



EAST LAKE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Statement of Faith

We recognize that equally faithful, growing followers of Christ can disagree about many beliefs and still be under the big tent of orthodox Christianity. East Lake Community Church holds to the concept of The Big Tent. Biblically framing the idea is derived from Luke 11:37-52. **We define God's tent** as the beliefs and practices of Biblical Christianity. Tent poles are the absolute essential teachings for the tent to stay up. We are a better, stronger church because of our differences. **Keeping this perspective is dependent on our adherence to 3 "tent pole beliefs"** that hold Christianity up and without which, Christianity crumbles.

1. The Bible is the Word of God. John 1:1-18
Believing the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God is the starting point of following Christ. God wants us to discover answers in the Bible, but the process of discovering those answers is often to engage in discussion and wrestle with truth.
2. Jesus is God. John 8:12-59
Many believe that Jesus was a good man but deny that Jesus claimed to be Divine or anything more than a prophet. Jesus clearly claimed to be the Messiah and sent from God. At the end of John. 8, He claimed the sacred name of God /*AM* for Himself. The Bible leaves no other option than that Jesus claimed equality with God.
3. Jesus is the Way to God. John 10:1-42
Jesus claimed to be one with God. They thought He was making Himself God. He held that He was not making Himself anything. He was what He was, and it was the Father who in the first instance sent Him into the world, and in the second instance testified of Him. Follow Jesus, follow God.

While there are other beliefs essential to understanding and practicing Christianity, all of them tend to spring from one of these. Even denominations within Christianity may disagree on orthopraxy (Practices) but tend to hold firm to these three tenets as orthodoxy (Beliefs).

We hold the beliefs below as defining those immovable poles of the Big Tent of our faith, while believing there is a lot of room under His tent for people to disagree in our practices and still enjoy fellowship. We believe in the freedom Christ gives us to live in obedience to Him. For us, the Bible is the final authority in all matters of belief and practice, but we will not bind the conscience of individuals in an area where Scripture is silent. In these areas each of us should seek the counsel of others in the church and then be led by the Lord, to whom we are ultimately responsible. So, even though we may not agree on every point of practice, we welcome all to fellowship with us as we live out the things we know God expects from us—like loving each other and working toward unity.

OUR BELIEFS

God

We believe there is one true, holy God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—each of whom possesses equally all the attributes of deity and the characteristics of personality. We refer to them collectively as “the Godhead” or just “God.” In the beginning, God created the world and everything in it out of nothing and He continues to sustain it by His power, wisdom, and goodness. By His loving guidance, God is at work fulfilling His redemptive purposes.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the eternal second person of the Godhead. He was united with a true human nature by a miraculous conception and virgin birth. He lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father and voluntarily made amends for the sins of people, making possible a right relationship with God. He died on the cross as a substitute for sinful mankind thus satisfying divine justice and accomplishing salvation for all who trust in Him alone. Jesus rose from the dead in the same body, now glorified, in which He lived and died. He ascended into heaven, where He, as mediator, continually intercedes with God, the Father, for those who have received salvation. He will come again to bring history and the eternal plan of God to completion.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit was sent into the world by the Father and the Son. A genuine saving relationship with Jesus Christ is evidenced by a life impacted by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Before salvation, the Holy Spirit enlightens the minds of sinners and awakens in them recognition of their need for a Savior. At the point of salvation, the Holy Spirit permanently indwells all believers, seals them into the family of God and gives them gifts to build up the church and help it pursue its mission. Further, when believers yield to the control of the Holy Spirit, they will gain an assurance in their relationship with Christ, a desire for fellowship with other Christians, a new value system that **aligns them with God’s moral statutes**, wisdom to discern what God wants them to do, and strength to do it.

The Bible

The sole basis of our belief is the Bible, composed of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. We believe Scripture originated from God and was given through writers inspired by God. Scripture speaks with the authority of God, yet reflects the backgrounds, styles, and vocabularies of its human authors. The Scriptures are presented exactly as God intended and without error in the original manuscripts. They are the unique, full, and final authority on all matters of faith and practice; there are no other writings similarly given by God.

Salvation

The human race was created to have fellowship with God, but we defied God, choosing to be independent, and were thus alienated from Him. This rebellion from God corrupted human nature, so that people are not acceptable to Him and means we are all in need of His saving grace. The purpose of **God’s plan in history is to free people from Satan’s grasp and restore them to the fellowship He intended in the beginning.** Salvation is never the result, in whole or in part, of human works or goodness; it is wholly the work of **God’s free grace.** **Salvation is personally realized when one repents from sin and accepts, through faith alone, Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.** When God begins a saving work in our heart, the Bible assures us that He will continue performing it until the day of its full consummation.

OUR PRACTICES

The Church

Believers in Jesus become members of His body, the church. The one true church is composed of all **those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Wherever God's people meet regularly** is the local expression of the church. Under the care of the elders, pastors and other leaders, its members work in love and unity to glorify Christ. The Scripture commands believers to gather for worship, prayer, fellowship, teaching, observation of baptism and communion, service within the body, and to reach out to the world.

Baptism

Christians who understand what the Bible teaches about Christ's death and forgiveness and who have made a commitment to follow Him as their Lord and Savior are qualified and commanded by Scripture to be baptized. Though baptism is not a saving "work," we believe all who have accepted Christ should be baptized as an act of obedience to God. Because we believe baptism is only for those who have made a personal commitment to Christ, we do not practice infant baptism. We practice water baptism by immersion as it best symbolizes the believer's identification with Jesus' death and resurrection. We expect those who partner with East Lake to have experienced believer's baptism.

Communion

God commands us to remember Christ's death for our sins through the bread and the cup of communion. Believers should examine their hearts and relationships before taking communion as participation with an unbelieving or hardened heart may lead to God's discipline. Those not ready to participate are never obligated to do so. Families are free to determine when it is appropriate for their children to partake. We celebrate communion monthly.

Giving

Many believe Christians should give 10 percent of their income to the local church as a tithe. While there is biblical precedence for this, the New Testament never prescribes tithing. Tithing is always mentioned there in reference to the practice in the Old Testament. Instead, we encourage giving as a response of faith and gratitude for what God has done for us. Our church is financed solely by the gifts of our people. We believe church leaders are accountable to God as stewards for managing what is given. You can participate in giving at in person services or online.

Family Dedication

We invite families to commit to raising their children to know and love Jesus, and ask the church to support them in prayer. All families who feel they would benefit are welcome to participate.