

Membership Covenant

Abner Creek Baptist Church

Statement of Faith and Beliefs

This church subscribes to the doctrinal statement of the "Baptist Faith and Message" as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in June 2000.

Section 1. Our Beliefs

"What We Believe"

Based on *The Baptist Faith and Message*

(For a full statement with scripture references visit www.sbc.net)

1. The Scriptures – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- The Bible was written by men who were inspired by God.
- The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to man.
- The Bible is a perfect treasure of divine instruction; it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter – therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.
- The Bible reveals the principles by which God judges us.
- The Bible is the true center of Christian union.
- The Bible is the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions are to be tried.
- The whole Bible is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

2. God

- There is only one living and true God.
- He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being. He is the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe.
- He is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all-powerful. God is all knowing.
- We owe God the highest love, reverence, and obedience.
- God is eternal.
- God has revealed Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

- God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace.
- He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise.
- God is truly Father to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.
- He is fatherly in His attitude toward all people.

B. God the Son

- Christ is the eternal Son of God.
- In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.
- Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God.

- Jesus took upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities, fully identifying Himself with mankind yet without sin.
- Jesus obeyed God's law perfectly – He never sinned.
- In His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin.
- He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who had been with them before His crucifixion.
- He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man.
- He will return in power and glory to judge the world and complete His redemptive mission.
- He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

C. God the Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine.
- He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures.
- Through illumination He enables men to understand truth.
- He exalts Christ.
- He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.
- He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration Salvation.
- At the moment of regeneration, He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ.
- He cultivates Christian Character Sanctification, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through his church Service.
- He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption.
- His presence in the believer is the guarantee that God will finish the work of conforming him to Christ.
- He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

3. Man

- Man (humanity) is the special creation of God, made in His own image.
- He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation.
- In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice.
- By his own free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race.
- Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, fell from his original innocence, and caused his posterity to inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin.
- Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation.
- Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship.
- Only the grace of God can enable man to fulfill the purpose for which he was created.
- Since God created man in His own image, and since Christ died for man, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

4. Salvation

- Salvation redeems the whole man.
 - Our fallenness extends to the whole of who we are.
 - Salvation includes even the resurrection of our bodies.
- Salvation is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer.
- There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.
- Salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

- Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. – 2 Cor. 5:17-21
- Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness (not our works) of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God. – Romans 3:5-8, 21-26
- Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. It is a lifelong process. – 1 Cor. 3:16-17
- Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the Christian. – Romans 8:28-30

5. God's Purpose of Grace

- Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners.
- It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end.
- It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable.
- It excludes boasting and promotes humility.
- All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

6. The Church

- A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel.
 - By covenant we mean that we will:
 - Teach and uphold the truths of the gospel.
 - Interpret, proclaim, and defend the scriptures.
 - Practice church discipline (receive only those who give profession and evidence of salvation through faith in Christ; correct, warn, and rebuke those who stray; exclude those who refuse the loving discipline; and restore those who repent).
- The church observes the two ordinances of Christ – baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- The church members exercise the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word.
- Each church seeks to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.
- Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord.
- Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.
- While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.
- The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ, which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

7. Baptism

- Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior; the believer's death to sin; the burial of the old life; and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus.

- It is a testimony to his/her faith in the final resurrection of the dead.
- It is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

8. The Lord's Supper

- The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

9. The Lord's Day

- The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance.
- It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private.
- Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

10. The Kingdom of God

- The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King.
- Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ.
 - Luke 17:20-21; Luke 12:31; Matthew 6:33; Matthew 3:2; Romans 5:17; Colossians 1:13
- Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth.
- The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.
 - Romans 8:18-21; Revelation 21-22

11. Last Things

- God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end.
- According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth (Philippians 3:20); the dead will be raised (1 Corinthians 15:51-52); and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. (Acts 17:31; 1 Cor. 3:12-15)
- The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment.
- The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

12. Evangelism and Missions

- It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations.
- The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life.
- Missionary effort is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations.
- It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Section 2. Statement on Marriage, Gender and Sexuality

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. (Gen 1:26-27.) Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. (Gen 2:18-25.) We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4.) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God. (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10.)

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Abner Creek Baptist Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Abner Creek Baptist Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Abner Creek Baptist Church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality. (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22.)

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11.)

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31.) Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Abner Creek Baptist Church.

Section 3. Statement on Life

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Ps 139.)

Section 4. Statement of Final Authority on Matters of Faith and Conduct

The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of Abner Creek

Baptist Church's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our pastor is Abner Creek Baptist Church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

Church Covenant and Membership Covenant

The Abner Creek Baptist Church membership covenant is birthed out of our love for the church body and its individual members whom we hope will experience the fullness of joy, which is found in the presence of the Lord.

What is a Covenant?

A covenant is generally defined as "a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action." Within the Scriptures, we find a number of examples of covenants; some between God and man (Genesis 6, 9, 15; Ezekiel 20; Hosea 2; Jeremiah 31; Matthew 26), while others are solely between men (1 Samuel 18; 2 Samuel 5). Some covenants are unconditional, meaning that two or more parties obligate themselves in such a way that the obligation of each party is not dependent on the faithfulness of the other. In other words, there is a pledge to be faithful to the covenant regardless of the other person's faithfulness. Other covenants are conditional, meaning that the obligation of one party is at least in part dependent upon the faithfulness of the other. While God's gracious covenant with the Church Universal is unconditional, the local church covenant itself is in part conditioned upon the faithfulness of each party. If at any time one of the parties, the individual member or corporate church body, fails in its obligations, the other party is freed from certain aspects of the covenant. The covenant of Abner Creek Baptist Church contains many conditions that are merely general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, whether members of Abner Creek Baptist Church or elsewhere, are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. Such requirements are universal obligations for the Christ-follower regardless of any failure on the part of the local church to live up to her covenant obligations.

If at any time any individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church leaders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness, then the member is freed from his or her membership obligations and is encouraged to seek membership elsewhere given the church's disobedience. In addition, certain circumstances may provide sufficient and righteous grounds to transfer membership elsewhere. While focusing primarily in language on the responsibilities between the individual parties, the corporate church body, her leaders and her individual members, the covenant is first and foremost a promise made to God as a commitment to His glory and the good of the body and bride of His Son.

Biblical Obligations of the Abner Creek Baptist Church Leaders to the Abner Creek Baptist Church Body

The Leaders covenant...

- To guard the offices of pastor and deacon according to the criteria assigned to them in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- To prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

- To care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth, and love (Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- To provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:1).
- To equip the members of the church for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- To be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).
- To lovingly exercise discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined, and the health of the church as a whole (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).
- To set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below (Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:3).

Biblical Obligations of the Members to the Abner Creek Baptist Church Body

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as “living by the Spirit” (Romans 8). The requirements of this membership covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible, yet non-exhaustive, explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces.

I covenant...

- To submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- To pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of spiritual disciplines (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22).
- To follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His church:
 - By being baptized after my conversion.
 - By regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through communion.
- To regularly participate in the life of Abner Creek Baptist Church by attending weekly services, engaging in biblical community, and serving those within and outside of this church (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14).
- To steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts, and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- By God’s grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:1-3). Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death, while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit. Below are a few examples of actions addressed in the Scriptures:
 - I will practice complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity means, among other things, that regardless of my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, premarital sex, and pornography (Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4).
 - I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation at Abner Creek Baptist Church before pursuing divorce from my spouse (Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11; for the role of the church in the role of divorce, see Paul’s concern for the resolution of legal matters within the assembly of the church in 1 Corinthians 6).

- I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip, and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (Romans 1:28-32, 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18).
- To refrain from such activities that the scriptures would deem foolish (Romans 14:14-23).
- To take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another (1 Corinthians 8:1-13).
- To submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:
 - Following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another – the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
 - Receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11).
- To do the following when I sin:
 - Confess my sin to God and to fellow believers.
 - Repent and seek help to put my sin to death (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10).
 - To submit to the pastor, deacons, and other appointed leaders of the church and will be diligent to strive for unity and peace within the Church (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5).

I have read and understand the above articles and agree to conduct myself in a manner consistent with them.

Signature

Date

Witness

Date