

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND DOCTRINE
OF
BANDERA METHODIST CHURCH

Bandera Methodist Church is an independent Methodist church that is committed to a Wesleyan expression of Christianity. It shall carry out its ministries and conduct its business as provided by its Bylaws. The Church may cooperate with other Christian organizations to support home and foreign missions and unite in any mutual efforts to fulfill its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, as grounded in the Great Commission found in Matthew 28: 18-20:

“Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit and teaching them all that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you until the end of the age.”

ARTICLE I – CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

1. The Holy Scripture:

We believe that the Bible is the primary authority for our faith and practice. The books of the Old and New Testaments are the primary rule and authority for faith, morals, and service, against which all other authorities must be measured.

- a. All Scripture is given by God. It is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Scripture allows man to be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- b. Scripture is not for private interpretation, but illuminated by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1: 20-21, 1 Corinthians 2: 1-16, John 14:26, John 16:13, 1 John 2:27)
- c. As God’s revelation of himself to man, the Scripture is fully sufficient and authoritative (Psalm 119: 11, 89, 105, 140)

2. God:

God, who is one, is revealed in three distinct persons.

- a. We believe there is only one God, who created all things, and nothing exists apart from Him. (Deuteronomy 6:4, Genesis 1:1, Psalm 8:3, Psalm 102:25, John 1:1-5)
- b. God’s word will accomplish His eternal purpose. (Isaiah 46:10, 55:11)
- c. God will not change His mind or repent. (Numbers 23:19)
- d. God reveals himself through the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14)

3. Jesus Christ:

We believe in the mystery of salvation through Jesus Christ. God became human in Jesus whose life, death and resurrection demonstrate God's redeeming love.

- a. He is the only son of God. (John 1:14)
- b. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. (Matthew 1:18-23)
- c. He speaks with the authority of God. (John 14:10-11)
- d. He was sinless, and died for our sins on the cross. (Hebrews 4:15, Romans 3:21-26, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- e. He was crucified, died, and was buried, and rose again on the third day. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)
- f. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God. (Luke 24:51, Acts 1:9-11, Ephesians 1:20-21)

g. He is the head of the Universal Church. (Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 5:23-24)

4. The Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit is God's present activity in our midst. When we sense God's leading, God's challenge, or God's support or comfort, it's the Holy Spirit at work.

- a. The Holy Spirit was sent by God as our helper, to live with us forever, empower us and guide us. (John 14:16-17, John 16:7-14, Acts 1:8)
- b. God's truth is revealed through the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:10-14)
- c. The Spirit of God dwells in us. (1 Corinthians 3:16)
- d. The seal of the Holy Spirit guarantees our inheritance of the Kingdom of God. (Ephesians 1: 13-14, Ephesians 4:30)
- e. The Holy Spirit enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. (Ephesians 5:18)

5. Man:

We have been made in the image of the Creator. Like God we have the capacity to love and care, to communicate, and to create.

- a. We believe that God created human beings in God's image, male and female, without sin. (Genesis 1: 26-30, Genesis 2:7)
- b. We believe that humans can choose to accept or reject a relationship with God. Free will, granted by God, resulted in sin, separating man from God. All have sinned, falling short of the glory of God. (Genesis 3:1-24, Romans 3:23)
- c. We believe that all humans need to be in relationship with God in order to be fully human. Only God's grace can bring eternal life through Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:12-21)
- d. We believe that human sexuality is a gift of God that is to be affirmed as it is exercised within the legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman. (Exodus 20:14, Matthew 19:3-9, Ephesians 5:22-33)
- e. We believe the family, composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption, is the foundational institution of human society. (1 Peter 3:1-7)
- f. We believe that life is a holy gift of God whose beginnings and endings are set by God, and that it is the particular duty of believers to protect those who may be powerless to protect themselves, including the unborn, those with disabilities or serious illness, and the aged. (Genesis 2:7, Leviticus 19:32, Jeremiah 1:5, Luke 1:41-44).

6. Salvation:

We believe salvation is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

- a. We believe we are saved by grace through faith, as the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:1-10)
- b. All who believe have the right to become children of God. (John 1:12-14)
- c. Salvation does not come through our own efforts, but because of God's mercy. (Titus 3:5)
- d. The Wesleyan concept of grace includes: 1) Prevenient grace – God at work before we know it; 2) Justifying grace – by grace we are forgiven; and 3) Sanctifying grace – grace's power over sin.

ARTICLE II – THE CHURCH

The church is the body of Christ, an extension of Christ's life and ministry in the world today. It is a community made up of all past, present, and future disciples of Christ. The church is called to worship God and to support those who participate in its life as they grow in faith.

1. **The Local Church:**

We believe the local church has the responsibility to:

- a. Stand for the fundamentals of the faith as contained in the Holy Scriptures. (1 Timothy 3:15)
- b. Teach the Holy Scripture to prepare the church members for the work of the ministry. (Ephesians 4:11-16)
- c. Evangelize the world. (Matthew 28:18-20)
- d. Glorify Jesus Christ, doing all things in the name of and for the honor and glory of the Savior. (Philippians 2:10-11, 1 Corinthians 10:31)
- e. Administer the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.
- f. Do everything in a fitting and orderly way, with love, so the church may be built up in the name of Jesus. (1 Corinthians 14:40, 1 Corinthians 16:14, 1 Corinthians 14:26, Colossians 3:17)
- g. Establish consequences for sin within the church. (Matthew 18:15-17)

2. **The Responsibility of Believers**

- a. *To Live a Holy Life of Service and Obedience:* We believe that it is the responsibility and privilege of all Christians to live a Christ-centered life. We believe that normal expression of this kind of life is individual ministry according to each believer's gift(s) and attitudes, which edify the entire Body of Christ, not bringing reproach upon the Name of Jesus Christ. We believe any Christian who is not so living is subject to the chastening hand of the Father and the discipline of the local church. (Romans 12:1-21; 1 Corinthians 11:28-32; 2 Corinthians 5:10, 6:14-17, 7:1; Galatians 5:16, 25; Ephesians 6:10-18; Colossians 2:6-7; Hebrews 12:1-15)
- b. *To Pray and to Give:* We believe that it is the obligation and privilege of every Christian to remember the work of the Lord in prayer, and to support this work with their means as the Lord has prospered them (1 Corinthians 16:2; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Galatians 6:6; 2 Corinthians 9:7)
- c. *To Witness:* We believe that it is the obligation and privilege of every Christian to witness by life and by word to the truth of the Holy Scriptures according to their spiritual gift(s). (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2; Romans 12:1-21)

3. **The Sacraments**

a. *Baptism*

- 1) We believe baptism in the name of Jesus Christ results in the gift of the Holy Spirit, and is available to all. (Acts 2:38, Acts 10:47)
- 2) We believe that through baptism we are cleansed of our sin and born into a new way of living, without regard to age. (Acts 2:38-41)
- 3) Baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is a necessary part of making disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:19-20)

b. *Holy Communion (The Lord's Supper)*

- 1) We believe the communion elements are symbolic representations of the sacrificed body and blood of Christ. (Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 10:16-17)
- 2) We believe the Lord's Supper is a memorial service to Christ's death. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

4. Rites and Rituals

a. *Confirmation:*

We believe full membership in Bandera Methodist Church requires a public profession of faith, where the pledges of Baptism are accepted and renewed for life and mission.

b. *Christian Marriage:*

- 1) Marriage is between one man and one woman. (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6)
- 2) Marriage is a sacred covenant reflecting the Baptismal Covenant and Christ's covenant with the church.
- 3) The church will not officiate, solemnize, perform or host a marriage or marriage-like ceremony involving anything other than the union of one man (biologically born male) and one woman (biologically born female). (Genesis 1:27)

c. *Ordination:*

Ordination is the action by which the church sets apart those who have been so elected to a particular order of ministry for the good of the whole church. Those to be ordained must meet the following qualifications:

- 1) Have a personal faith in Jesus Christ and be committed to Christ as Savior and Lord.
- 2) Nurture and cultivate spiritual disciplines and patterns of holiness consistent with this Doctrine.
- 3) Have a call by God and the people of God to devote themselves to the work of ministry.
- 4) Be able to effectively communicate the Christian faith.
- 5) Give evidence of God's gifts for ordained ministry and promise of future usefulness in the mission of the church.
- 6) Accept the authority of Scripture; be competent in the disciplines of Scripture, theology, church history and polity; possess the skills essential for the practice of ministry, and lead in making disciples of Jesus Christ.
- 7) Be accountable to this church, and accept its doctrinal standards, discipline, and authority.
- 8) Understand that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in Bandera Methodist Church.

d. *Confession:*

We believe that when we confess our sin, God promises to forgive us. (1 John 1:9)

5. Foundational Documents

- a. *The Apostles Creed (2nd Century A.D.)*
- b. *The Nicene Creed (A.D. 381)*
- c. *The Definition of Chalcedon (A.D. 451)*
- d. *The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church (A.D. 1784)*
- e. *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley (A.D. 1746)*

6. Stewardship

- a. We are created to be faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms, and should use our gifts to serve others. (1 Peter 4:10)
- b. A tithe of everything belongs to the Lord. (Leviticus 27:30)

- c. If we honor the Lord with our wealth, we will be blessed. (Proverbs 3:9-10)
- d. Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully for the advancement of the work of the church. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

7. Clergy

- a. Clergy are those who have been called out from among God's people for particular service to His church. It is the responsibility of the Administrative Board and Staff-Parish Relations Committee to establish procedures for selecting clergy to serve at Bandera Methodist Church, by examining a candidate's qualifications, abilities, and readiness for ministry.
- b. Clergy may not be practicing LGBTQ persons. (see also Article II.4.c(8))
- c. Clergy are prohibited from performing same-sex marriages. (see also Article II.4.b(3))