

Declaration of Faith

HISTORY OF THIS DECLARATION OF FAITH

The Declaration of Faith set forth below was originally adopted by Bay Leaf Baptist Church on August 19, 1880. It has been amended slightly to account for new declarations that the Church feels the need to establish in written form for the sake of its biblical witness. We give thanks for the faithful witness of this local church since her beginning.

BAY LEAF BAPTIST CHURCH DECLARATION OF FAITH

- 1. Of the Scriptures:** We believe the Holy Scriptures were written by men divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit and are a perfect treasure of heavenly revelation. That it has God as its author and salvation as its end. That it has truth without any mixture of errors in its original form. That it reveals the principles by which God will judge us, and therefore is and shall remain to the end of the world the center of Christian union and is the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinions shall be tried.
- 2. Of the One True God:** That there is one and only one true and living God, whose name is Jehovah. The maker and supreme ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness; worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love; revealed under the personal and relative distinction of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; equal in every divine perfection and exerting distinct but harmonious roles in the great work of redemption.
- 3. Of the fall of Man:** That the first man was created in a state of holiness under the law of his Maker. By voluntary transgression he fell from that holy and happy state. In consequence of which, all mankind are now sinners, being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the laws of God, given to the gratification of the world of Satan and of his own sinful person and therefore under just condemnation of eternal ruin without defense or excuse.
- 4. Of the Way of Salvation:** That the salvation of sinners is only by grace through faith in the Son of God, who took upon Himself our nature, yet without sin, honored the law by His perfect and personal obedience and made atonement for our sins by His death. Being risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in heaven and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathy with divine perfections and is in every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate, and all-sufficient Savior.
- 5. Of Justification:** That one of the great gospel blessings which Christ in all of His fullness bestows on such as believe in Him is justification. That justification consists in the pardon of sin and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness. That it is not bestowed in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through His own redemption and righteousness. That it brings us in a state of most blessed peace and favor with God and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.
- 6. Of Human Responsibility to Receive the Gift of Salvation:** That the gift of salvation is free to all through the proclamation of the gospel. That it is the responsibility of every individual to accept this gift by the leading of the Spirit in God-given faith or to voluntarily reject this gift. To accept this gift brings eternal life; to refuse brings eternal death.

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7. Of Grace in Regeneration: That in order to be saved, we must be regenerated or born again. That regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the believer, is effective in a manner above our comprehension or calculation by the power of the Holy Spirit so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel. That its proper evidence is found in the holy fruit which we bring forth to the Glory of God.
8. Of God's Purpose of Grace: That election is the gracious purpose of God according to which He regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners. That being perfectly consistent with the moral agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end. That it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely wise, holy and unchangeable. That it utterly excludes boasting and promotes humility, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of His free mercy. That it encourages the use of means in the highest degree. That it is ascertained by its effects in all who believe the gospel. It is the foundation of Christian assurance and that to ascertain it with regards to ourselves demands and deserves our utmost diligence.
9. Of the Perseverance of Saints: That only such are real believers as endure to the end. That their persevering attachment to the Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors. That a special providence watches over their welfare and they are kept by the power of God through his faith unto salvation.
10. Harmony of the Law and the Gospel: That the law of God is eternal and unchangeable. It is just, holy, and good. 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 into right relationship with their Creator is one great end of the gospel and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible church.
11. Of a Gospel Church: That a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His word. That its only proper officers are Bishops or Pastors and Deacons whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the epistles of 1 Timothy and Titus.
12. Of Baptism and The Lord's Supper: That Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water, in the name of The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in a crucified, buried, and a risen Saviour with its purifying powers. That it is pre-requisite to the privileges of a church relation and to the Lord's Supper in which the members of the church by the use of bread and wine are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ - preceded always by solemn self-examination.
13. The Lord's Day: It is to be kept holy and sacred by the devout observances of all the means of grace both private and public, by a preparation for that rest which remaineth for the people of God.
14. Of Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality: That God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as either male or female. That these two distinct and complementary genders together reflect the image of God (Gen 2:18-25). That rejection of one's biological sex (male or female) is a rejection of the image of God within that person. That the term "marriage" has one meaning as defined by Scripture: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union. That sexual intimacy is intended to occur only between

a man and a woman who are married to each other. That any form of sexual immorality as defined by Scripture (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, incest, etc.) is sinful and offensive to God. That all who confess their sin and forsake it can find forgiveness and salvation in Christ.

15. Of Civil Government: That civil government is of divine appointment for the interest and good order of human society. That magistrates are to be prayed for conscientiously, honored and obeyed, except in things opposed to the will of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience and the Prince of the kings of the earth.
16. Of the Righteous and the Wicked: That there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked. That such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord, Jesus, are sanctified by the spirit of our God and are truly righteous in His esteem. All such as continue in unbelief are in His sight wicked and under the curse. That this distinction holds among men both in life and after death.
17. Of the World to Come: That the end of the world is approaching. That at the last day Christ will descend from Heaven and raise the dead from their graves to a final retribution. That a solemn separation will then take place. That the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment and the righteous to endless joy. That this judgment will fix forever the final state of all men in Heaven or Hell on principles of righteousness.