

## Statement of Faith

The statements below are provided by the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Canada. Additional information has been added to explain how certain beliefs are applied to The Meadows Church.

### Bible:

We believe the Bible to be the complete Word of God; that the sixty-six books, as originally written, comprising the Old and New Testaments were verbally inspired by the Spirit of God and were entirely free from error; that the Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice and the true basis of Christian union. (Matthew 5:17-18; John 16:12-15; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

### Trinity:

There is one, and only one, God, who is the creator of this universe. God, who is a God of love and justice, has always existed and will always exist. He is the ultimate authority over all persons and things, and he answers to no higher being or principle. In biblical terms we affirm that he is "holy," which means that he is in every way unique and in a category all his own, free from all the limits and imperfections experienced by creatures. In both the majesty of his being and the moral purity of his nature and action, he is uniquely perfect. Although God is one in his being, he exists eternally in three divine persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The idea of the Trinity is a mystery beyond our full comprehension, but we are compelled by the witness of the Bible to affirm it. (Genesis 1-2; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

### Father:

We believe God the Father created all things in six days for his glory according to his own will (Revelation 4:11), through his Son, Jesus Christ. He upholds all things by the Word of his power and grace, exercising sovereign headship over all creation, providence, and redemption (Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3).

### Jesus:

The supreme revelation of God is found in Jesus Christ, the God-Man. The Son of God is a fully divine person of the Trinity who has existed eternally. In order to save human beings he added to his divinity a full and perfect human nature and became Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was miraculously conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a Jewish virgin, Mary. He lived a sinless life in obedience to God the Father, and his obedience culminated in his death as a payment of the penalty for the disobedience of sinful humans. God vindicated him when he raised him bodily from the

dead, and he ascended to heaven where he is free from the limits of this world. He now intercedes for us who believe in him and preserves us in our relationship with the Father while we await his personal return. (Matthew 1:18-23; John 1:1-18; Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8)

### **Holy Spirit:**

The Holy Spirit is a fully divine person, not an impersonal force. The Spirit makes the work of Jesus Christ effective in us by convincing us that we have sinned against God, that we therefore fail to meet God's standard for human life, that we are subject to God's judgment for that reason, and that Christ is the answer to our need. Christ gives the Spirit to indwell all those who believe in him, and the Spirit gives to believers a new spiritual ability to understand God's Word and live in obedience to it. By indwelling us he sets us apart as God's children; he continues to transform us into faithful followers of Christ; and he will in the end make us fully like Christ. (John 7:37-39; 14:16-17; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13)

### **Satan:**

Satan (also called the Devil) exists as an evil, personal, spirit-being who opposes the work of God in the world. Although created as a good, angelic being, he originated rebellion against God and continues to use his real but limited power to oppose all that would serve the glory of God and the good of humanity. (Genesis 3:1-15; Job 1:6-12; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 1 Peter 5:8-9)

### **Humanity:**

Human beings were created by God to be like him in every way. This is necessary in order to be in relationship with him. They serve as God's visible representatives in the exercise of responsible dominion over the created world. Our first parents sinned by disobeying an explicit divine command and thus brought ruin on the human race. The Bible describes this ruin in terms of "death": spiritual, physical and eternal death. Spiritual death involves corruption at the core of our being, so that human beings are by nature totally incapable of pleasing God. Physical death is the destiny of all humanity. And ultimately eternal death involves permanent separation from God as the destiny of all those who refuse to repent and respond to God's offer of grace. (Genesis 1:26-27; 3:1-24; Romans 5:12-19; Ephesians 2:1-3)

### **Salvation:**

Although God could have left all human beings in their sin and guilt, in love, he freely and graciously chose to deliver us from our ruined condition. He provided his eternal Son to become human in order to save us. Christ's saving work focused on his death, in which he bore the penalty which is justly ours, thus satisfying the demands of God's moral law and turning away the wrath of God which is poured out on unrepentant sinners. God signified his approval of Christ's work by raising him from the dead and

exalting him as Lord in heaven. On the basis of this work of Christ on our behalf, God accepts as perfectly righteous all those who trust in Christ who died and rose again. We come to believe in Christ because God does a special work of grace to overcome our sinful disposition and draw us to himself. Then God continues this work of grace, so that all who have been drawn to faith in Christ will be preserved in faith and salvation and will enter into the perfect conditions of eternal life in the age to come. (John 6:35-40; Romans 3:19-26; 8:28-30; 1 Peter 1:18-23)

### Future Things:

We believe that Jesus Christ will return personally, bodily, and gloriously, just as he promised and his apostles affirmed. In the end, Christ will raise from the dead all who have ever lived, and he will declare God's perfect judgment concerning every person. Those who have been saved will live eternally in the perfect, renewed creation, and those who have been unrepentant will exist eternally in the conscious punishment of hell. (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20-22)

### The Church:

The universal church, the community of **believers** in Christ, is manifested in local churches throughout the world. A properly ordered local church is a loving community of persons who have confessed their faith in Christ by being immersed in Christian **baptism**, and who by their baptism have **committed** themselves to one another as well as to Christ. Together they seek to proclaim the gospel of Christ, to build up each other as growing followers of Christ, to transmit the Christian faith to succeeding generations, and to worship God as his people called to be a distinct society in this world. Each local church is called to acknowledge Christ as Lord and Head of the church and to use its divinely given abilities and opportunities to make Christ known in its community. (Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-15; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

### The Mission:

Jesus has commissioned the Church to join him in making disciples of all ethnic groups. This is the daily action of every follower of Jesus to share (with words) and show (with works) the gospel message with those around them. This begins with their neighbours and continues to the ends of the earth. The Church is called to serve in this mission together both as individuals and as a community. (Matthew 28:16-20)

### Symbols of the Gospel

Among the things commanded by Christ, there are two visible symbols of the gospel, which he instituted for observance by his followers until he returns, one as a sign of Christian initiation and the other as a means of ongoing nurture.

**1. Baptism** is the immersion in water of a confessing believer, designed to occur

at the beginning of Christian experience as the formal means of response to the gospel and initiation as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. 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; Acts 18:8). Scripture shows that a person was

baptized after personally receiving forgiveness of sin by accepting Jesus Christ. The act is a powerful symbol of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, with all that this implies about our death to our old life and our spiritual rebirth. The waters of baptism are a symbol of death, burial, and resurrection to newness of life that happens when a person becomes a new creation in Christ (Colossians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:1-4).

**2. The Lord's Supper** is a symbolic meal in which believers together partake of bread and wine as a tangible reminder of the body and blood of Christ, which were offered up for our salvation. By this act of eating and drinking, the whole community of believers proclaims the Lord's death until he returns. It is treated as a celebration of the redeeming work Christ has done in the lives of believers. We also believe it is wise to substitute wine for juice as to not cause anyone who struggles with alcohol to stumble. (Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34)

### Church Leadership:

God calls qualified people to lead His family within each local church. The leadership is found in two specific offices; the role of elder and deacon (1 Timothy 3:1-16; Titus 1:5-9).

**1. Elders/Pastors** serve by leading. The Elders' have six primary responsibilities. The first is to ensure that the **doctrine** of the church is biblical and be teaching those in the church these biblical beliefs. Second is to **direct** The Meadows Church in the way of God's leading. This means the Elders are entrusted with the decision making and guidance of the church. Next, they are to administer **discipline** in love and humility through the process provided in Matthew 18:15-20. They are also to be **devoted** to God's family like a shepherd would care for his flock. They are responsible for **developing** other leaders. Just like in 2 Timothy 2:2; "what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Lastly, they **demonstrate** an exemplary life that is as close to Jesus' life as possible.

The Scriptures teach that whenever possible a plurality of elders is necessary to lead any church (Proverbs 15:22; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; Philippians 1:1). Every elder on the leadership team is equal in authority. However, this does not necessarily mean they are equal in influence. For instance, the Lead Pastor through his giftedness and calling should be the most influential over the local church, even though he is equal in authority to the rest of the elders (1 Timothy: 5:17-18; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

We believe that Jesus has given this specific calling to qualified men only. Just as God made Adam first to be the head of his household, he has also made a few men the leaders of his church (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:12-13, Titus 2:1-15). These men must be above reproach, able to teach, husband to one wife, not addicted to wine, temperate, not antagonistic, prudent, uncontentious, respectable, free from the love of money, hospitable, manages his own household well, and not a new convert (Titus 1:6-9).

**2. Deacons/Ministry Directors** lead by serving. Jesus calls qualified men and women to lead his church as deacons, a word that is literally translated as “servants.” As the burden of ministry grew for the early church, elders appointed deacons to serve the needs of the church and handle the administrative functions of the church (Acts 6). Therefore, deacons serve the elders and The Meadows Church by leading various ministries of the church.

Those who serve as deacons must be characterized as having integrity, generosity, soberness, a clear understanding of the Bible, a well-ordered home, and a good reputation both in the church and outside the church. These would be positions such as Children’s Ministry Director, Church Treasurer, and Set Up Coordinator.

## **Male and Female Roles**

The Bible teaches firmly that there is no partiality or discrimination in the body of Christ. Galatians 3:28 says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This means that everyone who is a believer in Christ is of equal value. We also believe that God has given people different callings and different roles to play. This does not change anyone’s value, but does change how they are to live within the family of God.

This is why God has called husbands to be the head of their household and qualified men to be elders. This does not mean women cannot lead; qualified women should serve in any leadership position that God has not designated solely for men (1 Timothy 2:12). Jesus calls every man and woman to minister and lead in a variety of ways for his mission. Titus 2 illustrates this well by instructing older men to teach younger men, and older women to teach younger women.

## **Marriage**

We believe marriage is one of the God’s highest callings because He designed it to be a picture of His union with the Church. Marriage points all of us to something much greater, the gospel (Eph 5:22-33). Therefore, our beliefs about marriage are deeply rooted in our beliefs about God.

God created humanity as male and female and included our born gender as part of our eternal identity. Therefore our bodies are both a gift and a calling (Gen 1, 2). Marriage is the union of two people who have become one flesh. This is a union between one male

and one female who have committed before God and the Church to be one until death separates them (Mark 10:9).

We believe God allows divorce to take place in rare and extreme circumstances only. However, His goal is always redemption and committed union whenever possible (Matt 19:3-10). Not everyone is called to marriage, but we all need to honour God's design for marriage and sexuality (1 Cor 7).