

# MissionNorthwest

Resourcing and developing churches that connect people with Jesus Christ

## Commonly Held Essentials

Originally Adopted at the 2002 Region Biennial,  
Revised by the Region Board, September 3, 2020

### Introduction

Confessions in the Baptist tradition declare the church's faith with conviction, joy and freedom. Baptists historically emphasize the right of individuals to interpret the Scripture as led by the Holy Spirit within the context of the community of faith, the priesthood of the believer, and freedom of religion. However, this freedom does not mean there is an absence of agreed upon doctrines that we cherish and believe. In an age in which many forces increasingly threaten to erode orthodox Christian doctrines, it is incumbent on believers to clarify the non-negotiables of their faith.

Our conviction is that salvation is God's free gift of grace and is received through simple faith in Jesus Christ and repentance of sin. Salvation is not the result of cognitive assent to doctrinal statements.

### Purpose

The following affirmations are an attempt to articulate doctrinal essentials in the midst of an increasingly pluralistic religious landscape. We believe that these central Christian tenets are necessary for maintaining sound doctrine.

As inheritors of a Baptist tradition, we recognize that confessions do not replace or supplement the Bible and its authority. Nor are they a substitute for the living, dynamic relationship, which we have in Jesus Christ. Additionally, we invite the individual believer to choose other words so as to express the following beliefs in a personal manner. This confession attempts only to confirm some of what is central to the faith, and by intent it is silent on less weighty matters and peripheral issues. However, it is our conviction that what is written here represents a consensus of doctrine, which will aid in guarding the deposit of truth, which we believe is revealed in Scripture.

### Essential Beliefs

**Trinity** – We worship the triune God of the Bible, who is eternally one God in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We affirm that the Father is sovereign over all and that God's grace is uniquely expressed and realized through His incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. We affirm the Lordship of Christ over the world, the church and all human beings. Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord, calling us to joyously surrender to His purposes and will. We are called to live by the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit, and proclaim the Good News of Jesus, the Messiah King, and His reconciling grace through His atoning death and resurrection.

Colossians 1:13-29

Philippians 2:5-11

Galatians 5:22-23

1 Corinthians 12 & 14

Ephesians 1:19-23

John 16:5-15

1 John 5:7

**Scripture** – We believe that the Bible, composed of the Old and New Testaments, is the divinely inspired Word of God. As our final authority, it is trustworthy for faith and practice when interpreted responsibly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the community of faith. It is the perfect standard for all human conduct and behavior. The essentials necessary for our salvation and the basics of how to conduct our lives are clearly revealed in it. The primary purpose of the Bible is to point to and glorify Jesus Christ, the living King of all, and Lord of the Church.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

2 Timothy 2:15

2 Peter 1:20-21

Deuteronomy 4:1-2

**Church** – The church, as the Body of Christ, is manifested most visibly in local congregations – communities of faith – which consist of regenerated believers with Christ as their Lord and Savior. Such believers claim a personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ, follow the Lord in believer's baptism, share in the Lord's Supper, gather regularly for worship and covenant together for witness, mutual edification and care giving. The church is the presence of the living Christ in the world, led, empowered and gifted by the Holy Spirit to continue His mission on earth. Local congregations associate among themselves to experience together the oneness in Christ, and responsibly function as members of one greater body.

Matthew 16:15-19

Romans 10:9-10

Ephesians 1:22-23

Romans 12

Ephesians 4

Acts 1:8

Ephesians 5:23

Acts 2:41

1 Corinthians 12-14

Acts 16:30-33

Hebrews 10:23-25

**Mission** – God's love in Christ for people motivates His people to love others, to love one another in the faith and to care for God's creation. Christ's love compels His followers to live and make decisions in accordance with His design in obedience to His Word and will. The heart of God, reflected in both the Old and New Testaments, is to create a redeemed community that loves and serves Him with all their hearts, minds, and bodies. This conviction is the foundation of our commitment to fulfill the mandate of the Great Commission. We will continue to be a mission people, carrying the Gospel to our nation and the world.

Mark 12:18-31

Matthew 28:18-20

John 15 – 17

1 John 4:21

Acts 1:8

Romans 12:1-2

Mark 16:15-16

Luke 24:48-49

2 Corinthians 5:14

James 2:14-19

**Human Beings, Fall & Sin** – We believe God created humankind, male and female, in the divine image. Through Adam's fall all became sinful, lost and condemned. Each person by deliberate choice participates in sin and is in need of redemption and transformation through Christ's death and resurrection.

Genesis 1:26-30

Romans 1:19-32

Ephesians 2:1-22

Romans 5:12-21

**Salvation** – God offers forgiveness of sin and justification through faith in Christ Jesus apart from works. Such redemption is received by human individuals as God's gift upon

repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ enabling us to participate as disciples in Christ's reign as a present reality and a future hope.

Matthew 28:18-20

Acts 1:8

Ephesians 2:8-22

1 John 1:6-2:11

**Last Things** – Jesus Christ will return visibly at which time He will raise the dead and judge all people. Believers will enjoy eternal fellowship with God as they participate in the fullness of His eternal reign, while unbelievers will suffer eternal separation from God.

Matt. 24: 29-31

Matthew 25:31-46

1 Thess. 4:14-18

Rev. 20:4-6, 11-15

## History

The original statements were created in 2001 and 2002 by representatives from churches in Washington, Idaho, Utah and Montana. In the wake of the division that occurred within ABC of the Northwest, it was felt a reaffirmation of what we in ABC/Northwest, now Mission Northwest, held in common was needed.

Initially meeting at Ross Point Camp in Post Falls, ID, they drafted the statements together. These were then sent to all the churches of the then American Baptist Churches of the Northwest, now Mission Northwest. Every church had opportunity to respond, send suggestions and feedback. The statements were revised using the input from churches, and the revisions were sent back to the churches. After additional revisions, the final version was presented to churches meeting in biennial session in May 2002. These were adopted by a 93% affirmative vote.

In the years subsequent to these events, other important essentials have been identified for inclusion. Meeting during the summer of 2020, the Ministry Standards Team of Mission Northwest discussed the need for additions. After looking at several documents expressing similar convictions, additions based on "A Confession of Our Faith" from the Ministers Council of the ABC/PSW (1994) were proposed to the Region Board of Mission Northwest.