

Understandings & Practices

In our statement of Doctrine, we cover the central truths that are essential to the Christian faith. We now turn to our understanding of other facets of our faith which, though brothers and sisters in Christ may disagree on the particulars, still play significant roles in the way we live and practice our faith as a church community.

Baptism and Communion

We understand that Christian baptism by immersion in water is a public identification with Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Although baptism is not required for salvation, it is commanded of all believers and is for believers only (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38, 41). Scriptures show that people were baptized after personally receiving forgiveness of their sin by accepting Jesus Christ. Baptism is a beautiful symbol of the death, burial and resurrection to new life, that happens when a person becomes a new creation in Christ (Colossians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:1-4).

We understand that communion is the commemoration by believers of Christ's death, and a reminder—through the symbols of the bread and the cup—of the Savior's broken body and shed blood until he returns. Communion is to be a reverent time of confession of sin and should be preceded by careful self-examination (Romans 6:3-6; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29).

Creation and God's Sovereignty

We understand that God created the universe and that, before He created the universe, nothing except God existed (Genesis 1; Exodus 31:17; Psalm 33:6-9; Acts 17:24; Hebrews 11:3; Colossians 1:16). God chose to create the universe and all that is in it to reveal His glory, divine nature, eternal power, infinite wisdom and supreme authority (Isaiah 43:7; Psalm 19:1-2; Jeremiah 10:12; Romans 1:20; Revelation 4:11).

We understand that all people are descendants of Adam and Eve, whom God created personally and individually as complete human beings (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7, 2:21-22; 1 Corinthians 11:8-9). Through the fall of Adam and Eve, we all suffer the effects of sin and death, but the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives everyone the opportunity to receive God's gift of eternal life with Him (Romans 5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). God rules over His creation and cares about and is involved in the lives of individual people (Job 12:10; Acts 17:25; Colossians 1:17; Ephesians 4:6).

Sexuality and Marriage

A faithful and thorough reading of the Bible leads us to the clear understanding that God created humankind in His image: male and female. Each person's gender is determined by their creator as evidenced by their genetics and/or physiology and God instills each person, regardless of their gender, with equal value and dignity (Genesis 1:26-28; Romans 1:26-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Matthew 15:19, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 13:4).

We understand that God created and designed marriage as a sacred union between one man, the husband, and one woman, the wife (1 Corinthians 7:2), and that God's plan and intent for sexual intimacy is exclusively for the union of a man and a woman within the marriage relationship. Therefore, any sexual conduct outside of marriage is a distortion of God's designed order for human flourishing and His glory (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:5-9; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7-9; Revelation 21:2).

We therefore understand that God has provided humankind with two good and right paths in the area of sexuality: The first is the marital union of one man and one woman; the second is celibacy. God offers either of these, in accordance with His sovereign will, as a gift for the thriving of the believer and for His glory. We value and affirm celibacy and faithful singleness (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18, 21-24; Isaiah 54:1; 56:3-5; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:5-8; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 7:1-8; Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Romans 12:10; 1 Timothy 5:1-2).

We understand that each person is created by God in His image and is fully deserving of our love, and respect (John 13:34-35). All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and that

redemption and restoration is available for everyone who turns from sin to find mercy and forgiveness through Christ. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Ephesians 2:1-10, Titus 3:3-7). Therefore, we treat with compassion and sensitivity all who are tempted or who have engaged in sexual sin. (Matthew 11:28-30; Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:17-18; Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 John 1:9). Our understanding of these matters leaves no room for bigotry or hate. We seek to share the Gospel with all (Mark 16:15). As such, although not condoning gender diversity, same-sex marriage or other sexual expression outside of God's path, Woodmen welcomes all who are earnestly seeking after the Lord and biblical teaching.

Salvation and Security

We understand that God, in His divine providence, decides who will be saved (John 6:37, 6:44, 6:65; Romans 8:29-30, 9:11-18; Acts 13:48, 16:14; Ephesians 1:4-6, 2:8-9; 1 Peter 1:3), and it is God's kindness, forbearance and patience that leads that person to repentance (Romans 2:4). The Bible also teaches that each person is responsible to embrace or reject Jesus as Savior and Lord and that God, in His great grace, welcomes all who come to Him by faith, regardless of their works (Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 15:7, 20:9-18; John 6:37, 7:37; Romans 10:9-13; Acts 16:30-34, 17:30). Both of these two truths—God's sovereignty in salvation and man's decision to embrace Christ—are taught in the Scriptures. Their co-existence is a mystery only fully comprehended by the mind of our omniscient God (Isaiah 55:8; Romans 11:33-34). All glory for the salvation of every believer belongs to God alone (Romans 3:21-31; Ephesians 1:7-9, 2:8-9; Jude 1:24-25).

Those who are born of God's Spirit through Jesus Christ persevere in the faith (John 15:4-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:10-13; 1 John 4:13; 2 John 9). God is faithful to His people, empowering them to persevere in the faith (1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:13; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 1 John 2:19-20).

We understand that everyone who is born of God's Spirit through Jesus Christ is assured of salvation from the moment that they place their trust in Christ (Ephesians 1:13-14). This assurance relies on God's decisive, faithful and extravagant grace, rather than on the works of the believer. Neither obedience nor good works earn or retain the believer's salvation. Instead, they are responses to Christ's love and indicators of the believer's love of Christ and profession of faith (Luke 6:46; John 14:21; James 2:17-18).

Eternal security in salvation relies on the Father's guarantee of each believer's adoption as His child (Galatians 4:4-7), God's seal of the believer by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14), and His gift of the Holy Spirit to each believer as a down payment toward future, eternal joy in heaven (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

A person who professes genuine faith in Christ immediately becomes His possession (Luke 23:42-43; Acts 2:40-41, 16:30-34; Romans 10:13), and nothing can snatch that person out of His hands (John 10:27-29). Having been bought with the price of Jesus Christ's crucifixion as complete payment for sin, the believer belongs to Christ (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). This assurance is absolutely certain, reserved in heaven, and protected by God's unlimited power (1 Peter 1:4-5).

Spiritual Gifts

Our understanding is that the Scriptures do not teach certain gifts have ceased, rather they indicate that the use of gifts vary according to the need that each gift meets. We do not believe that any particular spiritual gift is essential or proves the presence of the Holy Spirit. We seek to emphasize the more excellent way of love as well as zeal for the more edifying gifts (Titus 3:5; Ephesians 4:11-12; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-5, 12:11-13, 12:19, 14:26; Galatians 5:25; Hebrews 4:1-4).

Leadership Roles in the Church

We understand that men and women are equal before God (Genesis 1:27, Galatians 3:28) and any distinction between the two is not one of value, dignity or worth, but of role and responsibility. Our understanding of the biblical design for church leadership is that the role of elder/pastor is reserved for men alone.

We do not believe this precludes women from exercising their God-given leadership gifts within the church and we see no reason for those gifts to be limited to simply oversight of women and children. Women serve in a variety of senior leadership roles on staff at Woodmen, and in those roles, do lead both men and women. Women also serve as Deacons and in other key Ministry Partner roles. Like every church, we are at our best when men and women work together, side by side for the sake of the gospel.

Process of Sanctification and Maturity

We understand that true life is found only through Jesus; He said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). He bled, died and rose to life, so that we would be able to receive new life in Him.

We mature in our faith as we gather, connect, grow and contribute. These are our mission values—four commitments that we believe lay the groundwork for a Christ-like life. The person who exhibits these qualities of a disciple will grow in personal sanctification and, therefore, will experience a closer personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:28). In addition to the growth that takes place in community, we see personal spiritual practices, such as setting aside time for consistent Bible study and prayer, as vital facets in the life of the maturing Christ follower (Luke 5:15-16; Phil. 4:6-7; Matt 6:6-8; Deut. 11:18-23; Romans 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).