

Church & Christian Living

"We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer."

Article 7, EPCA Statement of Faith

- I. The True Church
- II. United in the body of Christ
- III. He is the Head
- IV. The Local Church
- V. Church Ordinances
- VI. Church Government

1. The True Church

- a. When we use the word "church," we may think of
 - i. A place _____ where believers assemble.
 - ii. The people _____ in a specific congregation.
- b. However, the Bible uses the word in another way:
 - i. *"And he is the head of the body, the church..."* (Colossians 1:18).
 - ii. *"Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."* (Acts 20:28).
- c. For this reason we may talk about the true _____ Church (or universal _____ Church).
 - i. The "true church" is made up of all believers _____ from every age, nation, race, and time.
 - ii. The Greek word for church is *ekklesia* which means "called out ones _____."
 - 1. Romans 1:6 – "...including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ."

2. 1 Corinthians 1:2 – “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours...”

2. United by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ

- a. Romans 12:3-8
- b. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27
- c. Galatians 3:28

3. Christ, the Head of the Church

- a. Jesus is the functional Senior _____ Pastor _____.
- b. Jesus has authority _____ over all things in the Church.
 - i. Ephesians 1:22-23
- c. All Church members submit _____ to and are accountable _____ to Jesus.
 - i. Ephesians 4:15-16
 - ii. Colossians 2:16-19

4. The Local Church

- a. The New Testament also uses the word “church” to describe local _____ congregations meeting together.
 - i. *“Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians...”* (1 Thessalonians 1:1)
- b. Only members of the True Church will be able to find authentic community in a local church.
 - i. The local church is sometimes called the visible _____ church.
 - ii. The Bible warns _____ that it is possible for a person to be part of the local _____ church but not part of the true _____ church. (Romans 9:6)
- c. The only requirements for membership in the local church are that you are a believer _____ and can give evidence _____ to that fact.

- i. Matthew 18:15-20
- ii. Galatians 6:1-18
- iii. 1 Corinthians 1:2, 9
- iv. 1 Timothy 3:1-13
- v. Titus 1:1-9

d. In order to become a member of Christ Community Church an individual must:

- i. Have experienced the new birth through saving _____ faith _____ in Jesus Christ.
- ii. Have taken or will take a “Welcome to CCC” or “BiC” class and be in agreement _____ with the 10-pt statement of faith.
- iii. Express willingness _____ to abide by the church’s Constitution and By-Laws and express a willingness _____ to further the purposes of this church through prayers, presence, financial support, and willingness to serve.
- iv. Share your testimony _____ (how you came to faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior and how He impacts your life now) with the elders.

e. Why become a member?

- i. As a profession _____ of faith: identifying with others who share your commitment to Jesus and his people, (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- ii. As a confession _____ of need: admitting our need for support, encouragement, and accountability in our walk with Jesus.
- iii. As devotion _____ to the mission of God: realizing that each of us must contribute to the task of reaching the world for Jesus Christ, allowing the Holy Spirit to use us and our gifts to accomplish this mission.

5. Church Ordinances

- i. What is it? An ordinance is a ceremony _____ prescribed by God for believers to carry out in the local _____ church.

- ii. What significance do they have? Ordinances are very important because they are prescribed by God, but they are not to be regarded as a means of salvation.
- iii. How many are there? We, along with most Protestant churches, recognize two .
 - 1. The Lord's Supper (sometimes called Communion or The Eucharist)
 - 2. Baptism

a. The Lord's Supper

- i. Descriptions of the "original" Lord's Supper are found in the gospels:
 - 1. Matt. 26:26-28
- ii. The first community of believers in Jerusalem carried on this "breaking bread" as well as having meals:
 - 1. Acts 2:46-47
- iii. Paul instructs the church in Corinth concerning the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-33) – this passage is used as a basis for our communion services. From these verses, note the following:
 - 1. Paul takes his authority from Jesus (v. 23).
 - 2. The broken bread is to remind us of Jesus' broken body (v. 25).
 - 3. The cup is to remind us of Jesus' blood (v. 25).
 - 4. The entire ceremony is to proclaim Jesus' death until His return (v. 26).
 - 5. Those who do not recognize these symbols of Jesus in the elements are in danger of judgment (v. 8-29).

iv. Three views of the Lord's Supper are held among Christian churches:

1. Transubstantiation - the bread and wine are thought to be literally changed into the physical body and blood of Jesus Christ (Catholic & Orthodox view).
2. Consubstantiation - the presence of Christ is in the elements, although they are not changed in substance (Lutheran view).
3. Symbolic/Memorial - the elements are symbols of Jesus' body and blood, who is always present in the lives of believers through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (other Protestants, including EFCA).

b. **Baptism** –

- i. Baptism is best understood as an outward sign of an inward change.
- ii. Baptism is not required for salvation.
 1. Justification by faith alone (Rm. 3:28; 3:5; 5:1)
 - a. As a human work, baptism can have no saving merit (Eph. 2:8-9)
 - b. Baptism is not emphasized in the NT as a major doctrine.
 2. Baptism is described as a response to (not a requirement for) salvation (Acts 16:29-34).
 3. The thief on the cross was not baptized, yet saved (Luke 23:34).
 4. What about 1 Peter 3:18-21 – “...baptism that now *saves* you...” [emphasis added]?
 - a. The context makes clear that salvation is found only through the death and resurrection of Jesus and baptism is a corresponding symbol that represents our union with Him in his death and resurrection.

iii. Neither should baptism be considered optional _____
for Christians.

1. It was commanded by Jesus (Matthew 28:19)
2. It was practiced consistently in the early church
 - a. Acts 2:38 – there was no such thing as an unbaptized _____ believer.
3. It was assumed of all genuine believers (Acts 2:41; 8:12...it was an accepted sign of true faith and conversion).

iv. Baptism is not to be considered applicable _____ for infants.

1. NT contains no instruction to baptize infants or examples of such. (Mt. 19:13-15 does not refer to baptism but emphasizes simple trust).
2. Historically, there is no record of infant baptisms until the end of the second century.
3. NT baptism is not the same as OT circumcision, which was applied to infants of Israel.
 - a. NT baptism is connected with OT circumcision in Col 2:11-13.
 - b. Circumcision signified God's covenant with his chosen people, Israel.
 - c. Baptism does not signify an ethnic or cultural identity but symbolizes a spiritual identity found in union with Jesus Christ.
 - d. Therefore, baptism should only be applied to those who have experienced the spiritual reality it symbolizes (not infants).
 - e. Only believers were baptized in the NT. (Entire families were baptized because they all believed Acts 16:21, 34; 18:8).
 - f. Believing is repeatedly given as the only requirement for baptism (Mt 3:6; Mk 16:16; Acts 8:37 – faith and repentance).

4. Baptism is not just a meaningless _____ ritual.

- a. It is a public declaration of personal devotion to Jesus, (like wearing a wedding ring is a public declaration of personal devotion to a spouse).
- b. Baptism is a symbol (not just a sign).
 - i. It symbolizes our identification with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5).
 - ii. It symbolizes our spiritual cleansing through faith in Jesus (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:18).
 - iii. It symbolizes our unity with other believers who have been also been united with Christ through the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).
- c. Baptism is best accomplished by means of immersion (not sprinkling or pouring).
 - i. The primary meaning of the Greek word for baptism is “to dip” or “to plunge under water.”
 - ii. Some passages strongly imply immersion (John 3:23; Mark 1:10; Acts 8:38-39)
 - iii. Only immersion captures the primary symbolism described in Romans 6:3-5.
 - iv. Immersion is not to be considered an absolute requirement (if circumstances do not permit immersion).

6. Church Government

- a. The government of a church concerns who has authority and how decisions are made
- b. There are Four basic ways in which a local church may be governed:
 - i. Monarchial - refers to one final human authority. (Catholic Church -the pope)
 - ii. Episcopal - a bishop oversees the work of a number of churches. (Methodist and Episcopal)
 - iii. Presbyterian - representatives from local churches meet to decide polices for local congregations. (Presbyterian and Lutheran)
 - iv. Congregational - the local church has the right to govern its own affairs. (Non-denominational, Baptist, Evangelical Free)
 1. These churches are self-ruling or autonomous but still submit to godly leaders in their churches.
 2. This means that the local congregation (members of that local church) make decisions for that body.
- c. The congregational form of government in the EFCA is the result of two factors:
 - i. A careful study of Scripture. This seems to be the most common pattern of the New Testament church.
 - ii. A natural outgrowth of the fear of our founders whose churches had been controlled by the state government in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. They wanted to be “free” in their new land, (this is why they’re called Evangelical **Free** Churches).

"We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed."

Article 8, EFCA Statement of Faith

- I. Justification and Sanctification**
- II. Live out our faith**
- III. Spiritual Warfare**
- IV. Make disciples**

1. God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose.

- a. All who have been saved _____ by grace through faith in Jesus are also being made holy _____ by grace through faith in Jesus.
 - i. Matthew 7:17-18
 - ii. 2 Corinthians 5:17
 - iii. Titus 3:3-8

- b. When we love God he gives us hatred _____ toward sin.
 - i. Romans 6:11
 - ii. Hebrews 12:1
 - iii. Ephesians 4:22-24
 - iv. Colossians 3:1-17

- c. God saved us to accomplish _____ his good works according to his purpose in us and through us unto the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - i. Ephesians 2:10
 - ii. Colossians 3:17
 - iii. Philippians 2:12-13

- d. The Bible makes clear that it is impossible _____ to have saving faith in Jesus and not have good works.
 - i. 2 Corinthians 3:18
 - ii. James 2:14-18

2. **Live out our faith**

- a. The result of saving faith in Jesus is a love for God that is above all other loves and sacrificial love and care for others.
 - i. We were saved as a result of Jesus' supreme love for his Father and his sacrificial love for us.
 1. Romans 5:8
 2. 1 John 4:9-10
- b. One way we express our love for God is by caring for others.
 - i. Jesus cared for us when we were poor and oppressed in our sin by compassionately offering his life and willingly absorbing God's just punishment of our sin on the cross.
 - ii. We are called to care for the poor, hungry, sick, widows, orphans, prisoners, strangers, aliens, and the oppressed because of our love for Jesus.
 1. Matthew 25:31-46
 2. Hebrews 13:1-3

3. **Spiritual Warfare**

- a. The Bible teaches the reality of both a seen (physical) world and an unseen (spiritual) world.
- b. These worlds are more than places but also include created beings.
 - i. Angels are spiritual beings created by God with moral judgment and high intelligence but without physical bodies.
 - ii. Demons are angels who rebelled against God and now continually work evil in the world.
- c. The Bible speaks of three spiritual forces of evil:
 - i. The World - an organized system of sinful flesh (outside ourselves) who rebel against God.
 1. The World prides itself in individual sinful longings for physical pleasure, greedy lives, and in possessions and selfish ambitions.
 - ii. The Flesh - our internal enemy and seed of corruption that lingers in us until glorification.

1. The resistance to obey God and put self-interests above God's interests found within every person.

iii. The Devil _____ - "Devil" is an English translation of the Greek *diabolos*, which means "slanderer." "Satan" is the personal name of the head of all demons. *Satan* is a Hebrew word meaning "adversary." Satan was the originator of sin and he and his demons tempt others to sin.

1. Job 1:6; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Zechariah 3:1; Matthew 4:10; Luke 10:18; Genesis 3:1-6; 2 Corinthians 11:3; John 8:44; 1 John 3:8

Other names given to Satan in the Bible:

- the devil (Matt. 4:1; Rev. 12:9; 20:2)
- the serpent (Gen. 3:1, 2 Cor. 11:3; Revelation 12:9; 20:2)
- the dragon (Rev. 12:3)
- Beelzebub (Matt. 10:25; 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 18-19)
- The ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
- The god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- The prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2)
- The evil one (1 John 2:13)
- The tempter (1 Thess. 3:5; Matt. 4:3)
- Murderer (John 8:44)
- Father of Lies (John 8:44)
- Adversary (1 Peter 5:8)
- Accuser (Zech. 3:1; Rev. 12:10)
- Enemy (1 Pet. 5:8)

d. The Bible's threefold response:

i. To the world

1. Do not love _____ the world. (1 John 2:15)
2. Do not allow the world to shape _____ our values. (Romans 12:2)
3. Because Jesus died to the world we are to live as crucified _____ to the world. (Galatians 6:14)

ii. To the flesh

1. Recognize we are no longer slaves _____ to the flesh. (Romans 6)
2. Walk in conscious submission _____ to the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:16; Romans 6:17-19)
3. Put to death _____ sinful desires. (Romans 8:13-16)

e. We are to combat these spiritual forces using the Bible, relying upon the power of the Holy Spirit, and through passionate prayer.

i. The Bible is compared to a sword _____, an offensive weapon for attack to be handled with training and care.

1. Ephesians 6:10-20; 2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 4:12

ii. The Bible instructs Christians to be aware of the Devil's tactics.

1. 2 Corinthians 2:11 – “In order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”)

Schemes of the spiritual forces of evil:

1. *Ordinary demonic work*

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. Temptation to sexual sin (1 Cor. 7:5) | g. Idleness, Busybody activity, gossip (1 Tim. 5:11-15) |
| b. Marriage between Christians & Non-Christians (2 Cor. 6:15) | h. Lies (John 8:44) |
| c. False religion and false teaching about a false Jesus (1 Cor. 10:14-22; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Cor. 11:1-4) | i. Idolatry (1 John 5:18-21) |
| d. Unforgiving bitterness (Eph. 4:17-32) | j. Deception (Revelation 12:9) |
| e. Drunkenness (Eph. 5:18) | k. Blind people to the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4) |
| f. Foolishness (Eph. 5:8-21) | l. Keep people in religious or cultural bondage (Galatians 4:8; Acts 15:28) |

2. *Extraordinary demonic work*

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|--|--|
| a. Murder (Psalm 106:37; Prov. 8:36; John 8:44) | e. Counterfeit miracles and exorcisms (Matthew 7:15-23; Acts 8:9-23; 16:16; 2 Thess. 2:9-10) |
| b. Self-destruction (John 10:10) | f. Accusation (Rev. 12:10) |
| c. Torment (Acts 5:16) | g. False Spirits (1 John 4:1-6) |
| d. Physical injury/illness (Matt. 9:32-33; 12:22-23; Acts 8:4-8) | |

Satan also uses people to war against God through false prophets who speak lies (2 Pet. 2:1), false pastors who lead ministries for the devil (2 Cor. 11:12-15); false Christians who divide churches (Gal. 2:4); false teachers who teach heretical doctrine (2 Pet. 2:1).

iii. Satan's defeat is possible only through Jesus' life death, burial, and resurrection. We must yield our lives to God the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus in order to live victoriously over these spiritual forces of evil

- Hebrews 2:14-15
- Revelation 12:11 – “And they have conquered him by the **blood of the Lamb** and by the **word** of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.” [emphasis added]

iv. Prayer expresses our trust in God. It is a means by which our trust in him may increase as we are brought into deeper fellowship with God and allows us to be involved in the eternally significant work of advancing God's kingdom.

4. Make Disciples

- a. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8
- b. 2 Timothy 4:2 – “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”
- c. 1 Peter 3:14-16 – “But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. ‘Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.’ But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”
- d. Colossians 3:17
- e. 1 Corinthians 9