



**Principles of Doctrine,
Government, and
Practice**

Purpose of the Church

The church exists to glorify God through the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) in the spirit of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39). The commission is fulfilled as disciples of Jesus Christ are made and grow in their relationship with Him. God is glorified as we manifest His presence as we do His work (2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

Core Values

At the outset of Salem Chapel, five core values were established as the priorities for this ministry. A fuller statement is available upon request.

1. *Proclaiming the authority of God's word without apology*
(2 Timothy 4:1-5; Hebrews 4:12)
2. *Boldly sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.*
(Matthew 9:36-38; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 6:19-20)
3. *Lifting high the name of Jesus Christ in worship*
(Mark 12:30; John 4:23-24, 12:32)
4. *Believing firmly in the power of prayer*
(Jeremiah 33:3; Ephesians 6:18; James 5:16)
5. *Loving our neighbors as ourselves*
(Mark 12:31; Matthew 25:40; James 2:15-17)

DOCTRINE

God

We believe in the only true God (John 17:3), often referred to as “YHWH” (the LORD) in the Old Testament and “God” in the New Testament. He created all things (Revelation 4:11) and upholds all things by the Word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). In Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). He is a God of truth and without iniquity, He is just and right (Deuteronomy 32:4), and He shall judge the world (Psalm 9:8).

We believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, having precisely the same nature, attributes, and perfections, and are worthy of precisely the same homage, confidence, and obedience (Mark 12:29; John 1:1-4; Acts 4:3-4).

Jesus Christ

We believe in the total deity and sinlessness of the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe He is the manifestation of God in the flesh. We believe He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. We believe Him to be true God and true man (John 1:1, 1:14, 1:18, 14:8-9; 1 Timothy 3:16).

Holy Spirit

We believe in the total deity of the Holy Spirit and that His ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:14). The Holy Spirit regenerates the sinner upon belief in Christ, baptizing the

believer into one body of which Christ is the head. The Holy Spirit indwells, guides, instructs, fills, comforts, and empowers the believer for godly living (Mark 13:11; John 14:26; John 16:13; Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 6:19). The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, of God's righteousness, and of coming judgment (John 16:8-11).

Scriptures

We believe the Scriptures of the Old Testament and New Testament are verbally inspired, breathed out by God, and inerrant in their original writings. We believe the 66 books of the Old Testament and the New Testament are God's complete and sufficient revelation and therefore carry God's authority for the total well-being of mankind (Psalm 119:97-104, 119:160; Matthew 5:18; John 5:46-47, 10:35; 2 Timothy 3:15-16).

Man

We believe man was created in innocence under the law of his Maker but by voluntarily transgressing fell from his sinless and happy state. Consequently, all mankind is sinful. All people are sinners not only by inheritance but by their own choice and therefore are under just condemnation without defense or excuse. We believe that without exception every man and every woman is totally depraved and needs a Savior (Genesis 3:1-6; John 8:24; Romans 1:18-20, 1:32, 3:10-19, 5:12).

Salvation

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice. We believe that each person who by faith receives Him as personal Savior is justified on the basis of Jesus Christ's shed blood on Calvary. Each person who receives Christ as personal Savior is born again of the Holy Spirit and thereby becomes eternally secure as a child of God. We believe the Holy Spirit baptizes each believing person into the body of Christ at the moment of salvation and that there is no second baptism of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:37-39, 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Resurrection

We believe in the resurrection of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, His ascension into heaven, and His present ministry for us as High Priest and Advocate (Acts 1:3, 1:9; Hebrews 7:25-26).

Heaven, Hell, and the Return of Christ

We believe in the "blessed hope": the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ. His return has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost. The saved are raised to eternal, conscious bliss in heaven (Matthew 25:34; John 14:2-3; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Revelation 2:7), and the lost are raised to eternal torment in hell in conscious separation from God (Matthew 8:12, 10:28, 13:49-50; Mark 9:47-48; Luke 12:5; Revelation 21:8).

Church

Upon accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, a believer becomes part of His body, which is the church. There is one church universal, composed of all those throughout the world who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The Scriptures command believers to gather in order to devote themselves to worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, observance of the ordinances (baptism and communion), fellowship, service to the body through the development and use of talents and gifts, and outreach to the world in fulfillment of the

command of Christ to make disciples of all believers (Ephesians 5:23; Romans 12:1; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 10:23-25).

Wherever God's people meet regularly in obedience to this command, there is the local expression of the church – under the oversight of elders and other supportive leadership. The church's members are to work together in love and unity, intent on the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Missions

Realizing that the cause of Christ extends beyond any one local fellowship, we commit ourselves to an ongoing ministry of extending the call of Christ to make disciples around the world (Matthew 28:19-20).

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Two Offices: Elder and Deacon

The Bible's teaching on the subject of two church offices is found in 1 Timothy 3:1-16 and Titus 1:5-9. Although there are multiple terms used for the offices of the church, i.e. bishop, overseer, elder and deacon, analysis of these terms indicates that bishop, overseer, and elder are used interchangeably.

Elder Qualifications (Titus 1:6-9)

Above reproach	Uncontentious
Able to teach	Respectable
Husband to one wife	Free from the love of money
Not addicted to wine	Hospitable
Temperate	Manages own household well
Not antagonistic	Not a new convert
Prudent	

Elder Duties

The Elder Board is be made up of vocational Elders, who are employed by the church and comprise the Pastoral Staff ("Pastors"), and non-vocational Elders. In keeping with the clear biblical injunctions regarding authority structures within the church, only men will be considered for the office of Elder. All Elders have responsibility for:

Doctrine. Ensuring that the doctrine of the church is biblical; all doctrinal issues in the church will be settled by the Elder Board.

Direction. Ensuring that the direction of the church is consistent with the Salem Chapel statement of purpose and our Core Values; and

Discipline and Care. Administering in love and humility the process of church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18:15-20, Galatians 6:1-4, Titus 3:10, 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, 1 Timothy 5:17-25, 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, and Romans 16:17.

The Pastoral Staff has day-to-day responsibility for the work of the Church under the direction of the Sr. Pastor while the non-vocational elders are charged to care for the Sr. Pastor and his family, evaluate his performance, and deal with any employment issues related to the Sr. Pastor.

Plurality of Elders

The Scriptures teach that a plurality of elders governed individual New Testament churches (Acts 14:23, 20:28; Titus 1:5; Philippians 1:1). The Scripture does not mention any congregations featuring a stand-alone pastor and leader. A plurality of godly Elders, exercising their individual giftedness, squares with the Scripture's teaching that wisdom is found in a multitude of godly counselors (Proverbs 11:4, 12:15, 15:22, 19:20, 24:6). This truth does not eliminate the possibility and likelihood that one or more Elders will stand out from the others as more public in their ministries or more influential in their workings on the Elder Board.

Senior Pastor

The Salem Chapel Senior Pastor automatically serves as an Elder and, because of his public presence and responsibility before the congregation, may be considered "first among equals" as a member of the Elder Board. The Senior Pastor should be gifted primarily as a preacher/teacher and as a leader.

Deacon Qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

Individual of dignity
Not double tongued
Not addicted to wine
Not greedy for dishonest gain
Hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience
First tested as servants

Deacon Duties

The word "deacon" come from the Greek word *diakonos* and usually simply means "servant." The Bible teaches that Deacons were engaged in serving and in assisting the Elders in the work of the ministry. At Salem Chapel, Deacons are individuals who serve in a variety of leadership roles in the Church that influence both operations and congregational care.

ISSUES FOR CLARIFICATION

Assimilation and Church Membership

We believe in the importance of serving the body of Christ by offering clear paths for people to start and develop healthy and growing relationships with others in the church body. We value an intentional plan to help every interested person enjoy godly relationships in the church. Church membership is a by-product of people who are growing in Christ and who grasp the importance of serving the Lord by using their gifts to serve others in the local church.

In order to implement the principles of accountability and commitment to the local body of Christ, as defined in the New Testament and practiced in the early churches, Salem Chapel recognizes the need for formal membership. Membership at Salem Chapel is for all who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and have visibly demonstrated that commitment through believer's baptism.

Membership Commitment

The level of the commitment we make will determine the effectiveness of our joining together. In a society where so few make commitments and fewer still keep them, Salem Chapel is seeking a group of people who are determined to know the joy Christ intended for His body, the church. To this end members of Salem Chapel must be willing to live in submission to our doctrinal statement. Further they must be willing to abide by the entire membership commitment.

1. I have, by faith, become a follower of Jesus Christ and I have been baptized as a visible way of demonstrating that commitment.
2. I will, with God's help, seek to demonstrate a transforming life that is grounded in Christ and exhibits the Four Qualities of a Disciple: Know. Grow. Share. Serve.
3. I will neither criticize nor listen to criticism concerning any member(s) of the body and will, when personally offended, speak directly and lovingly with those involved.
4. I will support the ministries of Salem Chapel (a) by serving in this local body and (b) by faithfully giving financially back to the Lord a biblical portion of my increase.
5. I will submit to the leadership and discipline of this local church and promise to support the beliefs, vision, and values of this church.
6. I have read and agree with the Salem Chapel Principles of Doctrine, Government, and Practice, and I embrace wholeheartedly the core values of Salem Chapel.

Baptism and Communion

We believe that Christian baptism by immersion in water is a public identification with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Although baptism is not required for salvation, it is commanded of all believers and is for believers only (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38, 41). Scripture shows that a person was baptized after personally receiving forgiveness of sin by accepting Jesus Christ. The waters of baptism are a symbol of death, burial, and resurrection to newness of life that happens when a person becomes a new creation in Christ (Colossians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:1-4).

Communion is the commemoration by believers of Christ's death and a reminder—through the elements—of the Savior's broken body and shed blood. Communion is to be a time of confession of sin and should be preceded by careful self-examination (Acts 4:13; Romans 6:3-6; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29).

Creation and God's Sovereignty

We believe God created the universe and that, before He created the universe, nothing except God existed (Genesis 1; Exodus 31:17; Psalm 33:6-9; Acts 17:24; Hebrews 11:3; Colossians 1:16). God chose to create the universe and all that is in it to reveal His glory, divine nature, eternal power, infinite wisdom, and supreme authority (Isaiah 43:7; Psalm 19:1-2; Jeremiah 10:12; Romans 1:20; Revelation 4:11).

We believe that all people are descendants of Adam and Eve, whom God created personally and individually and as complete human beings (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7, 2:21-22; 1 Corinthians 11:8-9). The fall of Adam and Eve infected all people with sin and death, but the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives the opportunity to receive God's gift of eternal life (Romans 5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

God rules over His creation and cares about and is involved in the lives of individual people (Job 12:10; Acts 17:25; Colossians 1:17; Ephesians 4:6).

Salvation and Security

It is God's divine decision to save a person (John 6:37, 6:44, 6:65; Romans 8:29-30, 9:11-18; Acts 13:48, 16:14; Ephesians 1:4-6, 2:8-9; 1 Peter 1:3), and it is God's kindness, forbearance, and patience that lead that person to repentance (Romans 2:4). The Bible also teaches that each person is responsible to embrace or reject Jesus as Savior and Lord and that God welcomes all who come to Him by faith apart from works (Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 15:7, 20:9-18; John 6:37, 7:37; Romans 10:9-13; Acts 16:30-34, 17:30). Both of these two truths—God's sovereignty in salvation and man's decision to embrace Christ—are taught in the Scriptures. Their co-existence is a mystery and is completely understood only in the mind of our omniscient God (Isaiah 55:8; Romans 11:33-34).

All glory for the salvation of every believer belongs to God alone (Romans 3:21-31; Ephesians 1:7-9, 2:8-9; Jude 1:24-25).

Those who are born of God's Spirit through Jesus Christ persevere in the faith (John 15:4-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:10-13; 1 John 4:13; 2 John 9). God is faithful to His people, empowering them to persevere in the faith (1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 1 John 2:19-20).

We believe that everyone who is born of God's Spirit through Jesus Christ is assured of salvation from the moment of conversion (Ephesians 1:13-14). This assurance relies on God's decisive and faithful grace rather than on the works of the Christian. Obedience, good works, and fruit-bearing do not earn or retain the believer's salvation but indicate the reality of the person's love of Christ and profession of faith (Luke 6:46; John 14:21; James 2:17-18).

Eternal security in salvation relies on the Lord's guarantee of each believer's adoption as His son or daughter (Galatians 4:4-7), His seal of the believer by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14), and the conviction that God gives the Holy Spirit to each believer as a down payment toward future bliss in heaven (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

A person who professes genuine faith in Christ immediately becomes His possession (Luke 23:42-43; Acts 2:40-41, 16:30-34; Romans 10:13), and nothing can snatch that person out of His hands (John 10:27-29). Having been bought with the price of Jesus Christ's crucifixion as complete payment for sin, Christians are not their own. They are Christ's possession (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). This assurance is absolutely certain, reserved in heaven, and protected by God's unlimited power (1 Peter 1:4-5).

Spiritual Gifts

While we believe that the Scriptures do not teach that certain gifts have ceased, they indicate that use of the gifts vary according to the need that each gift meets. We do not believe that particular spiritual gift(s) are essential or prove the presence of the Holy Spirit. We seek to emphasize the more excellent way of love as well as zeal for the more edifying gifts (Titus 3:5; Ephesians 4:11-12; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-5, 12:11-13, 12:19, 14:26; Galatians 5:25; Hebrews 4:1-4).

Process of Sanctification and Maturity

Jesus said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). We believe that true life is found only in the Gospel of Jesus. He bled, died, and rose to life so that we would be able to receive a new life in Him. Those who follow Him embrace these four qualities (the “Four Qualities of a Disciple”):

- Know** – Knows Christ by experiencing God through Biblical teaching and worship.
- Grow** – Grows in Christ through personal study and application of Biblical truth.
- Share** – Shares Christ in Biblical community and shares the gospel with the lost.
- Serve** – Serves Christ by faithfully shouldering the load of kingdom ministry.

The person who exhibits these qualities of a disciple will experience significant growth in personal sanctification and, therefore, will experience a closer personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:28).

We are committed to multiplying the godly characteristics of leaders’ lives into others (2 Timothy 2:2). This multiplication of ministry is key to the healthy growth of the church. We believe the disciples of Jesus Christ should minister to one another in the local church, rather than one or a small number of professional pastors bearing total responsibility to care for the entire congregation. God has given spiritual gifts to all of His people to provide mutual ministry in the context of the healthy and strong local church (Ephesians 4:11-12).