

The Heart and Soul of Grace Church



A look at our mission statement, core beliefs and core values...who we are...and what we hope to become!

Our Mission Statement That Guides Us

Our Grace Church mission is...*to glorify God by becoming more like Jesus Christ, by extending His grace in all our relationships, and by guiding others to a hope-filled future in Him.*

Our Core Beliefs That Define Us

Grace Church's *Core Beliefs* are a summary of what we believe to be major to our faith as a church and as His Christ-followers. Our beliefs are not merely our own theological convictions, but have also been held by fellow Christ-followers from the time of the early New Testament church. It is our desire that Christ and His message, as supported by the clearest teachings of Scripture, be central to our core beliefs. On other doctrines or teachings, we welcome dialogue without divisiveness and encourage all Christ-followers to join with us in advancing His kingdom in a spirit of unity.

A. The Bible

The Bible is the sole basis of our core beliefs and practices.

We regard the Bible as the sole basis of our core beliefs and practices, composed of the 66 books of the Old and New Testament. We believe that through the Bible, God speaks uniquely, exclusively and authoritatively through human authors. With its very words inspired by God, we believe the Bible is without error in its original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be

believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises. [Psalm 119:105, 160; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matthew 5:18]

B. God

We believe in one true, holy God, eternally existing in three persons.

We believe in one true, holy God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—each possessing equally all the divine attributes of God in complete unity. This eternal team is often known as the Trinity.

[2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2; Matthew 28:19; Matthew 3:16-17.]

1. God the Father

In the beginning, by His wisdom and power, God created the heavens, the earth and all creatures including humankind, out of nothing. By His divine care and direction He continues to rule and sustain His creation, operating throughout history to fulfill His redemptive purposes.

[Genesis 1:1, 26, 27; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 14:12-15; Jeremiah 10:12; Ephesians 1:2; Hebrews 1:14.]

2. God the Son

Jesus Christ, who appeared from heaven as the promised Messiah, is both fully God and fully man, having both a divine and human nature. Conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, God's Son lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father and voluntarily atoned for the sins of all by dying on the cross as their substitute. His death satisfied divine justice and accomplished salvation for all who trust in Him alone. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead in the same body in which He lived and died, was glorified, ascended into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of God as the only Mediator between God and man. There, He continually makes intercession for His own as our High Priest and Advocate, and He shall one day return to earth again, both personally and visibly, to consummate history and the eternal plan of God the Father.

[Hebrews 1:3; Matthew 1:22, 23; John 1:1-5; Isaiah 9:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:1-3; 14:6; Revelation 22:7, 12, 20-21.]

3. God the Holy Spirit

The main role of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus in all He does. He reveals to mankind our sin and guilt and convinces us of our need for Christ. He spiritually "re-creates" those far from God and gives them an eternal relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. He adopts those who are spiritually "re-created" into the family of God and the church of Jesus Christ. He applies Christ's work on the cross to each believer so they might experience the Father's forgiveness and have Christ's resurrection power to live a life of obedience and holiness, becoming more and more like their Leader and Forgiver. He indwells all who put their trust in Christ; shedding light on their interactions with the Scriptures, guiding them as they submit to His leadership, and uniquely equipping them for Christ-like living and service. In all the above, the Holy Spirit builds up of the body of Christ and advances His kingdom.

[John 16:7-13; 14:16,17; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; 2:12; 12:13; Romans 8:1-17.]

C. The Human Condition

We believe that our sinful human condition separates us from having an eternal relationship with God. Our hope is in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, which provides the total remedy for restoring that relationship.

From the beginning, God has desired an eternal relationship with those whom He created in His own image. God gave the human race choices about its relationship with Him. Satan, the antagonist to God's plan, tempted Adam and Eve to use their choices to go against God. Their sinful choices, known as the fall, separated them from a relationship with God and resulted in their new sinful nature. This impacted the entire human race and creation, creating a need for a remedy that God Himself chose to supply, having His Son pay the full penalty of our sinful choices and sinful nature by dying in our place on the cross. This spiritual rescue fully meets God the Father's standard for restoring our relationship with Him, when acknowledged and accepted by anyone in the human race. This merciful and gracious rescue also sets in motion a hope-filled future in Christ, designed to ultimately restore the human race to its original purposes, bringing glory to God for all eternity.

[Genesis 1:26, 27; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3; 3:23; 5:1; 5:12-21; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26.]

D. Salvation: Our Hope-filled Future in Christ

We believe the central reason God reveals Himself in Scripture is to invite all people into an eternal relationship with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The human race is helpless by our own efforts to meet God the Father's standard for restoring our broken relationship with Him. We are totally dependent upon God's rescue and recovery efforts. It was His eternal plan to free us from bondage to our sinful human condition by having His Son pay the full penalty of our sinful choices and sinful nature by dying in our place on the cross. This payment by His Son makes it possible for an eternal relationship with God. Our rescue and recovery is not the result of any human effort or goodness, either in whole or in part, but is through our receiving the free gift of His Son and His work on our behalf. This Good News is available to anyone who chooses to turn from sin and put their faith in the work of God's Son on the cross. This great salvation and rescue, once begun in our personal lives, will continue until we experience the fullness of our salvation upon seeing Him face to face. This process of rescue and recovery is best described in Scripture through three doctrinal pictures:

1. **Justification:** From the very first moment we place faith in Christ, the penalty of our sinful choices and nature is removed from us. We are freed from the eternal consequences of sin, based on the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. From that moment on, God no longer sees our sinful human condition, but now sees us covered by the righteousness of His Son. We are no longer condemned by our sin, but set free from the penalty and made righteous by Jesus Christ. That is the practical meaning and application of justification.

[Romans 3, 4, and 5; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5]

2. **Sanctification:** At the moment the penalty of our sin is removed from us, the Holy Spirit indwells us and begins the process of making us more like Jesus. The Holy Spirit works in our lives to free us from the power of sin that continues to challenge us in our journey with Christ. This process is known as sanctification and continues until we see Christ face to face.

[Romans 6 and 7]

3. **Glorification:** When we depart this life for our heavenly home in the presence of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we will be free from the presence of sin forever. This is known as glorification: The promised reality secured by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and guaranteed the moment we first put our trust in what Jesus did for us. As glorified Christ-followers, we will share His resurrection likeness in our new resurrection bodies, for all eternity.

[Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 14; Philippians 1:6; Revelation 21:1-5; 22:1-6.]

E. Human Destiny

We believe death seals the destiny of each person: Eternal separation from God to those who reject God's Son; and eternal life with God to those who accept God's Son as their Lord and Savior, their Leader and Forgiver.

The Good News about our human destiny is God the Father's desire that no one be spiritually separated from Him by sin, but that all people would turn from sin and receive His free gift of eternal life, made possible through His Son. He designed us to live forever with Him, yet He graciously accepts our choice to receive or reject Him. For every person there will be an eternal bodily resurrection, when Christ as Judge will determine the destiny of each individual. God will respect the wishes of those who choose to reject His gracious offer of eternal life with Him, by providing them with eternal separation from Him. But for those who choose to receive God's gracious offer of eternal life through His Son, there will be a forever relationship of joy in their new resurrection body.

[John 3:16-17; 5:24; 1 John 5:11-12; Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 20:15; 1 Corinthians 15:35-54.]

F. Purpose of the Church

We believe Christ is building His church to be His body on earth, so that we might demonstrate His love to one another and proclaim His Good News to His world until He returns.

At the moment we receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit places each new Christ-follower in union with Christ, and in community with the family of God, also known as the body of Christ, His church. There is one true universal church, comprised of all true Christ-followers. As a local expression of Christ's universal church, Grace Church desires to welcome with open arms and open hearts, all people who come our way. Like the early church pictured in the book of Acts, we desire to reflect God's heart by our devotion to one another, to God's Word, to prayer, to serving, to caring for those in need, to growing in maturity and to sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ in Waukesha County and to the ends of the earth. Together, we work in love and unity for the one ultimate purpose of glorifying God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. **Practices of His Church:** *Baptism and the Lord's Supper*

Our Lord commanded two practices for His church, both of which symbolize His mission and impact His followers when obediently practiced. Baptism and the Lord's Supper both visibly portray the message of God's *Good News*. They remind us of Christ's death and resurrection and help us tell His story and ours. Observing baptism and the Lord's Supper do not result in our salvation. However, both practices point to the reality of our salvation, and when celebrated in genuine faith, these symbols confirm and grow us as Christ-followers.

2. **Purposes of His Church:** *Christ's Great Commandment and His Great Commission*

Christ's purposes for His church are first expressed in His Great Commandment, loving God and loving people, the hallmark characteristics of His followers. Out of our love for God and love for people comes His Great Commission; for the whole church to take His whole message of Good News to the whole world. Our church mission statement is designed to reflect both Christ's Great Commandment and His Great Commission.

[Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:41-47; Romans 12:5; Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Acts 14:27; I Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 28:18-20; Matthew 22:36-40.]

G. Postscript to our Core Beliefs

We believe these *Core Beliefs* to be an accurate summary of what Scripture teaches, and as outlined in our Grace Church Bylaws, we ask all members of Grace Church to subscribe to these Core Beliefs. While we are open to dialogue on teachings in addition to our *Core Beliefs*, we ask all members and attendees to refrain from divisiveness, striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in a way that honors Christ and builds up His body.

[2 Timothy 2:23-26; 1 Timothy 1:3-7]

Our Core Values that Unite Us

1. We value whole-hearted worship!

God's love created us to have a mutual love and forever relationship with Him. We honor Him by loving Him with all our heart, mind, and strength, in all that we think, say, and do. This affirms that our love for Him is mutual. He shows His heart and love for us in all His creation, in all His divinely inspired Scriptures, and in all He did for us through His Son. He held nothing back...from the creation of the universe to the crucifixion of His only Son, Jesus Christ. He gave us His whole heart. It is only reasonable that we would want a relationship with Him that gives our whole heart back to Him!

[Matthew 22:37-38; John 4:23-24; Romans 12:1-2]

2. We value changed lives!

As we make it our practice to give our whole heart to God, we discover that God responds by showing us more and more of His heart...that you and I would be changed over time to become more like Jesus Christ. Change comes about by the Holy Spirit, as He develops Christ-like character in us. We are changed as we learn who God is and what He expects from us in the Bible, as we talk sincerely to God in prayer, as we meet regularly with followers of Jesus, and as we practice other behaviors that lead to changed lives.

[2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:22-23]

3. We value authentic relationships!

One sign that we are becoming more like Jesus is the change we experience in our many relationships. Most of us long for relationships where we can be real with others and where others can be real with us. We desire to belong to a family and community. We want to know and be known, to love and to be loved by those to whom we are connected. At Grace Church, we want to practice authentic relationships with everyone we meet.

[Ephesians 4:15; John 13:32-35]

4. We value meaningful service!

Changed hearts lead to changed lives and changed relationships, and all of these lead to a change of purpose in our life. We all want to know our life has purpose and that our life matters to others. The good news is that God wants all of us to discover how we fit in His world and how we can use our God-given strengths to make a difference. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ gives every believer unique strengths that come along side the unique strengths of others so we can work together to change His world. Meaningful service occurs as we offer back to Him all the time, talents, and treasures He has given us.

[Ephesians 2:10; 4:11-13, 16]

5. We value contagious faith!

When our relationship with God and His people results in compelling life-change and purpose, the kind that sends us back to love and serve a hurting world, the world can't help but notice our faith! Biblical faith is more than *what* we believe...it's about *Whom* we believe, how we live, and *Whom* we live for. He wants us to go from living life for ourselves to living for Him and for those He came to rescue, whether they be across the street or around the world. The result is a faith that is contagious and invites others to find a hope-filled future in Him.

[John 13:34-35; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 3:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20]

