

The Basics of Immanuel Church

Briefly describe who you are and your faith journey to this point:

I - Purpose

Luke 10:27 (ESV) — 27 And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”

Matthew 28:19–20 (ESV) — 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Romans 10:17 (ESV) — 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Three reasons church is an important part of my life as a follower of Jesus:

1. It helps me _____.
2. It helps me _____.
3. It helps me _____.

II - What Does Immanuel Church Believe?

I. The Scriptures

The Bible is the inerrant, infallible Word of God. Its subject is Jesus. Its purpose is my salvation. It is the authority by which I must live.

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It 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 completely true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

II. God

There is one God who is perfect in holiness, perfect in knowledge, and completely sovereign. He exists as three persons - co-equal and co-eternal.

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God relates to those who receive Christ as a gracious 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 Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

The second member of the Trinity relates to the Father's authority as the Son. He honors the Father's holiness by obediently living a perfect life and by dying as our substitute to take the penalty of my sin. The Father honored Him by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand.

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, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His penal 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 was 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 to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Spirit gives testimony of the Son by enabling our minds to understand truth; by giving conviction of sin, by regenerating the sinner, by giving faith, by working sanctification in us until our final redemption at Christ's return; and by giving us gifts for the service of the church body.

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. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

The Holy Spirit equips every believer with spiritual gifts to use for the edification of the church at the point of salvation. The use of sign gifts within the church is not encouraged. Instead, Scripture emphasizes the more excellent way of love, the speaking of the Word, and a zeal for the gifts that edify the church.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 13:15; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; 16:8; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-17,26-27; 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13,19; 14:1-12; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Galatians 4:6; 5:25; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1:22; 4:11-12; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 4:1-4; 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

Statement Regarding Spiritual Gifts from the Elders: Immanuel Church is neither Cessationist (believing that the spiritual gifts have ceased) nor Charismatic. The Holy Spirit equips every believer with spiritual gifts to use for the edification of the church at the point of salvation. We do not encourage the use of sign gifts within the church. Instead, with Scripture, we emphasize the more excellent way of love, the speaking of the Word, and a zeal for the gifts that edify the church. (1 Corinthians 14)

III. Man

God created mankind male and female as his unique image bearers. God created us without sin with a free will. But man chose by that free will to sin and was placed in bondage to it. As a result, man is totally depraved apart from the work of God.

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint but choice; being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse. As soon as man is capable of moral action, he is culpable as a transgressor and justly under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

IV. Salvation

Salvation is the redemption of man and is available freely and exclusively in Jesus Christ.

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Regeneration is the grace of God that makes us a new creation, enabling us to respond in repentance and faith.

A. 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. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior.

Justification is the grace of God to declare us righteous and, as a result, at peace with God.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

Sanctification is the process of making us holy and spiritually mature from regeneration throughout life.

C. 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. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

Glorification is the final completion of our eternal salvation.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is God's gracious, sovereign act of saving and security sinners. It gives security to the believer and glory to God.

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.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7, 19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22, 31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45, 65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6, 12, 17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7, 26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10, 19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5, 13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

VI. The Harmony Of The Law And The Gospel

The purpose of the Old Testament Law is to point us to the holiness of God and our need of a gracious Savior.

We believe that the Law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government; that it is holy, just, and good; and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts, arises entirely from their love of sin: to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy Law, is one great end of the Gospel, and of the Means of Grace connected with the establishment of the visible church.

Matthew 5:17-20; Luke 16:17; Romans 3:31; 7:4-25; 10:4; Galatians 3:11-25; 1 Timothy 1:8-11.

VII. 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; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking 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 elders and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of elder 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.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42, 47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23, 27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11, 21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

VIII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptism is immersion in water as a testimony of the gospel - death to sin, buried in Christ, risen to new life. It follows a credible testimony of repentance and faith.

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 faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

Statement Regarding the Baptism of Children from the Elders: Immanuel Church believes that it is the testimony of scripture (see above) and of early church history that baptism was the mature act of an individual to publicly profess personal faith. There is no record of infant baptism until 200 years after Christ. Therefore, we believe it is most helpful to the faith of the individual and the testimony of Christ and the church if we refrain from baptizing anyone who has not yet reached an age of maturity wherein he/she can make life choices alone. Practically, this means we would generally not baptize anyone who has not yet reached his/her teenage years, and even then would do so with great caution working with the parents to discern the maturity of the individual and his/her faith.

The Lord's Supper (Communion) is an act of obedience whereby we remind ourselves of what Christ has done to unite us in Him and of His future coming.

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.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

IX. The Lord's Day

We worship on Sunday, instead of Saturday, because Christ rose on Sunday and the church began gathering on "the Lord's Day" in response. It should be the regular practice of every believer.

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.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

X. The Kingdom

The Kingdom is God's general sovereignty over the universe, present rule over the church by which the Kingdom is emerging in the earth, and coming reign of Christ at the end of this age.

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. 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.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

XI. Last Things

Jesus is returning at a time no man can know both to save the righteous and judge the unrepentant.

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; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. 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.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

XII. Evangelism and Missions

The church's duty and joy is to make disciples of every nation.

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, and 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.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

XIII. Stewardship

God gives us our resources as a stewardship to use for our needs and the advancement of His glory through His work in the earth. We should therefore give of our resources cheerfully, generously, and in faith.

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21, 42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

XIV. Religious Liberty

God is the Lord of the conscience of the person. The state should not interfere with the conscience of the individual.

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7, 24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1, 13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

XV. The Family

Marriage and the family are ordained by God as the foundation of society. Marriage is the union of a man and woman in a relationship of equals with complimentary roles.

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

III. - How is Immanuel Church structured?

Is Immanuel and independent (non-denominational) church? Yes and no. One distinction of the Baptist tradition is the belief that the local church is the highest representation of the Kingdom of God on the Earth until Christ returns. Therefore, as a Baptist church, Immanuel Church is not governed by a denominational authority.

However, because we recognize the benefits of cooperating with other local churches in carrying out our mission, such as global missions and church planting, we do cooperate with the Hudson Baptist Association and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Who leads Immanuel Church? Immanuel is governed by the Members, led by the Elders, and served by the Deacons/Deaconesses.

The Bible's teaching on the two church offices (Elder and Deacon) is found in 1 Timothy 3:1-16 and Titus 1:5-9. Although there are several terms used for the offices of the church (i.e. bishop, elder, pastor, overseer, and deacon), bishop, elder, pastor, and overseer are used interchangeably.

Elders serve by leading. Their responsibility involves the spiritual oversight of the congregation. Elders must be men (1 Timothy 2:12) who are actively serving in the ministries of the church and have demonstrated a Christian testimony, spiritual gifting, and leadership skills in keeping with the office. The qualifications for the office of elder are found in 1 Timothy 3: 1–7 and Titus 1: 6–9. Elders must devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock (Acts 6: 1–6 and 1 Peter 5: 1–4).

Deacons and Deaconesses give leadership to the serving functions of the church (Acts 6), especially related to the physical needs of the members and the ministry. The qualification for deacons are the same as elder in the area of character, but different in aptitude. The elders are to be "able to teach" while the deacons are to be "able and proved as servants" (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1).

Why do we have female deacons but not female elders? As previously stated, the Bible restricts preaching and authority over the church to male elders (1 Timothy 2:12). But, being deeply thankful to God for godly female members of Immanuel Church, we affirm their ability to serve in any areas that do not contradict God's model of male leadership in the home (Eph. 5) and the church. Because the biblical call on deacons is to lead through serving, rather than through exercising authority, women are free to serve as deacons. Some teach that the biblical qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 exclude women. We disagree.

John Piper's words on female deacons are helpful:

There are four observations that incline me to think that this office was held by both men and women.

1. The Greek word for deacon can be masculine or feminine in the same form. So the word itself does not settle the issue.

2. In the middle of the qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 Paul says, "The women likewise must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things." This could be the wives of the deacons, but could also be the women deacons. The latter is suggested by the fact that no reference to women is made in 3:1-7. Since women were not candidates for the eldership in the New Testament (1 Timothy 2:12-13) because of its authoritative function in teaching and oversight, the absence of the reference to women in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 would be expected. But this confirms the probability that the reference to women in 3:11 is to women deacons, not merely to wives of deacons.

3. The deacons were distinguished from the elders in that they were not the governing body in the church nor were they charged with the duty of authoritative teaching. So the role of deacon seems not to involve anything that Paul taught in 1 Timothy 2:12 (or anywhere else) which is inappropriate for women to perform in the church.

4. In Romans 16:1, Phoebe is very probably called a deacon. "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon(ess) of the church at Cenchreae, that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well."

It appears then that the role of deacon is of such a nature that nothing stands in the way of women's full participation in it. Within the deaconate itself, the way the men and women relate to each other would be guided by the sense of appropriateness, growing out of the Biblical teaching of male and female complementarity.

Simple Church Recognizing the modern constraints on time, and desiring that each member of Immanuel Church would be engaged in serving our community and loving our unbelieving neighbors, we emphasize and encourage your commitment to two opportunities for your growth, health, and service as a Christian: weekly corporate worship and regular involvement in a community group. We believe these two environments are sufficient to provide for your spiritual needs, while still enabling you to be salt and light to the world outside the church. We encourage you to regularly fellowship with one another, to be hospitable to one another, and to do life with one another relationally outside of structured church settings.

IV - Membership: Why is membership in a local church necessary?

Reasons Membership Matters (Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership*)

1. **It's biblical.** Jesus established the local church and all the apostles did their ministry through it. The Christian life in the New Testament is the church life. Christians today should expect and desire the same.
2. **The church is its members.** To be a church in the New Testament is to be one of its members (read through Acts). And you want to be part of the church because that's who Jesus came to rescue and reconcile to himself.
3. **It's how you officially represent Jesus.** Membership is the church's affirmation that you are a citizen of Christ's kingdom and therefore a passport-carrying Jesus representative before the nations. And you want your representation to be authorized.
4. **It's how you embody and experience biblical images.** It's within the accountability structures of the of the local church that Christians live and experience the inter-connectivity of his body, the spiritual fullness of his temple, and the safety and intimacy and shared identity of his family.
5. **It's how you serve other Christians.** Membership helps you know to which Christians on planet Earth you are specifically responsible to love, serve, warn, and encourage. It enables you to fulfill your biblical responsibilities to Christ's body (see Eph. 4:11-16, 25-32)
6. **It's how you follow Christian leaders.** Membership helps you to know which Christian leaders on planet Earth you are called to obey and follow. Again, it allows you to fulfill your biblical responsibility to them (see Heb. 13:7, 17).
7. **It helps Christian leaders lead.** Membership lets Christian leaders know which Christians on planet Earth they will give an account for (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).
8. **It enables church discipline.** It gives you the biblically prescribed place to participate in the work of church discipline responsibly, wisely, and lovingly (1 Cor. 5)
9. **It gives structure to your Christian life.** It places an individual Christian's claim to obey and follow Jesus into a real-life setting where authority is actually exercised over us (see John 14:15; 1 John 2:19; 4:20-21). It's God's discipling program.
10. **It builds a witness and invites the nations.** Membership puts the alternative rule of Christ on display for the watching universe (Matt. 5:13; John 13:34-35; Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 2:9-12). The very boundaries, which are drawn around the membership of a church, yield a society of people that invites the nations to something better. It's God's evangelism program.

Who can be a member? To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized, in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of scripture as expressed in the Church Doctrine (Statement of Faith) and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant. The elders will be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership. The members will approve of member candidates.

Why have a Membership Covenant? A covenant is an agreement made before God. We live in a time when few make commitments and fewer still keep them. The effectiveness of our joining together will be determined by the level of the commitment we make. A membership covenant reminds us of our biblical responsibilities to one another as a church body and encourages us to be faithful to God in carrying them out for the glory of God and the good of one another.

What are the Duties and Privileges of Membership? Every member is privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Only members can lead in the ministries of the church. Non-members are welcomed to serve within

the various ministries of the church (excluding those involving leadership and biblical instruction) on an individual basis with the approval of the elders.

Members also vote on the following matters:

- The election or dismissal of elders, deacons, and the church treasurer;
- Decisions regarding membership status;
- Amending of the church constitution, doctrinal statement, or membership covenant;
- The purchase of land or buildings;
- The borrowing of any funds or any other action that would cause the church to incur debt;
- The approval of the annual budget;
- And on such other matters as may be submitted by the elders for congregational approval.

Why is church discipline important? Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and the welfare of the church hindered, will be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, in accordance with Matthew 18: 15–17 and the example of scripture. Church discipline should occur after individual private admonition has failed.

Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, suspension from communion for a definite period, removal from office, and removal from membership (see Matthew 18: 15–17; 2 Thessalonians 3: 14–15; 1 Timothy 5: 19–20 20; 1 Corinthians 5: 4–5).

The purposes of church discipline are:

- The repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (see Proverbs 15: 5; 29: 15; I Corinthians 4: 14; Ephesians 6: 4; I Timothy 3: 4–5; Hebrews 12: 1–11; Psalm 119: 115; 141: 5; Proverbs 17: 10; 25: 12; 27: 5; Ecclesiastes 7: 5; Matthew 7: 26–27; 18: 15–17; Luke 17: 3; Acts 2: 40; I Corinthians 5: 5; Galatians 6: 1–5; II Thessalonians 3: 6, 14–15; I Timothy 1: 20; Titus 1:13–14; James 1: 22);
- The instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (see Proverbs 13: 20; Romans 15: 14; I Corinthians 5: 11; 15: 33; Colossians 3: 16; I Thessalonians 5: 14; I Timothy 5: 20; Titus 1: 11; Hebrews 10: 24–25);
- The purity of the church as a whole (see I Corinthians 5: 6–7; II Corinthians 13: 10; Ephesians 5: 27; II John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21: 2);
- The good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (see Proverbs 28: 7; Matthew 5: 13–16; John 13: 35; Acts 5: 1–14; Ephesians 5: 11; I Timothy 3: 7; II Peter 2: 2; I John 3: 10);
- The glory of God through our reflection of His holy character (see Deuteronomy 5: 11; I Kings 11: 2; II Chronicles 19: 2; Ezra 6: 21; Nehemiah 9: 2; Isaiah 52: 11; Ezekiel 36: 20; Matthew 5: 16; John 15: 8; 18: 17, 25; Romans 2:24; 15: 5–6; II Corinthians 6: 14–7: 1; Ephesians 1: 4; 5: 27; I Peter 2: 12).

Where Do I Go From Here?

1. Get involved in a community group.
2. Ask to be connected to a discipleship partner.
3. Covenant with Immanuel Church.
4. Get involved in serving.

Immanuel Church Membership Covenant

(adapted from the Covenant of the New Hampshire Baptist Convention, 1833)

Having been, by faith, brought by God's grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and to give ourselves completely to Him; and having publicly given witness through believer's baptism; and in full affirmation of the church statement of faith; we solemnly and joyfully covenant with one another, to walk together in Him with brotherly love to His glory as our common Lord. Therefore, in His strength, we commit:

That we will care for one another as members of one body to promote the growth of the whole body in Christian knowledge, holiness, and comfort so that we may all stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

That for this purpose, we will continue to faithfully worship God together and observe the ordinances of His Church, believer's baptism and communion; that we will cheerfully and sacrificially give of our property for the support of those in need, and for the continuation of the faithful ministry of the gospel among us.

That we will practice both personal and family devotions at home; that we will biblically train our children and those under our care.

That we maintain a godly witness in the world, that we may lead others to faith in Christ; remembering that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind; that we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and that a city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

That we will frequently encourage, and if necessary, rebuke one another, according to Matthew 18, in a spirit of meekness; taking care that we ourselves might not be tempted, as we have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ, and therefore have an obligation to live a new life.

And may the God of peace make us perfect in every good work to do His will; working in us that which is pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ: to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

(Signature)

(Date)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Birthday: _____

Spouse & Anniversary: _____

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