



OUR
BELIEFS
STATED
OUR STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

**A biblical word view that shapes our beliefs
and behaviours**

Statement of Beliefs

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Our Beliefs

Why have we produced a statement of our beliefs?

We live in a world where everyone believes what they want to believe. The reference point for our beliefs that in turn govern our behaviour largely boils down to 'what I think'. It could be said that we approach what we believe in a pick and mix fashion depending on what suits us and what seems logical and reasonable to us. Often our strong convictions are shaped by our 21st culture and its ways of thinking. There is a presiding desire lurking within each one of us as a result of the rebellion of man towards God in the garden of Eden, not to be restrained by anything or be told what to do. In his book *Every Good Endeavour* Timothy Keller observes this very desire for what many would call freedom from imposed restrictions. He says this;

'Modern people like to see freedom as the complete absence of constraints. But think of a fish. Because a fish absorbs oxygen from water, not air, it is free only if it is restricted to water. If a fish is 'freed' from the river and put out on the grass to explore, its freedom to move and soon even live is destroyed. The fish is not more free it is less free, it cannot honour the reality of its nature.....Freedom is not so much the absence of restrictions as finding the right ones....'

God has our freedom and welfare in mind when He gives us very clear instruction and commands. When we live within the restrictions made for us by Him we can then be the people He has designed us to be. Therefore it is important that He shapes our beliefs through His word as revealed in scripture. Human life works properly only when it is conducted within the guidelines of the 'owner's manual', the commands of God. It is therefore essential that we are clear what our 'owner's manual' says.

With this in mind we would say that it is important to state what we believe for the following reasons;

To enable us to live in a God honouring way - This statement is a reflection of what we believe scripture teaches. Our understanding and application of these truths enable us to live life to its fullness through our obedience.

Because what we believe shapes who we are -it is our hope and prayer that these will be the convictions which shape our lives individually and corporately, and which remain the focus of our preaching, teaching and discipleship in all areas of our life together.

To protect our community of believers and to promote accountability - anyone with a leadership or teaching responsibility in the life

of ACC has the joy and responsibility to promote, uphold and defend these beliefs at all times.

To promote and take a stand for authentic Christianity – the statement is a summary of those beliefs which the ACC leadership team prayerfully consider to be essential to genuine Christian faith.

To be clear about what really matters – the statement does not try to describe every aspect of Christian belief. Instead it seeks to identify those core beliefs which we cannot compromise or negotiate – the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ.

Please take some time to read what we believe the Bible teaches. If you have any questions about anything you read one of the leadership team will be glad to talk to you and answer any questions you may have. Please contact our administration centre on 01384 370365 to book an appointment to talk to a member of the team.

What do we believe as a community of believers?

A statement of our beliefs

We want to begin by saying that everything in this statement comes from, and is we hope a true reflection of, what the Bible says. We believe that the Bible, Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God to all people in all situations at all times. We believe that as we listen to faithful preaching of the Bible and carefully study it individually and together, God makes Himself known to us and shows us His purposes. Because of this, we believe that the Bible is trustworthy, the highest authority governing Christian belief and behaviour, and that in the Bible God gives us all we need to know Him and understand His work in the world.

God

And so we believe that there is one God in three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe that God has no beginning and no end. For His glory He created and holds together everything that exists and rules over all forever. He is glorious, holy, loving, wise, just and faithful, and He never changes.

People

We believe that every human being, male and female, is made in the image of God. So we believe that every person is equally and uniquely valuable to God and should be recognised as such. Our highest calling and privilege as men, women and children is to know God and to glorify Him.

Humanity was created perfectly, enjoying relationship with God, but having been tempted by God's Enemy, the devil, they fell from that perfection by disobeying God's good commands and declaring independence from Him. Every person since, right up until each one of us alive today, inherits that rebellion. And so both by nature and by our thoughts, words and actions, we walk away from God. We prefer to live as we decide, rejecting His good purposes for our lives. The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, loving, wise, just and faithful, our sin brings us under His judgment and cuts us off from Him now and forever. There is nothing we can do to put that right. We believe that this explains the condition of our world - the pain, emptiness and suffering that we see all around us and within us.

Jesus

But that is not all the Bible teaches. God's gift of Jesus is good news! We believe that in God's eternal plan, God the Son became a man, the Lord Jesus Christ, sent by the Father into the world. We believe that He was born of a virgin. We believe that He experienced the difficulties and temptations of normal human life and yet in His relationship with God the Father and with men and women, He lived a perfect life, without sin.

We believe that in God's great love for the world Jesus willingly suffered and died on the Cross, His blood being poured out, to bear in Himself God's judgement (His righteous anger) against our sin. We believe that He was buried and that on the third day He rose again – truly and physically raised from the dead. We believe that He returned to heaven, where at the right hand of God the Father He now rules over all, having gained victory over the power of sin and all that is evil.

Salvation

We believe that only through the Lord Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection can we be rescued from the judgment of God, now and forever. And so, salvation means:

- believing and trusting in Jesus alone for forgiveness of our sins and restoration of relationship with God as our Father – this is what the Bible calls grace, or undeserved favour
- turning away from living as we decide, and making Jesus the Lord and greatest treasure of our lives (this is what the Bible calls repentance), depending for all of this on the Holy Spirit who lives within everyone who believes and trusts in Jesus and makes Him Lord – it is the Holy Spirit who makes repentance a daily reality
- entrusting our lives and our eternity into His hands (this is what the Bible calls faith), knowing that because Jesus rose from death, we too will rise to eternal life if we trust in Him

And so we must forsake any attempt to add to what Christ has done at the Cross, any belief that our own efforts and “good behaviour” will make us right with God. It is the death and resurrection of Jesus, and His goodness (righteousness) counted as ours, that is our only hope. Salvation is all God's work. The Bible teaches the painful truth that those who reject God's way of salvation will forever be separated from Him and from everything that is good, in hell.

The Holy Spirit and the Church

The Holy Spirit is give by Jesus to all believers. It is the Holy Spirit who causes us to recognise our sin, enables us to see our need of salvation and leads us to Christ. When He does, we become part of God's worldwide family, the Church, of which Jesus is the Head. Each local congregation, or community of believers in Jesus and His gospel, forms a vital part of the wider church. ACC is one such congregation or community.

As a community of believers we aspire to live out the gospel together in line with our “Statement of Values”, depending completely on the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Holy Spirit:

- gives believers understanding of the Bible, corporately and individually, and through the Bible and the gift of prayer leads us to know God and so become the people we were created to be
- transforms believers so that in every aspect of character and behaviour we become more like Jesus – the Bible calls this sanctification, and it is evidence that we belong to Jesus in salvation
- gives to all believers gifts to be used to help and encourage one another – these include spoken gifts, gifts of service, etc
- gives power to believers so that corporately and individually we can obey the command of Christ to share His good news with people who do not know Him, in our locality and in other parts of the world, calling people to yield to Christ as Lord, and so together with the wider church see God’s kingdom built as He gathers people to Himself, for His glory.

The future

We believe that Jesus will one day return to this world. All those who belong to Him, whether they have died beforehand or remain alive, will be raised to be perfectly united with Him. All those who do not belong to Him will be cut off from Him forever. Everyone will confess Jesus as Lord of all, and God will make everything new. Then, and only then, will believers be made perfectly like Jesus and then and only then will God’s kingdom come in all its fullness, forever. Until then, by His grace alone, we work with all believers towards that goal. For His glory.

What do we believe about God's plan for mankind?

The central theme of the Bible is God's love for all people. This love was revealed when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world as a human being, lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and rose from the dead. Because Christ died, our sins can be forgiven, and because He conquered death we can have eternal life.

God's Love Is Revealed in the Bible

'This is how much God loved the world; He gave His Son, His one and only Son. And this is why; so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in Him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.' John 3:16 (The Message)

God loves mankind. He wants to bless our lives and make them full and complete. And He wants to give us a life which will last forever, even after we experience physical death.

We Are Sinful

'We've compiled this long and sorry record as sinners and proved that we are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives God wills for us.' Romans 3:23 (The Message)

We may have heard someone say, 'I'm only human nobody's perfect.' This Bible verse says the same thing: We are all sinners. We all do things that we know are wrong. And that's why we feel estranged from God because God is holy and good, and we are not.

Sin Has a Penalty

'Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death.' Romans 6:23 (The Message)

Just as criminals must pay the penalty for their crimes, sinners must pay the penalty for their sins. If you continue to sin, you will pay the penalty of spiritual death: You will not only die physically; you will also be separated from our holy God for all eternity. The Bible teaches that those who choose to remain separated from God will spend eternity in a place called hell.

Christ Has Paid Our Penalty!

'But God put His love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were no use whatever to Him' Romans 5:8 (The Message)

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, has paid the penalty for all our sins. We may think you have to lead a good life and do good deeds before God

will love us. But the Bible says that Christ loved mankind enough to die for them, even when we were rebelling against Him.

Salvation Is a Free Gift

It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving' Ephesians 2:8-9 (The Message)

The word grace means 'undeserved favour.' It means God is offering us something we could never provide for ourselves: forgiveness of sins and eternal life, God's gift to us is free. You do not have to work for a gift. All we have to do is joyfully receive it, Believe with all our hearts that Jesus Christ died for us.

Christ Is at Your Heart's Door

'Look at me! I stand at the door. I knock. If you hear me call and open the door, I'll come right in and sit down to supper with you Revelation 3:20 (The Message)

Jesus Christ wants to have a personal relationship with us. Jesus Christ stands at the door of our hearts (the door of your emotions, intellect and will). We need to invite Him in; He is waiting for us to receive Him into our hearts and lives.

You Must Receive Him

'But whoever did want Him, who believed He was who He claimed and would do what He said, He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves.' John 1:12 (The Message)

When we receive Christ into our hearts we become children of God. The Christian life is a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. A relationship that will last for all eternity.