

OAK TREE COMMUNITY CHURCH

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Introduction

A “Statement of Faith” is one of the most important documents for a local church. It presents what doctrines the church will teach, will not teach, and may even boldly and vocally oppose. It is intentionally documented so that questions and clarifications can be discussed before new people join the congregation. Churches present their beliefs in different forms. Sometimes these documents are brief and succinct; others are much longer and more detailed.

Our statement has remained virtually unchanged since the 1950s. In 2017, we added a section to clarify our position on gender, sexuality, and marriage. There have been other minor edits to verbiage or Bible references, but our beliefs have not changed throughout our church’s history. In this 2024 update, we have chosen to expand our statement, including more details and Bible references. The reason for this is because of how fast doctrines are changing and churches are drifting from their beliefs. Our goal is to provide clarity and prevent Oak Tree from drifting over time. This means that there may be terms, phrases, and concepts with which you are not familiar. We encourage you to ask, so we can explain our understanding and formal position. Each major category includes a list of beliefs we hold and teach and a list of concepts or statements we reject.

Summary

Oak Tree Community Church, South Bend, Indiana, USA affirms the full inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of the Scriptures in their original writings. Based on the plain interpretation of the text, we affirm the existence of the one Triune God, man’s fallen nature, Christ’s payment for sin on the cross, his bodily resurrection, the necessity and sufficiency of faith in Christ alone for eternal life, a future pre-tribulational rapture, a 7-year tribulation, and the millennial kingdom.

The Bible

We affirm

1. The sixty-six historically accepted books of the Bible are the inspired Word of God, written by men as they were moved by the Holy Spirit to write exactly what was intended by God, while fully preserving each human author’s individual style. (1 Corinthians 14:37; Ephesians 3:1–5; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21)
2. The Scriptures are the very words of God with their perfection, authority, and sufficiency extending to the exact vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and literary context. (Exodus 24:3, 4, 8; Matthew 5:18; 1 Corinthians 14:37)
3. The Bible is the infallible Word of God, completely without error in the original manuscripts. Translations are rightly considered the Word of God to the degree that they preserve the meaning of the original text. (Psalm 19:7–9; John 10:35; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Peter 1:20–21)
4. The Bible is the supreme and final authority for faith and practice, fully addressing all issues of life either directly or in principle. (Matthew 4:4–10; 2 Timothy 3:16–17)

5. The apostles and prophets were unique messengers of God’s written revelation, being guided by the Holy Spirit through the process of inspiration. All Church Age revelation ceased by the end of the first century Apostolic Era. (John 15:26–27; 16:12–15; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Hebrews 1:2–4; Revelation 22:16–21)
6. Biblical revelation is always objective truth in both source and content. (Genesis 6:15–22; Exodus 20:1–17; 2 Samuel 7:5–17; Acts 9:3–6; Revelation 1:10–3:22)
7. The Bible is sufficient revelation for man to understand the will of God and to fully live a life that is pleasing to Him. (2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:3–9)
8. Scripture can be properly interpreted and understood only by consistently applying a literal/normal, grammatical, historical hermeneutic which recognizes the author’s original intent, including the use of literal language, imagery, and figures of speech. (Deuteronomy 4:2; 2 Timothy 2:2; Revelation 22:18–19)
9. The meaning of any given text is only that which is intended by the Divine and human authors and conveyed exclusively by the vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and literary context. (2 Peter 1:20–21; Revelation 22:18–19)

We deny

1. The concept that there are errors of any sort in the original autographs.
2. The legitimacy of multiple interpretations of any biblical text.
3. That the Holy Spirit ever teaches anything contrary to prior revelation.
4. That the preacher has any legitimate message from God apart from what is found in Scripture.
5. That any ecclesiastical body is authoritative in defining any biblical doctrine.
6. That any passage of Scripture corrects or mitigates against any other passage.
7. That any later Biblical author misinterpreted or reinterpreted any prior Biblical passages when quoting from or referring to them.
8. The “complementary” hermeneutic of Progressive Dispensationalism which softens the doctrine of cumulative revelation, forcing of a false continuity between the Testaments by teaching that the New Testament can change the Old Testament rather than just build on it.
9. The allegorical or spiritual hermeneutic of Reformed Theology, including the conflation of Israel and the church as one people of God, the spiritualizing of God’s promises to Israel, and re-application of those promises to the church.

The Triune God

We affirm

1. That there is exactly one, unique, infinite God who was not created but eternally exists as three distinct persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—who are in a perfect relationship with one another. These three persons are fully God and coequal in every way, each with a distinct role in God’s program. (Deuteronomy 6:4–6; Isaiah 61:3; Matthew 3:16–17; 28:19; John 1:1–3; 10:27–30, 33–36; 14:16–17, 26; 2 Corinthians 13:14)
2. That all three persons of the Godhead are perfectly holy and worthy of all possible worship and love (Exodus 20:2–3; Revelation 4:11)

3. That the second Person of the Godhead was not created but was an active part of the creation of all things; that he came to this earth, was born of a virgin by the miraculous conception of the Holy Spirit, took on human flesh and nature, becoming fully man while continuing to be fully God, and was named "Jesus." (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:35; John 1:1–3, 14; 2 Corinthians. 8:9; Philippians 2:5–8; Colossians 1:15–17; Hebrews 2:14–18)
4. That Jesus Christ lived a sinless life, perfectly fulfilling the Law of Moses and living in perfect accordance with all the eternal principles and laws of God. (John 8:46; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5)
5. That Jesus was crucified unto death at the hands of men, dying at the moment of his own choosing. His death was a substitutionary sacrifice for all mankind. His shed blood fully paid the penalty due for all the sins of every person. However, only those who turn to him in faith experience the salvation he offers on the basis of his sacrifice. (Isaiah 53:4–7; Matthew 27:50; John 1:29; 3:16–18; Philippians 2:6–11; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Timothy 2:3–4; 1 John 2:2; 4:10)
6. That Jesus died according to the Scriptures, was buried, physically arose from the grave according to the Scriptures, and was seen by many witnesses after his resurrection. (Matthew 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–13; Luke 24:1–49; John 20:1–29; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, 12–19)
7. That forty days after his resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven, where he is presently at the right hand of the Father interceding on behalf of believers as our High Priest, though not yet ruling from the throne of David as the Messianic King. (Psalm 110:4; Acts 1:9; 7:55–56; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 1:3; 2:17; 5:5–10; 7:25; 8:6; 12:2; 1 John 2:1)
8. That the Holy Spirit works to convict unbelievers of sin, righteousness, and judgment and to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel (John 12:32; 16:8–11; Acts 5:29–32; 7:51)
9. That the Holy Spirit is the agent of the new creation and that he indwells believers to seal, enlighten, guide, convict of sin, sanctify, help, and empower them to fulfill God's will by living a life that is pleasing to Him. (John 14:16–17; Acts 11:16; Romans 8:14–27; 1 Corinthians 2:10–12; Ephesians 1:13–14; 5:15–21; Hebrews 9:14)

We deny

1. Any doctrine, such as modalism or oneness, that teaches that the members of the Trinity are not distinct persons.
2. That the Father suffered with the Son on the cross (Patripassianism).
3. That the Son is less than the Father in power, glory, and/or being (ontological subordination).
4. Any doctrine or system, such as Open Theism, that teaches that God does not fully and completely know all things past, present, and future, both real and possible, or that his knowledge is dependent on human action and choice.

Creation

We affirm

1. That God created an innumerable company of sinless, spiritual beings, known as angels, to be his servants in the administration of creation; that one, “the anointed cherub” – the highest in rank – sinned through pride, thereby becoming Satan, the open and declared enemy of God and man and counterfeit god of this world; that a great company of the angels followed him in his moral fall, some of whom are active as his agents and associates in the prosecution of his unholy purposes, while others who fell are “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness until the judgment of the great day.” Satan is destined to the judgment of eternal justice in the Lake of Fire. (Job 1:6,7; 38:7; Isaiah 14:12–14; Ezekiel 28:11–19; Matthew 4:2–11; 25:41; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:13–15; Ephesians 2:1–3; 6:11–12; 1 Timothy 3:6; Hebrews 1:4, 13–14; 2 Peter 2:4; 1 John 5:19; Jude 6; Revelation 20:10)
2. That the Genesis record should be taken in its plain sense as historical narrative, which leads to the conclusion that God made everything through special creation in six literal days and the earth is relatively young. (Genesis 1–2; Exodus 20:11; 31:17; John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:16–17)
3. That Adam and Eve were the uniquely created first humans, that they were created in the image of God, that all humans have descended from them, that there is one human race, that the whole of humanity (with the exception of eight people) was killed in the Flood, and that all humans have descended from this small group. (Genesis 1:26–28; 3:20; 7:7–23; 8:15–19; 9:1)
4. That God put man as ruler over the creation to subdue it, that man is a steward of the environment, and that the creation is under a curse due to Adam’s fall into sin. (Genesis 1:26–31; 2:15; 3:14–19; 9:2; Proverbs 12:10; Romans 5:12)

We deny

1. That any passage of Scripture conflicts with genuine scientific reality.
2. That the narratives of Genesis 1–11 are mythical, allegorical, or figurative—anything but historical.
3. That God used any form of evolution in his creation.
4. That the Bible presents the earth as anything other than a spherical, spinning ball.
5. That scientific hypotheses about origins of life or matter may legitimately be invoked to overthrow Scriptural teaching about creation.
6. Any philosophy which values the creation over humanity or diminishes the creation for the sake of humanity.

Salvation

We affirm

1. That every person is born into the human race with a sinful nature that cannot be humanly controlled and causes him to naturally choose evil over good (Romans 3:10–11; 5:12; 7:14–25)
2. That sin was not created by God but was a voluntary response of angels and mankind causing us to fall from our sinless and happy states (Genesis 3:1–6, 24)
3. That sin will require us to give an account of our lives to God but will not be able to be used as a defense or excuse (Romans 1:18–32; 5:10–19; 14:12)

4. That salvation is available for every person and that the saving transaction between God and the sinner is simply the giving and receiving of a free gift of God's grace through personal faith in Jesus Christ, such that no act or promise of obedience, preceding or following that faith, may be added to or considered part of that faith as a condition for receiving everlasting life. (John 4:10; Acts 16:31; Romans 4:5; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 3:5–7; Revelation 22:17)
5. That at the moment of faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit permanently regenerates, indwells, and baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ (the Church), which includes all born-again believers in Christ from Pentecost to the Rapture, and gives complete pardon of sin and peace with God. (Acts 2:1–4; 13:39; Romans 5:1, 9; 8:1; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:7, 11–14, 4:4–6)
6. The doctrine of eternal security, that God preserves the believer's eternal life regardless of his perseverance, and that assurance of salvation is the believer's birthright on the basis of Christ's finished work. (John 3:16–18; 5:24; 10:28–29; Romans 8:38–39; Ephesians 1:13–14; 4:30; Philippians 1:6; 1 John 5:13)
7. That sanctification is positional, progressive, and eschatological, that the believer has been set apart unto God, that he is being conformed to the image of Christ to a greater or lesser degree, and that he will be perfected at the resurrection. (John 17:17; Romans 6:1–14; 8:1–5; 2 Corinthians 3:18, 5:17; 7:1; Ephesians 2:1–10; 4:24, 5:25–27; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 10:10, 14, 12:10; 1 John 3:1–3)
8. That every saved person still possesses his old sin nature with which he can accept or reject God's leading in his life, but also has a new nature with provisions made for victory over the sin nature through his identification with Christ and submission to the indwelling Holy Spirit. (Romans 6:1–13, 8:12,13; Galatians 5:16–25; Ephesians 4:22–24; Colossians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:14–16; 1 John 3:5–9)
9. That believers are to live their lives in this current world without being part of the evil in the world and that they are responsible to confess their sin to God in order to stay in fellowship with him (John 17:14–16; 1 Corinthians 5:9–10; 1 John 1:9; 2:15–16)

We deny

1. That a person's works are meritorious toward his salvation or that anyone can obtain salvation while trusting in his own works rather than Christ's.
2. That salvation has ever been or ever will be by anything other than grace through faith regardless of the dispensation in which he lives.
3. That God has selected only certain people on whom to bestow his salvation and that the rest are condemned eternally based on his decree.
4. That Jesus died and paid the penalty for only certain selected people rather than for every person.
5. That the Holy Spirit cannot be resisted in his invitation for a person to believe for salvation.
6. That it is the believer's responsibility to maintain his salvation or that eternal life may be lost.
7. That assurance of salvation comes from a Christian's works or by relying on anything other than Christ's work on the cross.
8. That the sin nature can be eradicated in this life.
9. That sin in a believer's life does not hinder his fellowship with God.
10. Universalism, which in its various forms, teaches that all men will be with God in eternity.

Israel and the Church

We affirm

1. That the church and Israel are two distinct groups in God's plan and will be so eternally. (Psalm 89:33–37; Jeremiah 31:1–4; Matthew 23:37–39; Romans 11:1–2, 25–29; Ephesians 3:1–12)
2. That God has made specific covenants and promises to national Israel and that his character of truthfulness demands that he fulfill them to the believing descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (2 Samuel 7:12–16; Psalm 89:28–37; Jeremiah 33:25–26; Romans 11:1–32)
3. That national Israel is under a temporary hardening until the end of the Church Age but that individual Jews may believe in Jesus as Savior and Messiah and be joined to the Church during this dispensation (Romans 9–11)
4. That any form of anti-Semitism is Satanic and not glorifying to God (Genesis 12:1–3; Revelation 12:1–17).
5. That the universal church (the “Body of Christ”) began on the day of Pentecost and consists of all born-again believers in Christ from Pentecost to the Rapture. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 1:4–8; 2:1–4, 46–47; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22–23; 2:19–22; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17)
6. That Christians are not under the Mosaic Law, but they are responsible to conform to God's righteous standards as revealed throughout Scripture. (Romans 3:20; 4:3; 6:1–4; Ephesians 2:8–9)
7. That the universal church is represented by local churches made up of born-again believers who regularly gather for fellowship, mutual edification, instruction, prayer, and worship and to regularly observe the ordinances of water baptism of believers and communion in remembrance of the Lord's death until he comes. (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 2:41–47; Romans 6:3–5; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 11:23–32; Colossians 2:12; Philemon 1–2, Hebrews 10:25)
8. That each local congregation holds the absolute right of self-government, under the headship of Christ, within the confines defined in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1–13; 5:17–22; Titus 1:5–9)
9. That men are exclusively responsible to fulfill the roles of leadership and teaching in the church, particularly in matters of Bible exposition, theology, or other matters that would include exercising spiritual authority over other men. Women have a biblically defined role in ministry to their families, to other women, and to children. (1 Timothy 2:11–15; 3:1–15; 5:14; Titus 2:1–8)
10. That the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts of service to all believers according to his will for the building up of the Body of Christ. (Romans 12:4–7; 1 Corinthians 7:7; 12:1–13; Ephesians 4:11–13)
11. That some of the gifts given during the first century were temporary and ceased by the time of the completion of the Bible. These gifts are the miraculous/sign gifts that authenticated Jesus' apostles and their message and revelatory gifts whereby God gave new revelation through his prophets. (Mark 16:17–20; 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 27–31; 13:8–13; 14:20–25; 2 Corinthians 12:11–13; Hebrews 2:3–4)
12. That the mission of the local church is to share the gospel and make disciples, each believer using his spiritual gifts to edify the others (Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15; Ephesians 4:11–16; 2 Timothy 2:2)

We deny

1. The practices and philosophy of ecumenism or any other movement that seeks to bring believers in Christ into an unequal yoke with those following other world religions, theological liberalism, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, or any other group that diverges from biblical Christianity.
2. Any conflation or combination of Israel and the church into one people of God or that the church fulfills God's promises to Israel or that God fulfills His promises to Israel in the church.
3. That Christ is currently ruling from the Davidic Throne.
4. That the mission of the church is to prepare the world for the Messianic Kingdom, to bring in the Kingdom, or to do Kingdom work; that the church is the Kingdom of God in this world; or that the Kingdom is already in force spiritually even if not yet physically ("already/not yet").

The Future

We affirm

1. That in an imminent moment, Jesus will return in the clouds, at which time all the dead in Christ will be resurrected and all the living in Christ will be caught up (raptured) to be with him forever. This is the church's "blessed hope." (1 Corinthians 15:50–54; Philippians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Titus 2:13)
2. That after the Rapture, there will be a seven-year tribulation period, which is a time of wrath from which the church will be delivered (through the rapture), and that this tribulation serves to purify Israel and to pour out God's wrath on the nations. (Daniel 9:24–27; Joel 3:1–3; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Revelation 3:10)
3. That after the Tribulation, Christ will physically return to the earth to defeat Antichrist and his armies, to rescue Israel and Jerusalem, and to establish his kingdom on the earth for 1,000 literal years (the Millennium), ruling the nations from the throne of David in Jerusalem. (2 Samuel 7:8–16, Matthew 25:31–46; Revelation 20:1–6)
4. That every Christian will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to assess the quality of his Christian life on earth. The Judgment Seat of Christ is for Church Age believers only and is distinct from the Great White Throne Judgment, which is for all unbelievers of all time. The anticipation of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ should motivate believers to persevere. (Romans 14:12; 1 Corinthians 9:24–27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 John 2:28; Revelation 20:11–15)
5. That this earth will pass away and that God will create a new heaven and new earth where every justified person will dwell for eternity with him. (Isaiah 66:22; Revelation 21:1–7)
6. That every unjustified person will spend eternity separated from God in the Lake of Fire, experiencing eternal conscious torment. (Isaiah 66:24; Matthew 25:41–46; Revelation 14:10–11; 20:11–15; 21:3–4, 24–27; 22:3–5)

We deny

1. Any doctrine of General Judgment, which equates the Great White Throne Judgment with the Judgment Seat of Christ and holds that all people, believers and unbelievers alike, will be judged at one time to determine their eternal destinies.

2. That the Old Testament promise of a literal, physical, earthly, Messianic Kingdom has been redefined or abrogated by New Testament revelation, such that the promised kingdom will not literally be fulfilled and instead has been replaced with a current spiritual reality.
3. All partial rapture theories, which hold that only faithful believers are raptured and that unfaithful believers will face God's wrath.
4. That the church will go through any part of Daniel's 70th week (the Tribulation).

Civil Government

We affirm

1. That human government is a divinely appointed institution, that its primary responsibility is the protection of its citizens and upholding God's law, and that is therefore not evil in itself and generally must be obeyed. (Genesis 9:6; Daniel 4:17; Romans 13:1-7)
2. That all human governments are inherently corrupt because they are held and led by humans who are inherently corrupt and that they are influenced by Satan's world system and his demonic agents (Genesis 5:3; Daniel 10; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 5:19)
3. That God has placed boundaries on how human governments are to function and that Christians are to pray for, consciously honor, and obey those in authority except in things in direct contrast to the word of God (Daniel 3:17-18; Matthew 22:21; Acts 4:19-20; 5:29; 23:5; 1 Timothy 2:1-2)

We deny

1. Any form of government that enslaves or places undue burdens on its citizens for the benefit of those in authority.
2. That a nation does not have the right to protect itself and its citizens from harm, whether instigated from inside or outside.

Gender, Sexuality, & Marriage

We affirm

1. That gender is designed by God and limited to "male" and "female" determined by biology, not preference, identification, or medical procedure. (Genesis 1:26-27; Matthew 19:4, 12)
2. That gender does not affect the value, worth, or importance of an individual because humanity was created equally in God's image, and each person continues to bear that image, albeit marred by sin (Genesis 1:26-28; 9:6; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:22-24; James 3:9)
3. That sexuality is designed for marriage, which is to be between one biological man and one biological woman. Any union and all sexual activity outside of this definition of marriage, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is sin (Genesis 2:18-24; Matthew 19:4-5; Romans 1:24-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 7:1-5, 9; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5; 1 Timothy 1:10)
4. That marriage is built on a God-ordained, functional hierarchy in which the man/husband/father is to be the leader of the marriage and family, reflecting the relationship between Christ and the Church (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:16-20; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-33)

We deny

1. That gender identity, gender ideology, or gender transitioning has any real effect on a person's true, biological gender, and that these concepts and desires come from anything other than a sinful, depraved mind, heart, and culture.
2. That any civil government has the authority to define or redefine marriage as anything other than a covenant between one biological man and one biological woman.
3. That any form of sexuality other than heterosexuality inside a biblical marriage is acceptable, including but not limited to homosexuality, bisexuality, pansexuality, pedophilia, and all sexuality with anything other than humans.