



MOSAIC CHURCH

**Affirmed Categories
of Belief and Practice**

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INTRODUCTION

Within the life of any local church there have always been and will always be a need for clarity on a number of topics, beliefs, and practices. While each belief and practice is important and requires clarity in some form, the most foundational piece is the way in which a church discerns the level of clarity to provide and the prioritization given to each topic, belief, or practice.

There have always been beliefs that have created distinctions within historic Christianity. However, not every belief and every doctrine is meant to be held with the same level of conviction or should be used equally to draw lines of division within the Church. Jesus' prayer for us as his people is that we would be united as he and the Father are united.

The hope of this document is to bring clarity to the ways in which the elders of Mosaic Church seek to shepherd our church toward Jesus through a means of discipleship that emphasizes Core Beliefs, provides humble discernment on Distinctive Beliefs, and is generous with Open Handed Beliefs.

DETERMINING BELIEF CATEGORY

Each belief a church holds needs to be weighed both individually and with a consistent standard as to which category the belief will fall in. Eric Thoennes provides a helpful perspective in his essay on categorizing belief and doctrine from the ESV Study Bible. He writes, “Where an issue falls within these categories should be determined by weighing the cumulative force of at least seven considerations (ESV Study Bible):

- Biblical clarity
- Relevance to the character of God
- Relevance to the essence of the gospel
- Biblical frequency and significance (how often in Scripture it is taught, and what weight Scripture places upon it)
- Effect on other doctrines
- Consensus among Christians (past and present)
- Effect on personal and church life

Determining which of these categories any particular belief falls into might vary between local churches and denominations. Therefore, it is important to handle the process of discerning which category a belief lands in with humility, prayer, and with consistent criteria, such as that listed above.

CATEGORIES OF BELIEF

CORE BELIEFS

Core Beliefs are doctrines and beliefs central to historic Christianity. These doctrines and beliefs are either vital to understand the Gospel, would hinder placing saving faith in the work and person of Jesus, or that by rejecting them would reveal a life, heart, and mind not surrendered to Jesus’ teachings.

TRIUNE GOD

We believe in one God who exists eternally in three co-equal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

HOLY SCRIPTURE

We believe that God has spoken and continues to speak in and through Scripture, the only infallible and sufficiently clear rule and authority for Christian faith, thought, and life.

HUMAN BEINGS

We believe that God created humans in his own image as male and female, both with inherent dignity and the calling to rule with him.

GOD'S DESIRE FOR HUMANITY

We believe that God's calling for humanity to rule with him is rooted in his desire for a relationship with his image bearers, one in which we would come to know and love him with our whole being and be moved to love other image bearers as the natural outflow of experiencing his divine love. From this design, God connected our calling to include expanding his image across the land through human reproduction, which is the fruitful multiplication of image bearers. In order to accomplish this fruitful multiplication, God crafted the covenant of marriage founded on the truth that men and women were created in such a way, for those who are given the calling, that one man and one woman would be united as one together within this covenant calling. This establishes God's divine ideal and standard of human sexual expression for men and women. Jesus would later expand on God's calling for humanity when he commissioned his followers toward fruitful multiplication by making disciples of all people groups as they bring the gospel good news of redemption and restoration to all image bearers.

FALLENNESS

We believe that the original goodness defined by God for all creation, including humanity, has been corrupted by sin. Sin infected and replaced the original and continual desires of all humanity, from the first humans to today. This replaced desire has led humanity to define good and evil on their own terms, rather than listening and obeying the desire of their Creator God and therefore leaving them without the ability to restore right relationship with him, rule with him, or find life on their own apart from him.

JESUS CHRIST

We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who became human for the salvation of humanity. He was born of the virgin Mary and existed as one person with two natures: truly God and truly man. He is the only Mediator between God and humanity.

THE ATONING WORK OF CHRIST

We believe that God, who is rich in mercy towards the undeserving has made gracious provision for human wrongdoing in the gift of Jesus' once-for-all sufficient and perfect sacrificial death on the cross. It is wholly by grace, not our own works or accomplishments, that we have been forgiven; it is wholly by Jesus' shed blood, not by our own sweat and tears, that we have been cleansed.

THE GOSPEL

We believe that the gospel is the good news that Jesus has come to usher in the Kingdom of Heaven and restore humanity to rule with him. To restore humanity, he paid the debt of death owed for humanity's sin on the cross and in that moment, Jesus made a way for humanity to return back to life with God where there had previously been no hope. God poured out his grace in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, so that through Jesus alone humanity might have restoration / restored relationship with God. Now humanity can return to God by repenting of their sin of unbelief, surrendering to him as Lord, and placing their faith, hope, and trust in the finished work of Jesus. All those whom he redeems and restores are fully adopted into his forever family. Because the image of God which had been marred at the fall has been renewed, his children are now empowered to live earthly lives with restored purpose. Justified by the work of Jesus alone, humanity has been restored to rule with him and enjoy his presence for all eternity.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the giver of life, first creating and sustaining life throughout the cosmos and now providing God's own life to the church as he dwells within each human who has surrendered their lives to Jesus. He is the invisible, personal presence of God that guides believers into a deepening understanding of what it looks like to love God and love people and convicts believers of sin, in thought, word, action, and inaction. He also provides comfort and strength to them as he forms them into new creatures with hearts oriented to the light and life of the Kingdom of Heaven and to peace and justice on Earth.

THE CHURCH

We believe that the unified, holy, global, and historic Church is the visible advancement of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth and is composed of every person who has been redeemed and restored by Jesus to the Father through the ages, regardless of geographical location, Christian denomination or cultural tradition. Jesus, the Son of the living God, is the Church's firm foundation and serves as its ultimate head and leader. Each local church serves as an embassy of the Kingdom of Heaven, an earthly place where his will is done and he is now present. He is working within the local church both through individuals and through the gathering of believers who come together in his name to proclaim and spread the gospel in word and deed, and obedience to the Lord's commands to make disciples, baptize them, and celebrate the Lord's Supper.

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that these two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, are visible reminders of the past, present, and future realities of the gospel.

HOLY LIVING

We believe that believers abide with Jesus by being reminded of the gospel through participation in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, as well as through personal and corporate spiritual rhythms such as prayer, engaging with Scripture, worship, fasting, submission, fellowship, celebration, and more. As we abide with him in such ways, we grow into our new reality and restored purpose as God's holy nation, a people, who are called to discover daily what it looks like to walk in the way of Jesus through the power of the Spirit given to us by God.

LAST THINGS

We believe that in God's own time and way, the bodily risen and ascended Christ will return to consummate what he has already accomplished through his death and resurrection.

DISTINCTIVE BELIEFS

Distinctive Beliefs are doctrines and beliefs that are non-essential to historic Christianity. However, non-essential is not the same as unimportant. Their importance is rooted in their ability to clarify the level of partnership and cooperation possible between local churches and organizations. These beliefs also have an impact in the life and practice of any given local church. For Distinctive Beliefs, it should be recognized these are beliefs that have historically led to debate and discussion within the church, with opposing sides prayerfully weighing the full counsel of Scripture, desiring to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and leading to hold differing viewpoints. With this in mind, it is vital that in the area of Distinctive Beliefs we study the evidence of both sides with a humble hermeneutic (interpretive approach to the Scriptures) and seek to love and respect those who hold a differing position.

DISTINCTIVE PRACTICES

Distinctive Practices are the practical implications of Distinctive Beliefs. As a church, we do not believe that these practices are essential for salvation or are exclusive in experiencing a life of flourishing by following Jesus. In fact, there are many wonderful local churches that would affirm the same Core Beliefs but hold different distinctives. It is necessary to clarify these Distinctive Practices as they directly impact the life and ministry of Mosaic Church and guide how it is led and directed. These have been prayed over, studied, and rooted in the historical tradition of a large section of the historic and global Church. Anyone who becomes a part of the Biblical Community within Mosaic Church should expect that these distinctives will be maintained in all ministry environments at Mosaic Church and it is expected that no one teaches contrary to them within their respective ministry environments.

On the following pages you will find a summary, but not necessarily exhaustive list, of some of the notable Distinctive Beliefs that carry significant Distinctive Practices at Mosaic Church:

ON GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN SALVATION

As a local church, we hold to the view of salvation historically known as the five solas of the Protestant Reformation, rooted in the Scriptures. The five solas state that followers of Jesus are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed by Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone. Since our salvation is by God's pursuit of us and not of our own works, we hold to the view that God pursues those whom he calls to himself to be his representatives and witnesses to the world of the truth and beauty of the Gospel.

This practically affects the way teaching, discipleship, and counseling is handled at Mosaic, with an emphasis on God's saving and sustaining work over our own human abilities. It also affects the approach to ministry here at Mosaic. For example, not viewing our Sunday Gatherings as the ultimate venue for evangelism (the mindset of leaving Gospel proclamation exclusively to those who lead from the stage) but instead viewing the Gathering as a place of equipping the church to go out and make disciples every day in their own unique contexts with the knowledge that the Spirit of God is active and working within each believer and he alone is the one that truly saves.

ON THE ORDINANCES OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

As a local church, we have been given the responsibility to steward the ordinances of both the Lord's Supper, otherwise known as Communion, and Baptism.

In the Gospels, we see that the Lord's Supper was first initiated by Jesus, deriving from the Passover meal that occurred the night before his arrest and execution. We believe this was instituted to be a sacred remembrance of what Jesus was going to accomplish on the Cross as well as a portrayal of the church's present and future communion both with God and with one another. This practice has only been made possible by Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection life and in light of that, we also then believe that the communion meal is for all who have surrendered their lives to Jesus as their Lord, Savior, and Teacher and seek communion with him to participate and partake in together. Therefore, we practice open communion, meaning regardless of your faith tradition or current home church, every follower of Jesus is welcome to the table for the Lord's Supper with us. We only ask for each believer to spend time in repentance before the Lord in advance of coming to the Table as to ensure a posture of reflection and remembrance not just a church formality.

We hold to the understanding of Baptism as being a sacred and symbolic commissioning to declare in front of Biblical Community externally what God has already done in transforming a dead heart into new life internally. Through baptism we believe that we are symbolically being submerged with Jesus into the grave and are then raised from the dead into resurrection life with Jesus where he is now seated. With these realities in mind, we engage in baptism only for those who have made a sincere declaration of faith in the work of Jesus and are prepared to make a public declaration of this reality. In addition, we practice baptism by full immersion in water, except for medical exception, as this is what

was recorded in the Scriptures and also provides for the symbolic visual representation of the submerged death and resurrection life found in the Gospel.

ON THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

As a local church, we hold to the belief that the Spirit of God is still working, moving and active within the life of the Church through the beautiful diversity of Spiritual Gifts. The Holy Spirit comes to reside within a believer at the moment of their salvation as the seal of their adoption, the Counselor to guide them through life, and the abiding presence of God to empower them with these good gifts. These gifts are meant to be utilized to build up the Church, leading us ever closer to love and unity, and are representative of our desperate need both for God's power to work in us and through us. They also reveal our desperate need to journey through life with one another within Biblical Community.

ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

As a local church, we see structures within the Scriptures for church leadership that are rooted in principles of clarity, empowerment, and diversity. While there are many roles discussed within the early church, there are three distinct categories listed for the life of the church meant for flourishing, submission, shepherding, and empowerment. These categories are: member, deacon, elder.

As Mosaic Church, we refer to members as Covenant Partners to best reflect the significance of the commitment one is making to our particular Biblical Community. Deacons are vetted and affirmed as biblically qualified men and women whose focus and aim is to serve in high capacities within Biblical Community. Elders are biblically qualified, called, and affirmed men from within the Biblical Community who serve and shepherd the flock that God has entrusted to them.

ON MEN AND WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

As a local church, we desire to empower men and women within our local church to flourish in their full diversity of Spiritual Gifts given by the Spirit of God for the building up of the church body. This includes empowering men and women to lead, make decisions, teach, exhort, encourage, serve, demonstrate hospitality, evangelize, and disciple, to name a few. We see the vital need for both men and women to compliment one another in ministry environments as well as in all aspects of life, which derives from God's created purpose for humanity and continues through today.

Within the Scriptures, we see the role of elder as a specific role in the life of the local church reserved for biblically qualified, called, and affirmed men. In conjunction with this, we recognize in the Scriptures the authoritative teaching within the Lord's Day Gathering as a space meant to be reserved for elders, as it is the primary space for the authoritative teaching of the Scriptures and doctrine of a church. There can be and will be additional opportunities for non-elder men and women to teach on occasion in our Lord's Day Gatherings coupled with oversight and shepherding from the elders on topics where

there is a unique insight that these non-elder voices could speak to. For all other teaching environments within Mosaic Church, non-elder men and women are encouraged and utilized to build up the church body through their Giftings. Additionally, non-elder men and women can and will be invited into elder meetings to be both views and voices to provide valuable insight and perspective into decisions.

OPEN HANDED BELIEFS

Open Handed Beliefs are doctrines and beliefs that can be researched in the Scriptures and through other resources but are meant to be held more as studied opinions than firm beliefs. They are beliefs of charity within historic Christianity and are known for typically having the least amount of biblical clarity and holding little effect on personal and church life. Mosaic's elders will rarely express an official position on this category. Instead, they will encourage the church to learn from and be disciplined on these topics from a variety of perspectives while at the same time focusing the majority of their attention on the first two categories as to not get distracted with Open Handed Beliefs.

AGREEMENT ON BELIEFS FOR LIFE WITHIN MOSAIC

While the elders of Mosaic Church have affirmed these categories and definitions, the ultimate hope is to encourage cooperation, love, and unity in all things. Moreover, the elder's desire is for this church to be intentional, thoughtful, and prayerful as they study the Scriptures and are disciplined on these categories of belief and practice.

With this in mind, it is also important to give definition to spaces of membership and leadership where agreement on these various categories of beliefs is necessary for the health of the local church.

At no level of being a part of Mosaic Church is there a required agreement to any stated Open Handed Belief. Those are beliefs of humble charity and should be treated as such.

For Covenant Partners, they must be able to personally affirm that they hold the Core Beliefs as personal beliefs. They do not need to personally hold each of the Distinctive Beliefs or any stated Open Handed Beliefs as personal beliefs. However, it is important that they are aware of them for the sake of clarity and unity. If a Covenant Partner holds a differing view on a Distinctive Belief it would be unfortunate if this difference in belief would lead to hurt or frustration, and for bitterness to grow. Therefore, it is up to the individual to prayerfully weigh whether they can fully be involved and submitted to the

eldership of the local church that holds a different position on these beliefs. Along with that, while they do not need to personally agree with Mosaic's Distinctive Beliefs, they may not teach or disciple against Mosaic's positions on these issues.

For Deaconship, everything stated above for Covenant Partners applies to deacons as well. However, as servant leaders within the local church they are being watched even more intentionally as to how they live, speak, and act. Therefore, it is important that they prayerfully weigh their personal beliefs on the Distinctive Beliefs to ensure that they are able to serve and lead at the capacity and visibility of a Deacon in a way that is in line with the stated Distinctive Beliefs and Practices, strives for unity, and does not violate one's conscience.

For Eldership, all elders need to hold agreement on all Core Beliefs but are not required to have absolute agreement with each Distinctive Belief. However, for the sake of unity and direction, an elder of Mosaic Church cannot hold a personal belief that is counter to the Distinctive Beliefs or Practices of Mosaic Church. This means that they could have a slightly different understanding or nuance to the way they would phrase or approach a Distinctive Belief, but cannot hold an opposing viewpoint entirely. Ultimately, each elder is called to submit or support the existing positions on Distinctive Beliefs and Practices.