a normal part of healthy, growing relationships and is an opportunity for personal and community growth and transformation. However, if not handled in a direct, humble and prayerful manner, conflict can bring division within the community of faith and discredit the name of Christ in the eyes of the wider community.

It is expected that all who attend or participate in ministry at Church of the Open Door deal with conflict in a manner consistent with Jesus' command in Matthew 18:15-20. Generally, grievances should be dealt with directly and privately between the parties involved before others are brought into confidence regarding the situation. No person should participate in a discussion regarding a conflict without first checking to see if the parties directly involved have attempted to resolve it. All rumors and potentially damaging second-hand information should be checked out directly.

If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached through direct interaction, then the person seeking resolution should ask a lay minister or pastor who has some relationship or authority relative to the other individual, for assistance in resolving the issue.

church of the opendoor

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