



Membership Class

Session 2: Articles of faith, core beliefs, and government

Welcome to session 2 of the Reach Church Palos Verdes membership class. During this lesson, we will delve into key beliefs and practices that are central to the Christian faith. We will also explore the role of church leadership and government in the life of the church. Our hope is that this class will help you gain a deeper understanding of these important concepts and how they apply to your own life and the life of our church community. Let's get started!"

I. What We Believe

Authority of Scripture

The authority of the Scriptures refers to the belief that the Bible is the ultimate authority on matters of faith and practice. Christians believe that the Bible is the Word of God and that it contains the truth about God, humanity, and the world.

2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

Salvation

We believe that salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone. With this faith a person can be forgiven of their sins and have eternal life with God. This is because Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for humanity's sin, and that by accepting Jesus as their savior, a person can be reconciled with God.

Ephesians 2:8-9: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast."

The Plan of Redemption

We believe that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, took our place, and with His life's blood purchased the pardon for all who believe in Him. John 3:16; Titus 2:14

We believe that all people are sinners by nature and, therefore, are under condemnation; that God saves and regenerates based upon faith by the Holy Spirit, those who repent of their sins and confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Ephesians 2:1-3 and 8-9; Romans 3:23 and 5:8; Titus 3:5

We believe that salvation is wholly through grace; that no human righteousness or merit can contribute to our receiving God's love and favor. Ephesians 2:8

We believe that, upon sincere repentance and a whole-hearted acceptance of Christ, we are justified before God through Jesus' sacrificial death. Romans 10:6-10; 1 John 1:9

We believe that the change at conversion is a very real one; that having received righteousness in Christ and having received His Spirit, people will have new desires, interests, and pursuits in life. 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20

We believe it is the will of God that those who have been born again grow in sanctification, become partakers of His holiness, and daily grow stronger in the faith, power, prayer, love, and service. 2 Corinthians 7:1

Trinity

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. Each person is fully God, sharing the same divine essence.

2 Corinthians 13:14: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

1. God the Father

The Father is recognized as the source and origin of all things. He is sovereign, eternal, and personal, showing love and care for His creation.

1 Corinthians 8:6 - "Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live..."

2. God the Son (Jesus Christ)

Jesus is the Son of God, fully divine and fully human. He was sent by the Father for the salvation of humanity, and He existed with the Father before the world began.

John 1:1-3 - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made..."

3. God The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit actively works in creation, prophecy, the life of Jesus, and the lives of believers, empowering them, teaching them, and sealing their salvation. The Holy Spirit is an essential aspect of the Christian faith, revealing God's presence and power in the world.

John 14:26 - "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

Baptism

We believe that being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is an essential response to Jesus' command, testifying to His lordship as Christ and King. We believe that baptism by immersion is an outward sign of an inward work. Baptism is a choice made by an individual who has decided to follow Jesus and that is why we do not baptize baby's as they cannot choose for themselves. We do offer baby dedications to members of Reach Church Palos Verdes.

Romans 6:4: "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Gifts of the Spirit

The gifts of the Spirit are special abilities that are given to believers by the Holy Spirit to serve the body of Christ and to build up the church.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7: "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

1 Cor 12:28	1 Cor 12:8-10	Ephesians 4:11	Romans 12:6-8
1. Apostle**	9. Word of Wisdom	(1) Apostle	(2) Prophecy
2. Prophet**	10. Word of Knowledge	(2) Prophet	16. Serving
3. Teacher	11. Faith	14. Evangelist	(3) Teaching
4. Miracles	(5) Gift of healing	15. Pastor - Teacher	17. Encouraging
5. Healings	(4) Miracles		18. Contributing
6. Helps	(2) Prophecy		19. Leadership
7. Administration	12. Discernment		20. Mercy
8. Tongues	(8) Tongues		
	13. Interpretation of tongues		

**One can have the gift of prophecy or apostleship, but not hold the office.

Biblical Marriage

Biblical marriage is a marriage between one man and one woman that is based on the teachings of the Bible. In a healthy biblical marriage, the husband and wife have distinct roles, with the husband serving as the head of the household and the wife supporting and submitting to her husband's leadership. We only marry members of this church, and members are in agreement with this biblical stance.

Ephesians 5:22-23: "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior."

Eschatology

Historic Premillennialism

We believe that Christ will return before the millennium (a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth). This view differs from dispensational premillennialism, which includes a more detailed timeline involving a rapture and a seven-year tribulation period.

In historic premillennialism:

- I. Christ returns before the millennium to establish His kingdom on earth.
- II. The millennium is seen as a literal period of 1,000 years during which Christ will reign, and peace and righteousness will prevail.
- III. During this time, Satan is bound, and believers share in Christ's rule, as prophesied in Revelation 20:1-6.

In 2 Corinthians 5:6–8, Paul expresses his confidence in his eternal destiny and his desire for the day when he can be “absent from the body” and present with the Lord he loves and serves. Being “absent” from the body simply refers to death, when the spirit departs from the body and goes to another realm—either to be with the Lord in heaven or to be eternally separated from God in hell.

Heaven

We believe heaven is the glorious habitation of the living God and the eternal home of born-again believers. The New Testament offers several descriptions of heaven, presenting it as a place of God's presence, eternal life, joy, and glory. While the descriptions often use symbolic language, they convey profound truths about what heaven is like. Ultimately, heaven is part of God's plan for a new creation, where His people will live with Him in a renewed heaven and earth. These descriptions offer a hopeful vision for believers, promising eternal communion with God and fulfillment beyond anything experienced on earth.

Revelation 21:4 - "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Hell

We believe hell is a place of darkness, deepest sorrow, and unquenchable fire, which was not prepared for man but for the devil and his angels; yet it will become the place of eternal separation from God for all who reject Christ as Savior. Jesus' teachings emphasize the importance of taking sin seriously and repenting, as hell is portrayed as a real and final destination for those who reject God's salvation. At the same time, the New Testament consistently points to the hope of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, offering a way to avoid eternal separation and to live in God's presence forever.

Matthew 25:46 - "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Stewardship

Through giving, we acknowledge that everything we have comes from Him and express our commitment to support the work of the church. If our heart is set on God's kingdom, we will prioritize using our resources to support His work. Conversely, if we are focused on earthly wealth, it will show in how we spend and save. Generosity enables the church to fulfill its mission of reaching the community, supporting those in need, and spreading the Gospel. As followers of Christ, we are encouraged to give cheerfully and sacrificially, not out of obligation, but out of love and faith in God's provision.

2 Corinthians 8:3-4 (NIV): "For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people."

II. Church Leadership

Church leadership refers to the individuals or group of people who are responsible for guiding and directing the church. At Reach we refer to these as leaders, pastors, and elders. Church leadership is a biblical concept that we abide by. These positions are not given away lightly, but are given through prayer, and guidance from the scriptures. Leadership is not a replacement for God. Leadership will make mistakes, will fall short, and will need grace like everyone else. (Everyone can lead, but not everyone is positioned as a leader in the church)

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13: "Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work."

1. Church leaders conduct church discipline

Church discipline is the process by which a church holds its members accountable to the teachings and standards of the Bible, and seeks to help believers grow in their faith and live in a way that is pleasing to God. This may involve private rebukes, counseling, or other forms of correction, depending on the severity of the issue and the needs of the individual involved.

The purpose of church discipline is not to shame or punish believers, but rather to help them grow in their faith and to protect the integrity and witness of the church. It is based on the belief that Christians are called to live holy lives, in obedience to God and in accordance with the teachings of the Bible. When believers sin or stray from the path of righteousness, it is the responsibility of the church to lovingly confront them and help them return to a right relationship with God.

Matthew 18:15-17 "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

2. Church leaders pray and fast for the vision of the church

A vision can help the church stay focused and rise above issues to a higher goal. A congregation is able to set aside many smaller issues when it has a clear picture of a future worthy of their sacrifice. A clear vision will give people hope for better ways and better times in the most difficult of circumstances.

Nehemiah 1:4-5 - "When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven."

Leadership Qualifications

There are several biblical qualifications that are often used as standards for those serving in ministry or leadership roles within the church. These qualifications are typically found in passages such as 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, which describe the characteristics that should be present in those who are called to lead and serve within the church. Some of the common qualifications for ministry and leadership include:

- **Above reproach:** This means that the individual has a reputation for being honest, trustworthy, and free from scandal or moral failings.
- **Self-controlled:** This means having the ability to control one's emotions, thoughts, and actions, and to resist temptation and sin.
- **Respectable:** This refers to having a good reputation and being respected by others within the community.
- **Hospitable:** This means being welcoming and open to others, and being willing to offer hospitality and support to those in need.
- **Able to teach:** This means having the ability to effectively communicate and explain the teachings of the Bible to others.
- **Not given to drunkenness:** This means abstaining from alcohol or any other substances that could impair one's judgment or ability to serve effectively.
- **Gentle:** This means being kind, patient, and compassionate towards others, and being able to handle difficult situations with grace and wisdom.
- **Not a lover of money:** This means being free from greed and being content with what one has, rather than being motivated by a desire for wealth or material possessions.

III. Church Government

Church government refers to the systems and structures in place within a church to ensure that it is being led and administered in an orderly and effective manner. This may include the development of policies and procedures, the establishment of committees and teams to handle various tasks and responsibilities, and the use of meetings and decision-making processes to ensure that the needs of the church are being met.

It is important for churches to have strong and effective leadership and government in order to function well and fulfill their mission of spreading the gospel and serving the needs of their members and the community. At the same time, it is also important for church leaders to be accountable to the members of the church and to be open to input and guidance from others in order to ensure that the church is being led in a way that is consistent with the teachings of the Bible and the will of God.

Reach Church Palos Verdes Government: Plural Elder Government

Elders of Reach Church Palos Verdes: Pastor Omar Lopez, Pastor Eddie Vargas, Pastor Mando Luna, Pastor Angel Flores, Pastor Luke Duperron*

