

West Congregational Church of Peabody

Statement of Faith

West Congregational Church recognizes the Bible as the sufficient rule of faith and practice, and holds that living in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ is the true test of fellowship. Each member shall have the freedom and responsibility to follow the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible: We believe the sixty-six canonical books of the Bible, as originally written, were given by God's divine inspiration and are free from error. Together they constitute the only authoritative and infallible guide for the Christian life in both faith and practice.

The Godhead: We believe there is only one living and true God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, who is infinite in being and perfect in all His ways. He exists eternally in three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are of one substance, equal in power and glory and who act together with perfect harmony in every thought, word and deed.

Man: We believe Man, created in the image of God, fell from his sinless state through disobedience at the suggestion of Satan; that this fall plunged him and all of his descendants into a state of sin and spiritual death; that mankind can only be saved from this condition by the mercy and grace of God.

The Son: We believe the eternally preexistent Son humbled Himself through incarnation; that He was born without human father by the power of the Holy Spirit working in the virgin Mary; that in Jesus Christ divine and human natures were united in one Person, with both natures being whole, perfect and distinct; that by His death as the sinner's substitute redemption was accomplished; that He rose bodily from the dead on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; that He ascended to the right hand of the Father; that He serves as a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God; that He will come again, personally and visibly, to complete the eternal plan of the Godhead.

The Holy Spirit: We believe the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Triune God; that He accomplishes the work of regeneration in the hearts of sinners and sets them apart unto God through the blood of Christ; that He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; that He sanctifies, instructs, comforts and counsels believers while restraining the

progress of evil in the world; that He empowers believers to live the Christian life; that He bears witness to Christ as they proclaim the gospel; that His indwelling presence is the guarantee of the believer's heavenly inheritance.

Salvation: We believe salvation is the fruit of God's mercy and is, from beginning to end, by God's grace alone; that faith in the redemptive work of Christ is an absolute necessity for salvation. We believe God sovereignly saves those whom He chooses to save; that He effectively draws them to Himself before the cross of Christ; that He humbles them before His holiness; that He gives them the gifts of repentance and saving faith; that He forgives their sins; that He imputes the righteousness of Christ to them, that He seals them for eternity through the indwelling presence of God the Holy Spirit, through whom He produces the fruits of righteousness. We believe God will one day glorify every believer by the resurrection of the dead and that every believer will receive the rewards of heaven.

The Church: We believe The Church is composed of the elect in Christ of all the ages; that it is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets and that Jesus Christ Himself is its cornerstone. We believe each local church is to meet regularly for the purpose of worshipping God, preaching and teaching the Word of God, observing the sacraments of The Church, encouraging one another to love and good works, and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost throughout the world; that a faithful proclamation of the Gospel must include the call for unbelievers to repent of their sins and turn in Godly sorrow to Christ alone for forgiveness and cleansing. We believe pastoral leadership in the local church resides in men set apart by the Holy Spirit as elders, pastor-teachers, and evangelists; that it is the responsibility of these men to give themselves as servant-leaders to oversee the congregation with humility, gentleness, compassion, and Godly wisdom; that it is the responsibility of the men not set apart as elders and the women of the church to voluntarily submit themselves to the oversight of the leaders while using their spiritual gifts for the glory of Christ and the good of the church.

Sacraments, Baptism, The Lord's Supper: We believe the sacraments of The Church are visible signs appointed by Christ as symbols of the spiritual realities of salvation; that they are not given as a means by which to be saved; that only regenerate people are to participate. Baptism We believe baptism is an outward sign and testimony of a believer's union with Jesus Christ, by faith in His death, burial, and resurrection; that in baptism the believer publicly testifies to salvation in Christ and resolves to live a life of separation from sin and of fellowship with God in the household of faith. We believe the baptism of believers most accurately reflects the New Testament pattern, they "believed and were baptized." At the same time we affirm those parents who adhere to the Covenant position of paedobaptism. The Lord's Supper We believe the Lord's Supper is to be observed by all believers in obedience to the command of Jesus Christ: "*Do this in remembrance of Me*"; that in remembering together Jesus' substitutionary death, we are called on repeatedly to forsake our sins, to forgive one another as He has forgiven us, and to renew our walk with God in holiness and purity.

Last Things: We believe at the end of the age, Jesus Christ will descend from heaven and exercise His sovereign authority over all creation; that He will gather unto Himself all who have trusted in Him for salvation and cast out all who have rejected the revelation of truth given to them; that those who rejected God's revelation of truth will be condemned to hell for eternity; that those who trusted in Him will share the glories of heaven for eternity.