



Dear friend,

On behalf of the congregation at Hinson Baptist Church, we're grateful that you've found us and are interested in learning more about this church. We've put together this booklet as a way to introduce you to our church: what we believe, our history, and what it means to be a part of it. We believe that every Christian is called to join their lives with other Christians in the context of a local church. This is what we call membership, and we hope the materials in here are helpful for you as you consider whether or not to be a part of this body.

As a church that has existed here in Portland for over a hundred years, we remain committed to the mission God has given us in being a light in our community, as we proclaim the Good News and love one another. Though we can't be sure what the future will bring, we're encouraged by the spiritual life that God has cultivated here. And we look forward to seeing how He will continue to be at work in our community and around the world through us.

Whether it is at Hinson, or another gospel-preaching church, my prayer is that God would show you where to commit yourself to His people in service.

In Christ,

Michael Lawrence
Lead Pastor

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WHAT WE BELIEVE

Our Statement of Faith

The most important thing when looking for a church is knowing what they believe. A church can have a great band, you might have many close friends there, they might have a great children's program, but if a church does not believe what Scripture teaches, then you'll want to find another church.

That's why Statements of Faith are helpful. They express what a church agrees to unite in. Some people object to statements of faith (or creeds or confessions), because they say that these are man-made documents that are too stifling and restricting, limiting the power of God's Word. They're definitely right that these are man-made documents. But they are never meant to replace God's Word. Rather, they express what a church believes the Bible teaches on key doctrines that unite the church. Additionally, they are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather they focus on what beliefs are essential for that body of Christians to be a church.

So what does Hinson's Statement of Faith reveal about us? Most simply, it says that Hinson is a Christian, Evangelical, and Baptist church. In other words, we can divide the ten articles of our Statement of Faith into three categories:

- Historically Christian – These are truths that any historically Christian church would affirm, whether Roman Catholic or Orthodox or Protestant. As opposed to some of the modern religions, particular Liberal Christianity, that would deny the virgin birth or the deity of Christ, we understand ourselves to hold to these historic Christian beliefs that Christians have held to since the very beginning.
- Evangelical – These truths mark us as Protestants, as opposed to our Roman Catholic and Orthodox friends. Even though we love them, we feel they have misunderstood God's Word on some key points, especially as it relates to our salvation.
- Baptist – Among Protestants, half of the article distinguishes us from our Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Methodist, and other paedo-Baptist friends. Even though we agree on what the gospel is and would be glad to partner with them in preaching the gospel, we have a different understanding of what baptism is and that actually makes a big difference in our understanding of the nature of the local church.

You can see this in the following chart:

| Article | Historically Christian | Evangelical | Baptist |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------|---------|
| 1. Scripture | | √ | |
| 2. God | √ | | |
| 3. Jesus Christ | √ | | |
| 4. Man | √ | | |
| 5a. The Cross | √ | | |
| 5b. Justification | | √ | |
| 6. The Resurrection | √ | | |
| 7. The Return of Christ | √ | | |
| 8. Conversion | | √ | |
| 9. Final Judgment | √ | | |
| 10a. Baptism | | | √ |
| 10b. Lord's Supper | √ | | |

Take a moment and notice just how much of our Statement of Faith is devoted to stating the essentials of the Christian faith; essentials that we would have little to no disagreement over with any other Christian denomination. Then notice how in just half a statement we express what distinguishes us as a Baptist church. This is where we internally find our unity as a church. This also means that we want Hinson to be a safe place where you agree on the essentials, yet available to think though secondary issues without condemnation.

Here are the 10 articles of our Statement of Faith, followed by some brief commentary:

1. **We believe** the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writings, and that they are of supreme and final authority in faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

Our final authority as a church is not any man or tradition or feeling, but the Word of God. We believe the Bible to be God's inspired Word, without error and the supreme authority for faith and life.

2. **We believe** in one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Corinthians 13:13).

Hinson is a Trinitarian church, believing in one God, eternally existing in three Persons. There is much about God that is mystery, but along with Christians from the very beginning, we believe that this is what Scripture reveals about God.

3. **We believe** that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and is true God and true man (John 1:1-18; Matthew 1:18-25).

The testimony of Scripture is that Jesus of Nazareth is not merely a good rabbi or prophet, but rather he is God incarnate, fully God and fully man.

4. **We believe** that man was created in the image of God; that he sinned, and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also that spiritual death that is separation from God; that all human beings are born with a sinful nature, and therefore are sinners in thought, word and deed (Genesis 1:26-31; Genesis 3:15-23; Romans 5:12-14; Ephesians 2:1-3).

Every person is of great value, because we all carry within us the image of God. We were made to reflect His glory. In our sin, we have all turned away and rebelled from God and gone our own way, earning His just judgment. However, our problem is not merely that we do bad things, but that we have a sinful nature.

5. **We believe** that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, as a representative and a substitutionary sacrifice; and that all who believe in Him are justified on the grounds of His shed blood (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 5:6-8; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

Here is the Good News of Christianity: though we have all sinned, God in His mercy sent His Son, Jesus, to die in our place, bearing our judgment upon Himself. For all who place their trust in what Christ has done, God promises to forgive them of their sins and declare them to be righteous, not on the basis of their good works, but on what Christ has accomplished.

6. **We believe** in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, in His ascension into heaven, and in His present life there for us, as High Priest and Advocate (Acts 1:9-11; Hebrews 1:1-4; Hebrews 8:1-3).

After his death, Jesus rose bodily from the dead, proving that He has conquered our sin and death. And He has ascended to heaven and now intercedes for His people.

7. **We believe** in the sudden, visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ and in His Millennial Kingdom (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Revelation 20:4-6).

The day is coming when Jesus will physically return to this world, and reign as King. Christians have interpreted the Bible's teaching on Christ's Millennial Kingdom in different ways throughout church history. We as a church allow for different interpretations, but together affirm that Christ will indeed return and reign one day.

8. **We believe** that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born again of the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God (John 1:10-13; 3:3; Galatians 2:16).

It is those who place their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior that are born again of the Holy Spirit and adopted into the family of God.

9. **We believe** in the bodily resurrection of the just and unjust, the eternal blessedness of the saved, and the eternal punishment of the lost (Jude 24; Revelation 20:4-15)

Along with Christians throughout the centuries, we believe that the Bible teaches that there will be a place of eternal reward, and also a place of eternal judgment. There will be a Day of Judgment when God will render His just judgments on all people, answering the longing of our hearts for justice.

10. **We believe** that baptism is the immersion of a believer, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit in testimony of faith in the crucified, buried and risen Christ, and in confession that the believer is to be dead to sin and risen to newness of life in Christ Jesus; and that the Lord's Supper is a commemoration of the Lord's death "till He comes." (Romans 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 11:25-26).

The first part of this article is what makes us Baptists. We believe that baptism is for the believer, who has made a credible profession of repentance and faith in Christ. Baptism demonstrates one's personal commitment to walk in repentance and obedience to Christ. The church, who baptizes the new Christian, publicly affirms that he or she is a Christian. We are grateful that we are not the only church that preaches the gospel, and joyfully accept a believer's baptism from any other Christian church that preaches the gospel.

However, if someone were baptized in a church that does not preach the gospel that we've outlined here in our Statement of Faith, but something contrary to it, then we would not recognize their baptism as a true baptism. In obedience to Christ, such a person would need to be baptized in a true church of Jesus Christ, whether at Hinson or elsewhere, before joining this church. This would apply to adult baptisms in any churches outside of historic Christianity (ex: Jehovah's Witness), to baptisms from Catholic or some Orthodox churches, and to baptisms from some churches of certain denominations that see baptism as necessary for salvation (ex: Church of God, Disciples of Christ).

The second part is a statement of our belief in the Lord's Supper as remembering the sacrifice of Christ and looking forward to His return. Many Christians throughout church history would say a lot more than that about the Lord's Supper, but they would mostly all agree with this statement.

If baptism is that initial profession of faith to follow Jesus, then the Lord's Supper is the on-going profession of faith for the Christian. It is a meal for the covenant community where we renew our commitment to Christ and each other. We celebrate this family meal on the first Sunday of the month. It is open not only to our members, but also to all Christians from other gospel-preaching churches, who have made that initial profession of faith (normally through baptism), and are continuing to walk in the profession (normally through membership in the local church).

CBNW DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Early in 2014, the congregation at Hinson passed a motion that affirmed our agreement with the CBNW Doctrinal Statement. As we will see in the history of this church, Hinson has been a part of the Conservative Baptist community of churches from the very beginning. Given the confusion that exists in our culture on many social issues, and the clarity that the CBNW Doctrinal Statement brings on many of those issues, we wanted as a church to express our agreement with hundreds of other Conservative Baptist churches throughout our region on these matters.

This document does not replace our church's Statement of Faith, nor are prospective members required to sign it in order to join. However, we do want people to know that this will be the teaching of the Elders here. If you have any questions about this, please don't hesitate to ask!

Scriptures

We believe the Bible is God's absolute, objective truth for all people for all times.¹ It is without error in concept or detail in the original writings.² It is breathed out in its entirety by God, divinely preserved, and, therefore, trustworthy.³ We believe the Holy Spirit superintended human authors so that, through their individual personalities and literary styles, they composed and recorded God's Word.⁴ It is God's written revelation complete in the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments.⁵ It is the supreme authority in all matters to which it speaks and is sufficient for life, conduct, and practice – understandable by every believer.⁶ We believe Scripture must be understood through the literal, contextual, grammatical, and historical method of interpretation, and applied under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁷

God

We believe in the one personal, transcendent, immanent, living God – the creator, sustainer, and sovereign ruler of all things.⁸ He is self-existent, immutable, and works all things according to the counsel of His will in order to bring glory to Himself.⁹ God's foreknowledge is exhaustive and not dependent on human decisions and actions.¹⁰ He eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹¹ They execute distinct but harmonious roles in creation, providence, redemption, and consummation.¹² They are equal in nature, attributes, and perfections.¹³ The holy triune God is worthy of our worship, confidence, and obedience.¹⁴

The Father

We believe in God the Father: one in essence with the Son and the Spirit.¹⁵ He is an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in all His attributes.¹⁶ He is the creator, sustainer, and sovereign ruler of all things through His Son Jesus Christ.¹⁷ We believe that He concerns Himself perfectly in the affairs of humanity.¹⁸ His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with the redeemed.¹⁹ Everything He does is in accordance with His perfect will,

though His sovereignty does not eliminate or minimize human responsibility.²⁰ The Father adopts as His own, through Jesus Christ, all those He calls to Himself.²¹

The Son

We believe in God the Son: one in essence with the Father and the Spirit.²² He is the one and only eternal Son of God, the preeminent revelation of God.²³ At the right time He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-slave.²⁴ He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary as Jesus, the Christ – fully God and fully man.²⁵ We believe in His sinless life, His voluntary submission to His Father's will that culminated in His substitutionary death on the cross, His burial, and His bodily resurrection.²⁶ He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father.²⁷ His death on the cross atoned for our sin and satisfied the righteous demands of the holy God.²⁸ He is the Mediator between God and man.²⁹ He is Prophet, Priest, and King; the Head and Savior of His Church; the Heir of all things; the Judge of all the world; and the exact representation of God the Father.³⁰ We believe in the personal return of Christ for His Church and in the establishment of His Kingdom on earth.³¹

The Holy Spirit

We believe in God the Holy Spirit: one in essence with the Father and Son.³² He was sent by God the Father and God the Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.³³ The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus Christ and implements Christ's work of redemption and baptism.³⁴ He regenerates, baptizes, seals, gifts, and indwells all believers at conversion, progressively sanctifying, and securing them in Christ forever.³⁵ The Spirit fills, leads, comforts, and intercedes for believers, empowering them for godly living and service.³⁶ His presence is evident by the fruit of the Spirit and the building up of believers into the body of Christ, the Church.³⁷

Humanity

We believe that humanity, male and female, is sacred in God's eyes and was uniquely created by Him, in His image and for His glory, to exercise dominion over the earth and to enjoy a relationship with Him forever.³⁸ Every human being is directly responsible to God in matters of faith and life.³⁹ After sin entered the world, humans still possess the image of God, though tainted by sin.⁴⁰ God's will for humanity is that they love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love their neighbors as themselves.⁴¹

Family

In God's design for humanity, life begins at fertilization.⁴² He established the institution of family through the union of one man and one woman in a marriage covenant for life.⁴³ His design for the continuance of humanity is through the procreation and discipleship of children within the marriage union.⁴⁴ Marriage is to be an example of the relationship between Jesus Christ and His

Church.⁴⁵

Sin

We believe that sin is any action, inaction, or attitude that is contrary to the nature or Word of God, which constitutes a rejection of His authority, resulting in alienation from God.⁴⁶ Sin entered the world when Adam, representing humanity, disobeyed God.⁴⁷ As a result of the one sin of Adam, his descendants – the whole human race – are separated from relationship with God, spiritually dead, and therefore in a fallen state. Being sinners by nature and choice and utterly unable to remedy their lost condition, humanity is in need of salvation.⁴⁸

Salvation

We believe that salvation is a gift of God, received by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.⁴⁹ Salvation is motivated by the love of God demonstrated through His sovereign election in Christ, purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross, and received by faith apart from any human merit, works, or ritual.⁵⁰ Regeneration is effected through the work of the Holy Spirit in God's elect.⁵¹ All who repent and believe in Jesus Christ are forgiven of all their sins, justified in God's sight by the merit of Christ's righteousness, adopted into His family, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and have equal access to God.⁵² As a result, the progressive sanctifying work of salvation leads to a newness of life that is evidenced by righteous living, good works, and biblical social concern, or God's corrective discipline.⁵³ The consummation of salvation is that those who have accepted God's gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ shall be resurrected and glorified.⁵⁴ They shall receive their inheritance in the Kingdom of their Father, whom they shall see and enjoy throughout the ages.⁵⁵

Church

We believe that the New Testament Church is composed of all persons who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit since the day of Pentecost following Christ's resurrection.⁵⁶ We believe that the Church is the spiritual body of Christ, of which He is the Head.⁵⁷ We believe that this body expresses itself in local assemblies in which believers are in a covenant relationship.⁵⁸ Biblically that relationship is expressed corporately through hearing the Word of God proclaimed, engaging in worship, practicing the two ordinances of believer's baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper, building up each other's faith, holding each other accountable through biblical love and discipline, and engaging in local and world evangelization.⁵⁹ Biblically designated officers must meet the biblical qualifications for their office and submit to the headship of Christ, emulating His servant leadership.⁶⁰ We believe the function of eldering is reserved for biblically qualified males.⁶¹ Each local church is to choose, support, and submit to those who function as elders.⁶²

Angels

We believe God created angels as spirit-beings possessing power and intellect, to worship and serve Him and to minister to believers.⁶³ Satan is a fallen angel who masquerades as an angel of light.⁶⁴

The scope of Satan's power is subject to God's will.⁶⁵ By subjecting Adam and Eve to temptation and sin, Satan has extended his rebellion against God, which he continues by deceit, seduction, and destruction.⁶⁶ While Satan and his demons are powerful, they are subject to Christ's authority and judgment.⁶⁷ Satan and his demons have been defeated for eternity by Jesus Christ through His death on the cross and victorious resurrection, sealing their everlasting damnation.⁶⁸ At the time of final judgment, they will be consigned to eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire.⁶⁹

Last Things

We believe in the sudden, visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ and in His Millennial Kingdom.⁷⁰ He will return with His saints from heaven with power and great glory, on a day known only to God.⁷¹ We believe that those who have accepted God's gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, at the point of physical death, enter into God's eternal glory.⁷² They shall be resurrected and transformed to His body of glory, and they shall receive their inheritance of glory in the Kingdom of their Father.⁷³ They shall be made fully blessed in the presence and service of God, whom they shall see and enjoy throughout the ages.⁷⁴ We believe that all unsaved persons, at the point of physical death, are destined for eternal damnation.⁷⁵ They will be resurrected, separated from the righteous, judged, and cast into an existence of eternal punishment where they will be tormented day and night forever and ever when death and Hades is cast into the Lake of Fire.⁷⁶ We believe it is imperative for the Church to work and wait in sober watchfulness, that it may be found ready at His coming.⁷⁷

¹ 2 Samuel 7:28; Psalm 25:10; 33:4; 119:160; John 17:17; Titus 1:2-3

² John 10:35; 2 Timothy 3:16

³ Matthew 5:18; John 10:35; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21

⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 2 Peter 1:20-21

⁵ Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; 1 Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:11-12; Revelation 22:18-19

⁶ Isaiah 8:20; Matthew 5:17-19; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 14:17, 37; 2 Timothy 3:15-17

⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 2 Corinthians 3:14-16; 2 Peter 1:20

⁸ Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 83:18; 139:1, 7-10; Isaiah 6:1; 33:10; 40:22; Jeremiah 10:10; Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 3:4; James 2:19

⁹ Genesis 1:1; Exodus 3:14; Numbers 23:19; Psalm 19:1; 33:9-10; 102:26-27; Psalm 104; Isaiah 14:24; Malachi 3:6; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11; James 1:17

¹⁰ Romans 8:29-30; Psalm 139:1-6, 13-17; 147:5; John 6:64; Isaiah 40:13

¹¹ Matthew 28:19; John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 8:6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Philippians 2:5-6

¹² Genesis 1:1-2; Job 26:13; Psalm 104; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22; John 1:3; 5:17; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 2:18; Colossians 1:16-17

¹³ John 10:30; 14:23; 17:5, 10; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; Phil. 2:5-6

¹⁴ Isaiah 6:3; Jeremiah 2:12-13; Mark 12:30; Revelation 4:11

¹⁵ Matthew 28:19; John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 8:6

¹⁶ Exodus 3:14; John 4:24; 14:7

¹⁷ Genesis 1:1; Psalm 19:1; Psalm 104; Acts 17:28; Colossians 1:17

¹⁸ Psalm 8:4-6; Matthew 5:45; 6:26-32; 10:29-31

¹⁹ Matthew 6:1, 4; 10:20; John 20:17, 21; 17:1; Ephesians 1:2-3; Colossians 1:2-3

²⁰ Romans 1:18-20; 8:29; Colossians 1:10

²¹ John 6:44; Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:5

²² Matthew 28:19; John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 13:14

²³ John 1:1; 8:58; Philippians 2:5-6; Revelation 1:8

²⁴ Matthew 1:23; Philippians 2:6-7

²⁵ Matthew 1:20; 9:2; 12:8; Luke 1:35; John 1:1, 14; 8:58; 10:30; 14:7; Romans 9:5; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 1:3

²⁶ Luke 19:10; Hebrews 4:15

²⁷ Acts 1:9; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1

²⁸ Isaiah 53:4-12; Matthew 20:28; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:1-3; Hebrews 9:13-15; 1 John 2:2; 4:10

²⁹ John 1:1-14; Hebrews 4:14; 12:24; 1 Timothy 2:5

³⁰ Psalm 2:6; Acts 3:22-23; Romans 10:9-11; Hebrews 1:3, 8; 4:14; 8:2-5

³¹ Psalm 2:6; Zechariah 14:4, 16; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; Revelation 11:15; 20:4

³² John 15:26; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

³³ John 16:8-11

³⁴ John 3:5; 16:14; Acts 1:5; Romans 8:2-16; 1 Corinthians 12:13

³⁵ John 3:5; 14:17; Acts 19:5-6; Romans 11:29; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 12:4-31; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; Philippians 1:6; 2:12-13; Hebrews 13:5; Jude 24-25

³⁶ Exodus 31:3; 1 Samuel 16:13; Joel 2:28-29; John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 2:17-18; 4:31; 6:5; 9:31; Romans 8:26; Ephesians 5:18

³⁷ Romans 5:5; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:22-25; Ephesians 2:22; 3:14-21; 1 John 5:4

³⁸ Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7, 22; 5:1-2; 9:6; Psalm 100:3; 119:73; Isaiah 43:7; 45:12; Acts 17:26; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9

³⁹ Ecclesiastes 3:17; 12:14; Jeremiah 17:10; Romans 1:20; 3:19; Hebrews 4:13; 9:27; Revelation 20:11-13

⁴⁰ Genesis 5:1; 9:6; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10-18, 23; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9

⁴¹ Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Romans 12:30-31; Romans 13:8-10

⁴² Psalm 51:5; 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:31, 34-36, 41, 44

⁴³ Genesis 2:23-24; Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Timothy 3:2

⁴⁴ Genesis 1:27-28; 9:1

⁴⁵ Ephesians 5:22-32

⁴⁶ Leviticus 4:27; Matthew 5:28; James 4:17

⁴⁷ Romans 5:12, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22

⁴⁸ Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23; 5:12-21; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:22

⁴⁹ Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24, 28; 1 Corinthians 3:5-7; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:5, 8

⁵⁰ John 6:44; Acts 13:48; Romans 4:4-5; 6:23; 8:29-30; 11:5-6; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 1:3-6; 2:8-9; Philippians 3:7-9; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:1-2; 1 John 4:10

⁵¹ John 1:13; 3:3, 5-8; Acts 11:18; Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 7:10-11; Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 2:13; Titus 3:5-7; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:1-2; 1 John 4:7

⁵² Acts 10:43; 13:39; Romans 1:15-17; 3:24-26; 4:23-25; 5:1-2, 9, 11, 17, 19, 21; 8:1; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:13-14; Titus 3:5-7

⁵³ Acts 11:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:21; 7:1; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:26-27; Philippians 2:12-13; 3:12-16; Colossians 1:28-29; 3:5-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 12:7-11, 14; 2 Peter 1:3, 5-8; 3:18

⁵⁴ John 5:25-29; Acts 24:14-15; Romans 8:17; 1 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 John 2:25; Revelation 20:5-6

⁵⁵ 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 21:6-7; 22:3-5

⁵⁶ Acts 2; 1 Corinthians 12:27; 2 Corinthians 6:16

⁵⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:27; Colossians 1:18

⁵⁸ 1 Corinthians 12:27

⁵⁹ Matthew 18:15-17; 28:19-20; Mark 16:16; John 3:22; 4:1-2; Acts 2:38, 41-42, 47; 8:12, 36-39; 16:32-34; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25; Ephesians 4:11-13

⁶⁰ Matthew 20:25-28; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:7-9

⁶¹ Titus 1:5-6; 1 Peter 5:1-3

⁶² Acts 6:3-6; 15:22; Hebrews 13:17

⁶³ Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20; Matthew 4:10

⁶⁴ Ezekiel 28:13-16; Luke 10:18; 2 Corinthians 11:14; Revelation 12:7-9

⁶⁵ Job 1:6-7, 12; John 14:30; 16:11

⁶⁶ Genesis 3:1-7; Matthew 4:1-11; 2 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:18

⁶⁷ Philippians 2:10; James 4:7; 1 Peter 3:22; 2 Peter 2:4; 1 John 2:12-14; 5:18; Revelation 20:10

⁶⁸ John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Romans 16:20

⁶⁹ Revelation 20:10

⁷⁰ Mark 13:32-37; Titus 2:13; Revelation 20:2-6

⁷¹ Matthew 24:30, 36; 25:31; Mark 13:32-37; John 14:3; Titus 2:13

⁷² John 10:28; Romans 8:38-39; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Hebrews 9:27

⁷³ Isaiah 26:19; Dan. 12:2; John 5:25-29; Acts 24:14-15; 1 Cor. 6:14; Philippians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Rev. 20:5-6; 21:6-7

⁷⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 22:3-5

⁷⁵ Hebrews 9:27

⁷⁶ Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:25-29; Acts 24:14-15; Revelation 14:10-11; 20:10; 21:8

⁷⁷ Matthew 24:42-44; 25:13; Mark 13:33-37; Hebrews 10:25

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can Statements of Faith be helpful? Have you previously been part of a church or organization that used a Statement of Faith?
2. When you think about the three categories of Historically Christian, Evangelical, and Baptist? Which one would you consider the most crucial when it comes to doctrinal emphasis?
3. If you've been involved in other churches or ministries in the past, do you think they kept the gospel (represented by points 4 and 5 in the Statement of Faith) central in their teaching and ministry approach, or was the emphasis on something else? Looking back, do you see any positive or negative effects from that emphasis?
4. Are there any articles in the CBNW Doctrinal Statement that surprised you? Are there any teachings represented there that you have questions about, or differ with?

WHAT WE COMMIT TO

Our Church Covenant

Introduction

Christians have always understood that their belief in Jesus produced a certain kind of life. Faith without works is dead (James 2:17). However, the New Testament reveals that one of the best places where we see faith worked out is in the local church. Jesus himself taught his disciples, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). The apostles gave expression to this in their letters to the early churches in all their “one another” commands. As a result of being united in the gospel, Christians are to love one another (1 John 4:11), serve one another (Gal. 5:13), accept one another (Rom. 15:7), be devoted to one another (Rom. 12:10), bear with one another (Eph. 4:2), teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16), offer hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9), and carry out many other such commands to one another. In other words, in the unity of the church, the truth and beauty of the gospel is made visible.

As a result, Christians have long understood that committing to a church meant not only committing to Scriptural truths but committing to a way of *life*. So Christians would give expression to the latter commitment through a Church Covenant. Rather than being a summary of the doctrinal teaching of Scripture (Statement of Faith), the Church Covenant is a summary of the ethical teaching of Scripture, outlining the kind of life that these Christians were committing to living out and wanted to be held accountable to in joining that church.

Since our founding in 1879, Hinson has had a Church Covenant that the original founding members would have signed, and every member since has committed to. Over the years, some of the language has changed in order to reflect the social concerns of the time and to make it more understandable, but the heart of the covenant has remained the same: a commitment to following Christ and loving one another. Below is our church covenant with a brief commentary on each commitment.

Opening

As those who have been brought to repent and believe in Jesus Christ by the grace of God, being united to Him by His Spirit we now solemnly and joyfully covenant with one another. (John 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:13)

The Church Covenant opens with a reminder of our gracious salvation through Jesus Christ by the grace of God and our union to God by His Spirit. Here is the foundation of every commitment we make in the Christian life. We do not pursue these things in order to be saved, but in the joy and freedom of knowing that we have been saved entirely by grace through faith in Christ.

Engaging in Community

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph 4:1-3)

Our opening commitment is to work and pray for the unity of the church. We understand that this unity is a spiritual reality that God has created by His Spirit, through the gospel. However, we give expression to that unity as we seek to live “in the bond of peace” with one another. So rather than only thinking about unity when there’s a difficult decision coming up or when there’s a disagreement, we want to cherish our unity, and work and pray for it.

We will, by God’s grace, forsake the paths of sin, and walk in the ways of holiness all the days of our lives, striving together for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort. (Eph. 4:25; Col. 5-12; Heb. 3:13)

We cannot fight sin and walk in holiness alone. God has given us the local church in order to help us persevere in the faith and to grow in our knowledge of the truth, obedience in holiness, and joy and comfort in the gospel. In joining this church, commit to being a part of what God is doing, both in growing in your own spiritual walk and helping others to grow.

We will regularly gather together, engaging in gospel community, rejoicing with each other’s happiness, and bearing one another’s burdens and sorrows. (Heb. 10:24-25; Rom. 12:15; Gal. 6:2; Col. 3:13)

One of our most fundamental commitments in being a church is the commitment to “regularly gather together.” We are not to give up meeting together because we know that it is in that context that we get to live out the truth of the gospel in community. Our relationships should be characterized by a concern for others, whether in rejoicing with them in their joys or bearing patiently with one another and pointing each other to our hope in the gospel.

We will pray for each other and provide help to those in our midst who are in need. (1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Tim. 5:8; Gal. 6:10)

At the end of the day, we know that apart from God’s work by His Spirit, people will not grow in “knowledge, holiness, and comfort.” And so joining the church, we are committing to regularly praying for one another. Look for opportunities to pray with other members of Hinson (Sunday morning service, praying through the membership directory on a regular basis. Then having prayed for each other, we commit to extend practical help to those who are in need, both physically and spiritually, in formal and informal ways. The church is to be characterized by prayer and loving concern for one another.

Pursuing Christ Together

We will pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through the ordinary means of grace and will encourage the same in one another. (Heb. 3:12-14)

The basis of our unity is the gospel. Therefore, in committing to the church, we are also committing to pursuing Jesus Christ in every area of our lives. This will mean meditating on God’s Word, being devoted to prayer, pursuing discipling relationships, and other means of grace. As we

are personally encouraged by these means, we then encourage one another through those same means.

We will bring up those under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and, by a pure and loving example, seek the salvation of our family and friends. (Titus 2:1-6; Deut. 6:4-7)

Another context of our pursuit of Christ is in the home. In whatever living situation you find yourself in, we understand that we are to use our influence to point people to Jesus, especially those who are nearest to us. However, often these close relationships can be some of the hardest ones to share the gospel. But in the church, we pray for one another and encourage one another to persevere.

We will live carefully and honorably before the world, remembering that as we have been voluntarily buried through baptism and raised again in Christ, so there is on us a special obligation to lead a new and holy life. (Rom. 6:1-4; Eph. 5:15-21; 1 Pet. 2:11-12)

Not only privately and in our homes, but we will pursue Christ out in the world. As those who belong to Christ's church, we understand that our lives represent Him. This is what was pictured in our baptism as we were united to Christ in his death and resurrection. Therefore, we commit ourselves to living a holy life before the watching world, in order that they may see the truth and power of the gospel.

Proclaiming the Gospel

We will lovingly guard one another from the deceitfulness of sin, giving and receiving admonition in humility and affection. (2 Tim 2:15; 1 Cor. 5:1-2; Matt. 18:15)

As our church, we bear witness to the truth of the gospel corporately. Therefore, our corporate witness begins not with our proclamation, but in the way we help one another walk in faithfulness and holiness. Sin is deceitful and we need other believers to humbly and lovingly point us towards the truth. In guarding one another from sin, we preserve the witness of the church.

We will bear patiently with one another, diligently pursuing biblical reconciliation. (Eph. 4:2; Matt. 5:24)

In this fallen world, there will always be conflict and misunderstanding. Yet in the church, we bear patiently with one another and look for ways to pursue reconciliation that is grounded in grace. When the church is unified, even in the midst of difficulties, the power of the gospel is displayed.

We will work together to promote a faithful gospel ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry of this church for the spread of the gospel through all nations. (Phil. 1:27; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Cor. 9:7; 1 Cor. 16:2)

And so, we commit ourselves to working together to promote the proclamation of the gospel here on the corner of 20th and Salmon SE. This happens primarily on Sunday mornings, as we gather to

hear the preaching of the Word, and to observe baptism and the Lord's Supper. But this also takes place as the members of this church scatter throughout the city of Portland and take the gospel into their workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and even as we send workers who take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Should we leave this church, we will seek another church where we can carry out the principles of God's Word as followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Matt. 18:18)

For as long as we live and follow Christ here on earth, we commit ourselves to doing this not as lone rangers, but in the context of the local church. The day will when "congregations never break up." We long for that day when we will all be gathered together in one congregation. But until that day, we give expression to that hope as we commit ourselves to local churches wherever God places us.

Benediction

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen. (2 Cor. 13:14)

We close our public services with at Hinson with this prayer, and so we entrust ourselves to the grace of God as we commit our lives to following Christ.

We are able to covenant together only by grace and we pursue this together only in grace. We don't do this perfectly, but encourage one another to walk like Christ together. This Church Covenant is not a list of rules and regulations. It is not a way to measure and compare ourselves against one another. It is not a way for us to earn God's favor. No, our hope is that this covenant would be an expression of our desire to live out the committed love that we see in the New Testament in response to love that we have received in Christ. We hope that this expression of our commitment will provide safety and depth to our relationships. Because when the going gets tough, we can remind ourselves of the commitment we have made to each other. This can serve as a catalyst to intentional and deep relationships in the church as we pursue godliness until Christ returns.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it a good idea for a church not only to have a Statement of Faith, but also a Church Covenant?
2. Does this covenant's picture of church community line up with what you've experienced? What about it would you enjoy? What about it would be difficult?
3. What is the relationship between our personal pursuit of Christ and our corporate pursuit of Christ?
4. How does our corporate life together relate to our mission to proclaim the gospel?

WHERE WE'VE COME FROM

Our Church's History

Introduction

In order to tell the story of Hinson Baptist Church, we must first learn something about the Baptists. To adequately learn about the Baptists, we have to learn a little about the Protestants. To learn about the Protestants, we have to learn about what they were protesting against and what they sought to reform, namely the Roman Catholic Church. And in order to do that, we need to go back to the very beginning of church history. So, our goal is not only to talk about the history of this church, but also to help you understand where Hinson fits into the big picture of what God has been up to.

The Church

One of the basic truths that the Bible reveals is that God creates His people by His Word. God's Word is central to the life of his people.

We see this in the Old Testament with Adam and Eve as God speaks life into them. We see it Abraham, as God calls him out of Ur. We see it with Moses - God's spokesperson of His law for His people. And we see it perhaps most vividly in Ezekiel 37 when the dry bones come to life by the very act of God's Word as it is spoken and heard.

And we see it ultimately in the New Testament, with Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. It's Jesus who saves us from our sin through his death on the cross. And in saving us as individuals, we are joined into a community, an assembly of people, called the church.

In other words, the church isn't man's idea. The church is God's idea. Jesus establishes the church, not the apostles (Matthew 16:18). Jesus commissions the church (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus builds the church through the Spirit (Acts 2:42-47). And Jesus rules the church through his word. Knowing this, the early church kept and preserved the apostles' writings, because they recognized it from the beginning as Scripture—God's word (2 Peter 1:20:21).

But it wasn't long in the early church before error began to creep in. The Apostle Paul warned that there would come a time when people would not want to hear sound teaching (2 Tim 4:3-4). And we see this starting even in the days of the New Testament. The church in one city tolerated perverse sexual immorality among its members; another embraced Gnostic heresies, the church in another city showed gross favoritism to the wealthy and powerful. It's all there in the Corinthians, Colossians, and to the book of James.

It didn't get any better as time went on. The history of the church from the death of the generation of the Apostles until 1500 is a long history of the spread of the church geographically, but also of the struggle of the church doctrinally.

Repeatedly during this period heresies emerged which sought to undermine and redefine the faith. This included the Gnostics, Montanists, Marcionites, Arians, and Pelagians. Many of today's cults and heresies are a repackaging of old heresies. As Solomon said long ago, there is nothing new under the sun.

In response to these heresies, the church repeatedly returned back to the Scriptures. And fairly early on, Christians began to confess what they believed the apostles had taught. This is where we get some of the early creeds and confessions, such as the Nicene Creed. They weren't looking to create new doctrines, but rather they were looking to understand and summarize what the Scriptures taught. They understood that in understanding God's Word, the Gospel was at stake.

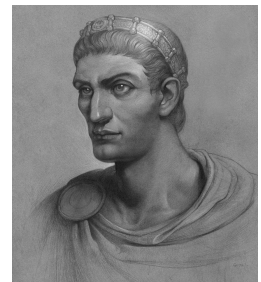


Early Christian martyrs

Not only did the early church hold fast to their faith through creeds and confessions, but also with their very lives. Organized persecution began with the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7 and continued periodically -- but often brutally. From the apostles to the early church martyrs, we see them illustrating for us what it means to be a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ: someone who is willing to affirm that Jesus is Lord, even unto death.

Constantine

There is perhaps no more important figure in the early church than Constantine, who became Emperor in 311 AD. In 312, he associated himself with Christianity having had a vision of a cross in the sky and the words "In this sign conquer". Frankly it's unclear if he was actually converted. But the result was that Christianity, which had been persecuted, soon became the favored and the official religion of the Empire through the Edict of Milan in 313 AD. This brought an end to persecution, but it also brought worldliness. The church began to resemble the structure of the Roman civil hierarchy. We see the growth of monarchical Bishops, who began exercising authority over local churches, until eventually, we get the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, who claimed to be the representative of Christ on earth. And it was his word that now ruled the Church.



Constantine

Over the next many centuries, various people reacted and sought the purity of the church and would try and bring people back to their spiritual identity. The effects were short lived.

Meanwhile, as Popes attempted to consolidate their power and authority, not everyone recognized the supremacy of the Bishop in Rome. In 1054 AD, after growing further and further apart for some 600 years, the church in the East broke from the Western church, in part over the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and in part over the universal authority that the Pope claimed. This is where we get the Orthodox family of churches, 15 in all, including the Russian and Greek Orthodox churches.



The selling of indulgences

In both the church in the East and the West, the distortion of the authority of the Church grew over the centuries leading up to the Reformation. The church began to claim to forgive original sin through baptism, and to forgive on-going sin through the practice of confession and penance. Eventually, these theological innovations developed to the point that the Church claimed to dispense God's grace as she saw fit. Other heresies crept in like doing one's best as a prerequisite to receiving the grace of God, indulgences to earn merit, penance for forgiveness, purgatory for further purging of sins, then being made holy and justified.

It was these practices and beliefs that led to the Reformation, and the recovery of the gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Reformation

One of the principal figures of the Reformation was Martin Luther. Born in 1483, he was a monk in Wittenberg, Germany. He had long struggled with the question of how he was accepted by God. But after much struggle of soul, the Lord brought him to a Biblical understanding of the Gospel.

The insight Luther had was on a verse that had long been oppressive to him:

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith,
just as it is written; **"The righteous will live by faith"**. – Romans 1:17

Luther had always been taught that this meant his righteousness, and he knew he didn't have that. But finally, through his study of Psalms and Romans, the Lord brought him to realize that Paul wasn't talking about his own righteousness, but a righteousness that was outside of himself—the righteousness of Christ. He came to understand that it was on the basis of Christ's righteousness that he was justified; not on his own efforts, but as a free gift of God received by faith.

For the first time in his life, Luther knew the peace of soul that comes through the Gospel. And in coming to this realization, Luther writes, "Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates." And so it comes as little surprise that he was outraged at Church's crass attempt to sell salvation through indulgences.

Luther didn't set out to start a new denomination, and he certainly didn't set out to break with Rome, which was the only church he or anyone in Western Europe knew. He wrote:

"The first thing I ask is that people should not make use of my name, and should not call themselves Lutherans but Christians. What is Luther? The teaching is not mine. Nor was I

crucified for anyone... How did I, a poor stinking bag of maggots that I am, come to the point where people call the children of Christ by my name?"

But Luther did want to see reform of the teaching of the church, and so in normal fashion at the time, he proposed a debate by nailing 95 theses, or debating points, to the door of the Wittenberg church on October 31, 1517.

But the Church of Rome was having nothing to do with what they perceived as Luther's novel ideas. He was tried before the Diet of Worms in April 1521, and told to withdraw his books and teaching. His reply stands as a bracing call of Christian conviction:

"Unless I am convinced by testimonies of the Scriptures or by clear arguments that I am in error—for popes and councils have often erred and contradicted themselves—I cannot withdraw, for I am subject to the Scriptures I have quoted; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. It is unsafe and dangerous to do anything against one's conscience. Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise. So help me God. Amen."



Luther at the Diet of Worms

And for this stand, Luther was eventually condemned by Rome.

But notice, that what Rome condemned, when it condemned Luther, was not an innovator or a revolutionary. It condemned the biblical gospel. For what Luther affirmed was that Scripture was to be the final authority, not the Pope, and that righteousness, or justification, was the free gift of God in the Gospel, not something that the church could dispense at will, and certainly not sell for money.

Luther wasn't the first or the only person to have perceived the problems with Roman Catholic teaching. Similar reformers were popping up all over Europe: Zwingli in Zurich, Calvin in Geneva, Bucer in Strasbourg, and Cranmer in England. Even before them, and throughout the Middle Ages, we can point to John Wycliffe in the 14th century, Jan Hus in the 15th century and more. As bad as things might have been during that age, God never left his church without a faithful witness. But it was Luther that God used in a unique way, to recover the faithful preaching and teaching of the gospel so that the church would never be the same again.

Baptist

Out of the Reformation came several strands of Protestants, or those who protested against the abuse and heresy of Rome. There were the Lutherans, who affirmed a biblical understanding of the Gospel, the supreme authority of Scripture, and the priesthood of all believers, but also maintained some similarities with Catholic doctrine, especially in their understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

There were the Anabaptists, whose main distinctive was the rejection of infant baptism for believer's baptism, but who also questioned original sin, rejected civil authority, embraced pacifism, and even in some extreme cases, polygamy and anarchy.

There were also the Reformed churches: Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and the Church of England, who along with free grace emphasized God's sovereignty in salvation, a Protestant view of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and God's ongoing work in making each believer's life more holy.

Out of this last group came the Baptists. As early as 1608, some in the Church of England such as John Smyth were rejecting infant baptism. By the middle of the 17th century, a small but growing number of Congregationalists in England were becoming Baptists. And it is out of this Reformed stream, rather than the Anabaptist stream, that Baptists in America come from.

At the same time that some Puritans in England were realizing that the Bible commanded baptism for believers, in the New World of America, Roger Williams and eleven others in Providence, RI founded the first Baptist church in America in 1639. The Congregational authorities in MA had exiled them for their beliefs, and Williams sought a charter for the colony of RI that would specifically grant religious toleration. Though Williams himself soon went off the theological deep end, more and more Baptists began emerging in England, and many immigrated to America. These late 17th and 18th century Baptists almost all shared a Reformed, confessional understanding of the faith: A sovereign God saves us not through our good works or even our wise choice, but through His grace realized in Christ's work on the cross.

Baptists in England distinguished themselves in literature (e.g., John Bunyan) and government, and in America contributed significantly to the cause of religious liberty. One example is John Leland who wrote on religious liberty. During the debates over the Constitution and Bill of Rights, Leland either corresponded with or met with George Washington and James Madison, and seems to have been quite influential in developing the First Amendment's guarantee of religious freedom.

Baptists have also pioneered the world missions movement. In 1812, Adoniram Judson, a Baptist missionary to Burma, was the first missionary sent out from North America. Fellow missionary, Luther Rice, helped form the Baptist General Convention for Foreign Missions intended to help churches cooperate in financing and sending missionaries, which was the beginning of Baptists coming together on a national scale to support missions.



Adoniram Judson

Towards the late 18th century, Baptists grew at an astonishing rate. Because of their emphasis on personal conversion, the Gospel's simplicity, relatively informal worship services, individual conscience, and congregational church governance, Baptists appealed to people in the new democratic nation. Throughout their growth, most Baptists continued to hold to reformed confessional standards.

Liberalism & Neo-Evangelicalism

At the end of the 19th century, around the time when Hinson was being founded, Christianity encountered another formidable threat: the rise of theological liberalism and modernism. It rejected the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, His miracles, and His bodily resurrection. At its heart, it questioned the authority and trustworthiness of Scripture.

By 1930, almost every Protestant denomination in America had been captured or greatly influenced by theological liberalism. Eventually, denominations splintered as those holding onto orthodox beliefs were forced out or simply left: the OPC out of the PCUSA; the Missouri Synod out of the ELCA, and the Conservative Baptists out of the Northern Baptists.

There were the Fundamentalists in the 1930s and 1940s, who sought to preserve orthodox Christianity by withdrawing from an increasingly secular and irreligious culture. Similar to the Fundamentalists in doctrine, but frustrated by the cultural and intellectual marginalization, a new movement known as neo-evangelicalism sought to re-engage the culture while also defending the inerrancy of Scripture and the necessity of supernatural grace for salvation.

Neo-evangelicalism was led by men like Billy Graham, Carl F.H. Henry, John Stott and J.I. Packer. Neo-evangelicals came from a variety of denominational traditions, but united around a shared commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture, the necessity of being born again in Christ, the imperative to evangelize, and the importance of engaging with the culture. These men exercised significant influence over the Conservative Baptists here in the Northwest.

Hinson Baptist Church

All this brings us to Hinson Baptist Church. In 1872, the First Baptist Church of Portland, located on the westside of Portland in what is now SW Fifth & Yamhill, sees a need to start Sunday school classes across the Willamette River. By 1879, there has been enough growth so that 20 members of First Baptist are sent to constitute First Baptist Church of East Portland, with Rev. R.C. White as their pastor. Ministry is hard out in the Wild West, and in the first 15 years, 10 different men serve as pastor. By 1894, the church grows to become a metropolitan church, so they vote to change their name to Second Baptist Church of Portland. Two years later, they construct and dedicate their first building on the corner of 7th and SE Ankeny.

It's during this time that the church first begins to encounter the social gospel movement, as a result of the growing influence of theological liberalism. In 1901, a new pastor, W.E. Randall, is called, but in less than a year he divides the church over the question of the church's involvement in social issues. This leads to his resignation and a group going out with him to form Central Baptist Church on 20th and SE Ankeny. For almost 10 years, these two churches exist about a quarter mile from each other. But there is a happy ending. By 1910, many involved in the original debate have moved on, and so the two churches agree to once again re-unite, now forming East Side Baptist Church. And it's around this time that we see the first period of significant growth.



Walter B. Hinson

In 1917, East Side Baptist calls W.B. Hinson as pastor, and under his faithful evangelical ministry the congregation begins to grow. When he arrives, there are about 200 members, but 9 years later the congregation has grown to nearly 1,400. It's during Hinson's pastorate that the church acquires our present-day property on 20th and Salmon in 1918, and you can see East Side Baptist Church written there on the stone near the entrance. It's also under Hinson that this church begins to develop its passion for outreach & world missions, and also its leadership among conservative churches in the Northern Baptist Convention. However, in 1926, Hinson suffers a sudden stroke and passes away, and in memory of him, two months later, the church is renamed Hinson Memorial Baptist Church.

For the next 30 plus years, we see the continued growth of Hinson Baptist Church, as the building is expanded, and Western Conservative Baptist Seminary is founded right in our building. In 1934, Hinson calls Dr. Albert G. Johnson to be their pastor and he goes on to have the longest pastorate here at Hinson, for 21 years. But it's during this time that conservative churches in the Northern Baptist Convention lose the fight for evangelical doctrine within the convention, and in 1947, in part under the leadership of Johnson, they leave the NBC to form the Conservative Baptist Association of America.

With Hinson becoming a prominent church in the CB denomination, what we see in the next 50 years is several short pastorates, as pastors serve at Hinson for a few years and then leave to serve in other ministries and churches. This includes William Kerr, who goes on to serve as dean of a CB seminary, Herb Anderson, who goes on to serve as president of CB Foreign Missions Society, and Don Baker, who leaves to pastor a church in Illinois. During these years, Hinson continues to see growth, but they also watch the community around them change dramatically. As in other urban cities in America, people are emptying out to the suburbs, so by the time we get to the 90's, Hinson is largely a commuter church and experiences some decline as its membership becomes less invested in this community.

Starting in the late 90's, we see an increase in the outreach to the community, as the church attempts a seeker-sensitive model under the leadership of Bruce Boria, and this proves to be effective in some ways. However, the seeker-sensitive model also has its own challenges in this congregation and context, and before long Boria accepts a pastorate back east. The next pastor, Gary Dozier, faithfully leads this church for four years, but for various reasons, ends up finding a better fit for him in another church across town. Which brings us to our present day, as Michael Lawrence began his ministry here in 2010 and hopes to be here for a long, long time.

Given the history of this church and recent years of decline, it's easy to feel the pressure to once again return to a state of prominence and size. However, what this overview reminds us is that our history stretches back far beyond those "glory years", even beyond those first twenty Christians starting a church on the east of the Willamette. In fact, when we take a broader look at the history of the church, we begin to see the faithfulness of Christ in preserving and building His church, from Palestine all the way to Portland. And so, we feel a different kind of pressure. We're encouraged to persevere in faithfulness to Christ, in whatever He may have for us.

Our hope is very much that we here at Hinson may resemble what we read about in Acts 2: a community of believers who are committed to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship of believers, to breaking bread and to prayer. By the grace of God, this church remains committed to the same Gospel believed by Christians through the centuries, and first proclaimed by Jesus Christ, who is the "same yesterday, today, and forever."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Many of the early creeds and confessions were developed in response to heresies, to clearly delineate a biblical understanding of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Are these creeds still relevant today? Why or why not? How do these creeds protect the gospel?
2. Luther stood against the Roman Catholic church, affirming the biblical gospel, that we are saved by grace through faith alone. He affirmed that Scripture, not the Pope, was the final Christian authority. How is the church today tempted to affirm salvation by other means, in addition to "by grace through faith"? If the church is drifting away from Scripture as the final authority, what would be another authority she would embrace as ultimate?
3. As you read the overview of the history of Hinson Baptist Church, what stands out to you? What do you think has been the most instrumental factor in God preserving this church for over a century?

WHEN WE GATHER

Our Life as a Church

Introduction

In Hebrews chapter 10, we see a surprising vision of the Christian life. The entire book, up to this point, has been to encouraging Christians to remain faithful to Jesus Christ. But now that Jesus has come and accomplished our salvation, how then ought we live?

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of **faith**, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water. Let us hold on to the confession of our **hope** without wavering, since he who promised is faithful. And let us watch out for one another to provoke **love** and good works – Heb. 10:22-24

There you see a summary of the Christian life: faith, hope and love. Because Christ has come and accomplished our salvation, we trust Him in faith, we hold on to the hope of His promises, and we now live in love for one another. But how? What does this look like practically? We see this in the following verse:

Not neglecting to **gather** together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching. – Heb. 10:25

Faith, hope, love, and *gathering*! It seems funny, but actually it's teaching us a very important lesson. How do we remain faithful and hopeful and loving to the end? *Through gathering together as a church.* The local church is the context where we are reminded of our faith in Christ, where we are encouraged to hold on to our hope even through suffering, where we consider how we may spur one another on toward love.

Ultimately, this growth in faith, hope, and love is the work of the Spirit in our lives to overcome our unbelief, discouragement, and selfishness. But the Spirit of Christ is at work when His people gather together under Christ's authority. And so we want to organize our church in a way that supports and promotes this kind of gospel-centered, intentional, loving Christian community. What does that look like here at Hinson?

Membership

Hebrews 10 envisions more than just people showing up for a service, or a list of names on a church roll. Rather, it envisions an ongoing commitment and accountability that you have with a particular body of Christians. It is the formal expression of living the Christian life together as a local church displaying the glory of God. This is what we call membership here at Hinson.

But membership in a church isn't like membership at a gym, where you can voluntarily join and drop out of the gym. Rather, it's very much a two-way relationship. In deciding to join this church, the church also chooses to receive you into membership.

This happens as you learn about this church: as you attend our services, as you get to know the community here, as you prayerfully decide whether or not you want to commit to this body, and as you express that commitment to us.

And this happens as this church learns about you: as we hear your profession of faith, as you give testimony and evidence to being a genuine follower of Jesus, and the congregation affirms, "Yes, we believe in the same gospel, we see you're a Christian, and we're happy to commit ourselves to you in membership also."

What happens if it comes time to leave? If a job or other circumstances take you to another church, you would submit a letter asking to resign your membership from Hinson, and the congregation would receive your letter and then vote to approve your resignation. In other words, even in departing, we want to acknowledge the two-way nature of this relationship. In cases where a person is resigning their membership in order to avoid accountability, the church would have the option to reject that resignation, in order to continue engaging that member in love.

What all this indicates is that membership in a church is not like joining a club, but is a *committed relationship*, carrying with it privileges and blessings, and also responsibilities. This is the context of committed relationships where we see Hebrews 10 being lived out.

The Services of the Church

Besides joining the church, the next most important piece of being a part of this community is being here on a regular basis. That's precisely what Hebrews 10 is telling us: Don't give up meeting together! Often, people think that the way to get connected is by serving in a ministry. But even before you sign up to serve, realize that your attendance at church is your most fundamental, ongoing ministry. Simply by showing up faithfully, being engaged in relationships and conversations, you are serving and ministering to the body. So, what does this look like?

Sunday Morning Service

Our main worship service officially begins at 10:30 am. Our Sunday morning service is our most important gathering, because it's during this time that we hear from God's Word, which is the source of all of our life together as a church. Because God saves and sustains us by his Word, we preach the Word, sing the Word, hear the Word, pray the Word, and see the Word (through baptism and the Lord's Supper). Throughout the service, we want to focus our attention on the grace that we've received. In our songs, our prayers, the sermon, we are always reminding one another that we stand on the grace of Jesus Christ. It's this good news that drives our worship. The entire service is our time of worship as we respond to the good news that is revealed in God's Word.



This is why we hear from God first and last in our service through our call to worship and benediction. It's why we have longer prayers. It's why we emphasize singing with full hearts and loud voices—the Spirit-filled people are proclaiming the rich Word of Christ to God and one another (Col 3:16; Eph 5:18-19). And it's why we sing *a lot* of songs—because we can't exhaust the character and work of God. We'll never have enough songs to declare God's praise!

So prepare ahead of time for these Sunday morning times together. Come rested and ready. We have Sermon Cards with the upcoming passages that will be preached on each Sunday. They are available in the pews, online, or on the church app. Tuck a card into your Bible and take time during the week to read through the passage, to prepare your heart to hear God's Word. It's great to feel the anticipation of the congregation, when many people have been reading the passage all week and are looking forward to hearing from that particular text.

Our morning service is also when we celebrate baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptisms are a wonderful display of the gospel, as we get to see pictured what it means to follow Christ, namely to be united with him in his death and resurrection. We always announce upcoming baptisms because we mean for you to use them as evangelistic opportunities. If you've wanted to invite an unbelieving friend to church, invite them particularly to baptism services, because there, they will get to hear someone's testimony and see this picture of the gospel.

We also celebrate the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of the month. When we look at 1 Cor. 10 and 11, Paul's emphasis is almost strictly on the corporate reality of the Lord's Supper. Paul encourages people to examine themselves and their relationships with one another. So we encourage our members to make particular effort to prioritize being at these Lord's Supper services. But it's not just about your own personal, individual following of Jesus. Rather it's about how all of us together have been united to Christ and we are reminded of that in that meal. Again, we'll always announce it ahead of time to remind our members to be examining their lives and relationships in the week leading up to it, so that the meal is a faithful picture of our unity in Christ.

Sunday Evening Service

At 5:00 pm on Sundays is our congregational prayer service. We begin by praising God in song (this is usually the place where we'll learn new songs), members share prayer requests regarding them or the church or various ministry opportunities, and then we pray for those things as a congregation. After our time of prayer, we have a short devotional, usually not given by the Pastors, based on the same theme as the morning service but from the opposite Testament.

These services are special: it's a time to hear who's hurting and who's rejoicing in our church, to hear of important events during the week, to send out missionaries and hear about ministry opportunities inside and outside the church. Hinson is not a small church, but it is possible to know the congregation as a whole, and one way to do that is simply by coming to our Sunday

evening service regularly. So much of the spurring on to faith, hope and love that we read about in Hebrews 10, happens in our Sunday evening service as we pray together, so let me encourage you to make that a regular part of your Sundays.

Congregational Meetings

On the third Sunday of every other month, we have our Congregational Meetings. In these family meetings we discuss things that address the life and workings of our church. We hear reports on membership, finances, buildings & property, Children's Ministry, Elder or Deacon matters, and various other new business.

We think these are a high priority for our members, because it is one of the functional ways the church can exercise their Jesus-given authority in matters of doctrine, membership, and appointing elders and deacons (Matt 16:18-19; 18:15-20; 28:16-20; Gal. 1)

One of the key responsibilities is to affirm new members. When elders bring new members to be added, these are people that have come to us saying, we want to commit to this church. They've gone through the membership process, they've met with an Elder, and they'll be voted on by the congregation. After we have welcomed new members in, we encourage our members to take a look at that report, and see if you might find one or two new members that you can consider reaching out to. This is a great opportunity, again, to put into practice this vision of engaging in relationships within the local church.

If ever, for some reason, the Elders are bringing forward a motion, and you decide that you're going to vote "No", please come talk to one of us Elders before you do so. That's not because we want to manipulate you or change your vote, but simply because you may know something that we don't, and we want to have the opportunity to reconsider or even withdraw the motion before coming to a vote if that information proves to be significant. We might still bring it forward, but having open lines of communication will help the Elders to lead well.

Sunday Classes

Our week begins, each Sunday, with a day set aside to gather with the church and worship God together. The Sunday classes are at 9:00 AM before the main gathering. These classes provide solid Bible teaching and equipping (Eph 4:11-13). They are a great place for people to build significant relationships. Take advantage of these classes for biblical training and relationships!

Informal Relationships

Our services and various meetings are ways for us to live together as a Christian community. But beyond these, there are countless other ways that we want to build the culture and relationships that are the glue of Hebrews 10.

Discipling

A disciple is a follower of Jesus. Discipling in its most basic sense is intentionally helping one another follow Jesus. Every Christian is a disciple and every Christian is called to disciple. We want a culture of discipleship at Hinson where it is the whole church discipling the whole church.

Because of the biblical centrality of discipleship, we don't believe it is something we do, but how we do everything. Serving in a ministry helps people follow Jesus. Hospitality helps people follow Jesus. Meeting for Bible studies helps people follow Jesus. Small Groups helps people follow Jesus. Meeting with a younger believer helps people follow Jesus. Meeting to pray, etc...the list could go on. This isn't a program. You don't need our permission to start something up. Be creative and look for ways to help others follow Jesus. This is the responsibility of every Christian and therefore every member at Hinson! If you have questions about this, reach out to a staff member, elder, or a friend you have at church.

Hospitality

One practical example is hospitality (Rom. 12:13). This starts with faithful attendance, coming early to greet people, and staying after to engage with people. Also, if you're able, make plans for getting lunch with people after services. This takes planning and initiative, but even if you just do so once a month or every couple of months. If this is overwhelming, start small. This could be a great way to begin building significant relationships here. Don't wait for the staff to build a program for this, but feel free to take the initiative.

Other ideas for practicing hospitality: Join our Member Care Team or Deaconesses to visit a shut-in and read Scripture and pray with them. Come regularly on Sunday evenings to hear about practical needs within the congregation, and volunteer to help. Host a missionary on home assignment in your home. Invite people over to your home for dinner. Host a prayer meeting in your home.

Small Groups

Being in a Small Group is not required because we recognize that discipleship can happen in several different forms. However, Small Groups are great way to be involved intentionally getting to know other believers and helping them follow Jesus. Four things characterize *all* our Small Groups—hospitality, Word-centered study, transparent gospel-application, and prayer. While every group shares these characteristics, each group is a bit different because of the gifting of the leader and the make-up of the group. This is not a time for monologue teaching, but mutual sharing of what God is teaching us through his Word and in our lives. Also, we do our best to keep the groups multi-generational. Small Groups are spread out over the greater Portland area. Many of them meet every other week, but each group is different. If you are interested in joining a Small Group, contact the church office or ask a friend if you can go to theirs.

Women's Ministry

The vision of the Hinson Women's Ministry is that women of all ages and stages of life be encouraged and equipped to be life-long followers of Jesus and bring others with them as fellow disciples. We want to bring the gospel to light in all of life's complexities so the foundation of the ministry is Bible Study; seeing and knowing God through his word. Women gather weekly during the school year for Bible Study with morning and evening options. There are also special events throughout the year to focus on specific topics pertaining to women, looking to see life and relationships through the lens of the Scriptures, as well as build support and community among

women. To get involved, contact Mary-Alice, our Women's Ministry director, at mdeboer@hinsonchurch.org.

Men's Ministry

Our men's ministry is about helping men take spiritual responsibility in the church and home. So the bulk of the ministry happens as men meet together in smaller groups for accountability and study and taking responsibility in the church as a whole through participation in ministry. Twice a year, the men are gathered together. It's an opportunity to eat some good food, build more relationships, hear a brief devotion, and gain a better understanding of how to serve the church and other men through the rest of the year.

Giving

Along with building intentional, loving relationships, another practical way to support the ministry of this church is to give faithfully and sacrificially.

Scripture suggests that what a person does with their money is a good indicator of where their heart is and where their trust is. So if you are a Christian, you know that God wants us to grow in every aspect of our Christian life, and this includes in how we use our money. What does this mean for our giving? Give, in scale with your income (I Cor. 16:1-2). A certain dollar amount is not prescribed, but Christians are encouraged to give in joy and gratitude, not under compulsion. We want members of the church to be joyous in the privilege of being able to share in God's work here at Hinson Baptist Church, which means the Elders are going to do their best in presenting a budget that is transparent and that supports strategic, useful Gospel work. And as we give to that work, we do so remembering the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, he became poor for our sakes that we might become rich.

Leadership

So far, then, we've discussed membership, meetings, relationships, and giving as ways where we can put into practice the spiritual community of Hebrews 10. But the Bible doesn't envision this community as a headless, unorganized mass. So where is the authority in the church. We believe the church is congregationally ruled and elder led. Earlier you heard about authority Jesus gave the members of the church. So let's expRather, it has very clear instructions for leadership and for how we make decisions as a church. In fact, just a few verses later in the book of Hebrews, we see this:

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, since they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” - Hebrews 13:17

Therefore, we have aimed to structure the leadership here at Hinson in a way that reflects what we see in the New Testament.

Elders

We begin with the biblical office of Elders. Here are the men who are currently serving as Elders:

- Mike DeBoer – Public School Guidance Counselor
- Jim Everden – Retired
- David Fisher – Consultant
- Trent Hughes – Financial Analyst
- Michael Kane – Business Owner
- Michael Lawrence – Lead Pastor at Hinson
- Jeff Liebert – Accountant
- Anthony Locke – Accountant for Multnomah County
- Todd Miles – Professor at Western Seminary
- Daniel Schreiner – Associate Pastor at Hinson
- Mark Whitcomb – Associate Pastor at Hinson
- Neal Woollard – Associate Pastor at Hinson

And what do these men do? Quite simply – prayer, oversight, and teaching.

First, Elders are to be in prayer. In our Elder meetings, we always spend an extended time in prayer. We spend time praising God and praying through the membership directory. And Elders invest time in prayer as a regular part of their ministries here. We find it is indeed a necessity in seeking to lead God's people, and it is honoring to God as we show our dependence on Him.

Second, Elders are to extend oversight of the church, to shepherd the flock by being under-shepherds. So Elders give attention to areas of marriage, finances, worship, ordinances, discipline, doctrine, missions, recommendation of Elders & Deacons & new members, and so forth.

Third, Elders are responsible for the teaching in the church. The one distinct qualification of an Elder in I Timothy 3:2 vs. that of a Deacon is that an Elder must be able to teach. This doesn't mean that the Elders are necessarily doing all of the teaching in the church, but it does mean that they are overseeing it. So for example, the Elders have given prayerful consideration and created some standards for whoever teaches on a regular basis here at Hinson. And the Lead Pastor position is given to an Elder devoted primarily to the faithful, expository preaching of God's word. Because of God's command in 1 Timothy 2:12 about teaching in the local church being a responsibility given to men, we understand also that the role of Elder is reserved only for qualified men.

So what is the process of selecting an Elder? As Elders we want to see who is already doing the work of eldering in our church in their care for members—so that we as a congregation can recognize them as such. Now, we understand that the congregation has the final vote in calling Elders. But rather than having the congregation try to publicly evaluate the spiritual maturity of the men in the congregation, which could be really embarrassing, we've entrusted that responsibility to the Elders, and they are the ones who recommend and evaluate men to serve in this capacity. Our

goal in this process is that when it comes time to vote on an Elder, the congregation will have been given plenty of notice and opportunity to hear from that candidate and get to know him.

Congregationalism

It's worth noting that though we are called in Scripture to obey our Elders, we also see that final responsibility for matters of discipline and doctrine rests with the congregation. In places like 1 Corinthians 5 or the book of Galatians, when a problem arose in the church, the apostle Paul went after the congregation, not the Elders or the Pastor. So at Hinson, we believe that this congregation is the final authority on some of the most fundamental things about us, including what we believe, who gets to be a part of our body, and who our leaders are. For those things, and more, you'll notice that rather than having the Elders simply make the decisions, the congregation is involved in the process in various ways, and they are the ones who have the final say.

How do we balance congregational authority with the Elders' responsibility to lead? You want to assess how important a matter is, and how clear it is.

- If a matter is important, and Scripture is very clear on it, then the congregation has the responsibility to act (ex: an Elder is beginning to teach heresy, and the other Elders are doing nothing about it).
- If a matter is important, but Scripture isn't clear on what's to be done, then here is an opportunity for the congregation to trust the Elders' leadership (ex: whether a certain man should serve as an Elder).
- And if a matter is unimportant, then likely this is something even the Elders shouldn't be concerned about, but should entrust to the staff and others in the congregation (ex: what copier paper to buy).

Deacons

We also have those who serve as Deacons. Acts 6 shows how the office of Deacon was established. An issue of logistics threatened to divide the church: Grecian Jews complained against Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. To address this issue of unity, the apostles designated these brothers to oversee this administrative challenge.

So what are the responsibilities of Deacons? Well, primarily, they are to promote the unity of the church by caring for practical needs within the church, and freeing up the Elders to devote themselves to their ministry. So when selecting Deacons, we look for people of godly character, who will happily allow the congregation's overall good to supersede their own interests. Deacons are nominated by the Elders, and recognized by the congregation.

We have the following members serving as Deacons:

- Deacon of Benevolence – Mark Von Wald
- Deacon of Bookstall – Cathy Lasater
- Deacon of Children's Ministry – Jen Whitcomb
- Deacon of Children's Safety Administrator – Steve Morgan
- Deacon of Global Worker Care – Christian Walburg

- Deacon of Hospitality – Kevin Klein
- Deacon of Library – Ralph Becker
- Deacon of Practical Care – Jon Schnur
- Deacon of Member Care – Elaine Fahland
- Deacon of New Member Care – Austin Davis
- Deacon of Ordinances – Peter Dillenburger
- Deacon of Security – Joe Cobb
- Deacon of Sound – Doug Fabel
- Deacon of Welcome Ministries – Larry Huang
- Deacon of Website – Tami Fung
- Deacon of Youth – Dizzie Hus

If you are interested in serving in any of these areas, these would be the men and women to talk to.

Church Staff

Finally, we have members who have been set aside to serve in the employ of the church:

- Michael Lawrence – Lead Pastor
- Daniel Schreiner – Associate Pastor
- Mark Whitcomb – Associate Pastor
- Neal Woollard – Associate Pastor
- Mary-Alice DeBoer – Director of Women’s Ministry
- Vonny Hewitt – Office Manager
- Davey Walker – Pastoral Assistant
- Paul “PK” Kim – Pastoral Assistant
- Andy Matsuoka – Director of Facilities

The staff’s job is basically to carry out the Elders’ vision for ministry in their respective areas.

Conclusion

We’ve covered a lot, but let me conclude by saying that we are glad you’re considering committing to Hinson. If there you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to approach any of the Pastors or Elders here. We would love for you to play a part in fulfilling this vision of meaningful, word-centered community that spurs us on toward love and good deeds, giving glory to God along the way, whether you do that here at Hinson, or at another gospel-preaching church here in town.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you had previous experiences with churches that emphasized membership, “an ongoing commitment and accountability that you have with a particular body of Christians”? If this is a new idea, does it strike you as a good thing, or do you have reservations about it?
2. Hinson’s worship services are centered on God’s Word, not only during the sermon, but in readings, singing, and prayers. Why is it so important that the Word remain central? What is the danger if the Word becomes more and more marginalized?
3. The congregationalism at Hinson means that the members of the church are finally responsible for matters of discipline and doctrine. Have you been in a congregational church before? How do we balance the congregation's responsibility to exercise authority and the elders' responsibility to lead?

WHY WE COMMIT

Why join a church?

Introduction

Think of four people and their attitudes toward church:

- John – He follows Jesus but is not into “organized religion.” He feels he worships best by going for a hike on Sunday.
- Leann – She is a church hopper. Here for a while, there for a while, and somewhere pretty much every Sunday.
- Natasha – She found a great Singles Group. She is always there on Sunday night, and shows up at church in the morning when the sermon seems like it’ll be interesting.
- Joseph – He loves the preaching at his church, but tends to slip out right afterward. He’s never really thought about joining. What’s the point?

What do all these people have in common?

They all see themselves as Christians. They all see the church as somewhat unrelated to their faith. Perhaps you’ve encountered people like this. Or perhaps this describes you at some point in your life.

We want to suggest that according to the New Testament they all share a fundamental misunderstanding of what it means to be a Christian.

The Purpose of the Church in the Book of Ephesians

The question we want to think about is: Why should I join a church? Not just attend a church, not just join a small group, but why should I **join a church**?

And we’ll begin by looking at an overview of Ephesians.

Chapter 1 is a beautiful description of our salvation, which began before the beginning of time:

Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him. He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One. – Ephesians 1:3-6

And how is it that we’re saved from our sins, to the praise of God’s glory? Chapter 2 lays out the gospel, which has come to us in this present age:

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! – Ephesians 2:4-5

That's the theology. And now the application: the first implication of the gospel we come to as we finish chapter 2 is that the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles is gone. Destroyed.

For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In his flesh, he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death. – Ephesians 2:14-16

This unity is so profound that Paul even calls it a mystery—hidden for generations but now made known.

The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. – Ephesians 3:6

Why did God do this? Why rescue sinners from their sin and join them together in one Body? Why create unity between redeemed Jews and Gentiles who have nothing in common but Christ?

This is so that God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens. This is according to his eternal purpose accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Ephesians 3:10-11

Isn't that amazing? And maybe hard to believe? *"Through the church? God intends to do these amazing things through the church?"*

This narrative of God's plan of salvation seems to be an odd place to introduce that most institutional aspect of the Christian religion. But apparently this is what God is doing. God's plan to glorify Himself centers on the local church.

The church isn't fundamentally about instruction, or about singing songs. It's about a community of people who are different from each other in the world's eyes, as different as Jews and Gentiles coming together—and yet who live together in unity and love because they share Christ in common. Instruction fuels this community. Praise is the response. But at its core, the church is community, for the praise of God.

Think back to what Jesus says in John 13:34-35: "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Love between Christians isn't just an "extra credit" part of the Christian life. It's essential.

And this is hard. Church is messy. It hurts. It's not easy to love people who're different from you. But that's the whole point, isn't it? That love is different in kind from the world's love. As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?"

That's why a small group of people just like you doesn't accomplish the goal God's set out for the church. That's why a singles group isn't a church. That's why attending church but not investing in messy, difficult, God-glorifying relationships isn't living up to God's plans for the church. It's one thing to live a holy life in isolation from everyone else. But that will be no different from the world.

What's different, though—revolutionary in fact—is Christians who love each other; who are committed to each other; who have difficult conversations and share in each other's joys and burdens. That's the church. And that's why, if you consider yourself a Christian, you need to be a meaningful member of a local church.

Think, for a minute, of the images the New Testament uses for the church.

- Sometimes Paul uses the image of building (1 Cor. 3:9, Eph. 2:21, 2 Cor. 6:16)
- Sometimes we see the very famous image of a body (Rom. 12:4-5, Heb. 12)
- Sometimes the church is a flock (1 Peter 5:2).
- Sometimes the church is a family (1 Tim. 3:15. Eph. 1:5).

But in all these images, we should ask, "If we are Christians, what should our relationship to the church be?"

- Where are the bricks? They are in a building, and if they aren't connected to the building then they can't really identify with it. They would simply be rubble lying around in a heap.
- If we are members of physical body, then how can we not be attached to it? To be dismembered from a body is grotesque.
- If we are sheep, we are going to be in a flock. To be separated from the flock is to expose yourself to danger.
- If we are called to be God's children, we are going to be in His family. We are to no longer live as orphans, but to realize we have been adopted into a family of brothers and sisters.

In all of these images that are used about being a Christian in the New Testament, we clearly see that there is a corporate reality to our spiritual lives, and this is expressed in the local church.

A Biblical Case for Church Membership

So what exactly does it mean to be committed to a church? One way to answer that question is by walking through some of the so-called "one-another" commands in Scripture. Those commands are given in the context of the local church and when we put them together, they take the shape of committed relationships, what we call church membership.

Love One Another

First, much of this body life involves commands to “love one another.”

Love the brothers and sisters. – 1 Peter 2:17

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith. –Galatians 6:10

And this isn’t just a fuzzy feeling inside, but is eminently practical. This is love with staying power.

Now we who are strong have an obligation to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, and not to please ourselves. – Romans 15:1

Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality... Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. – Romans 12:13, 15-16

Just like a marriage doesn’t image Christ’s love for the church if the husband or wife gets up and walks off the first time sacrifice becomes real, love in a church doesn’t say much about the power of the gospel if there is no commitment, no staying power. What I think is important about these passages I just mentioned—and there are dozens more like them—is that they are given to all Christians, not just to an elite few. This kind of deep, committed love for other Christians isn’t something that we just grow into over time. No, it’s expected of all Christians. And it’s something you can only do with Christians you rub shoulders with on a regular basis. So if you’re a Christian, you need to put yourself in a place where you can love in this kind of way—and where you give others the opportunity to love you like this.

Encourage One Another

This second group of one another commands has to do with encouraging each other’s faith.

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.
– 1 Thessalonians 5:11

And let us watch out for one another to provoke love and good works – Hebrews 10:24

It’s good to be a generally encouraging person. But is that what these two authors have in mind? The author of Hebrews goes on in the very next verse to tell us explicitly what he means.

Not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching. – Hebrews 10:25

Obedience to this New Testament command to encourage each other is to be done quite specifically in the context of the local church.

Have you ever thought about encouraging others in your church as part of God’s big plan? Maybe God’s plan isn’t all about you in an individualistic sense, about how you can be sure to witness to

2.5 more people on average each month, and get your quiet times 7 minutes longer over the year, and your individual holiness in some measure developed. These things aren't bad, but could it be that God is about something larger and grander than that?

Maybe even more than he cares about you, he cares about you giving up yourself to build up your brothers and sisters in the local church. And perhaps by your pouring your life into other people in a committed fashion, those who are weaker in the faith will be strengthened, and God will be glorified.

Guard One Another

The third group of commands has to do with guarding one another. In Hebrews, the author writes to Christians about their responsibility for each other.

Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and defiling many. And make sure that there isn't any immoral or irreverent person... - Hebrews 12:15-16

Or there's that famous passage in 1 Corinthians 5 where Paul writes to the Corinthian church:

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and the kind of sexual immorality that is not even tolerated among the Gentiles – a man is sleeping with his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Shouldn't you be filled with grief and remove from your congregation the one who did this? Even though I am absent in the body, I am present in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who has been doing such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus, and I am with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, hand that one over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.
– 1 Corinthians 5:1-5

I would guess that the man in 1 Corinthian 5 thought of himself as a Christian. He probably went to church regularly. He probably did all the things that a person would do in that church community.

And that is precisely the reason why Paul had to write and tell them to take action. Somehow they had to make it clear to him (for his sake!) that his life was that of a non-Christian. That was a **loving** thing to do, not only for the man, but also for others around him. By such an action, Paul wanted to make the gospel clear to unbelievers and believers alike.

As we are careful to hold each other accountable to living consistently with the gospel, everyone who is watching can see "Ah... this is what Christianity is. This is what it means to follow Jesus. This, and not that."

Again, commands like Hebrews 12 or 1 Corinthians 5 aren't just for super Christians. All Christians are to have this kind of relationship with a local church. As fallen people, we're prone to self-deception. And the main thing that God has set up for us to deal with self-deception is the

local church. The church is kind of like an assurance of salvation co-op. It is being in a community of people where we get to know them and we allow them to get to know us. That's how we see whether or not we're living out this Christianity that we profess.

Obey Your Leaders

And then there's a fourth category of commands made to every Christian about their life in a local church, having to do with leaders.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, since they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. – Hebrews 13:17

Now, this verse has implications for both church members and church leaders.

For church members: are you to obey every Christian leader who comes along? No. You're to obey the leaders of your own church, the ones who you've signed up to submit to.

And for church leaders: will we give account for every Christian? No. We'll give account for a particular flock, namely the one who has recognized you as a leader.

How would this work if everyone was just a church consumer, hopping around from one place to another? Which leaders are they to obey? And pity those poor church leaders! How are they to know which souls they'll give account for someday?

Members of this church have had one of the Elders hear their testimonies. Elders have asked them questions about their understanding of the Gospel and have committed to pray for them and shepherd them. We know who has committed themselves to this church and we've committed ourselves to them.

The only reason why churches exist is because people realize, "OK, no church is perfect. But I'm going to settle in this place and try to prosper here spiritually. I agree with what they teach—their statement of faith—and how they're trying to live together—their church covenant. So I'll live life together with them, committed to them."

That's the kind of commitment that allows us to live out Hebrews 13:17.

Putting it all together

Now, if you're going to obey all these commands, some things need to be true of your relationship with a church.

- It has to be a committed relationship. This kind of love and encouragement can't happen without real commitment.
- It has to be a relationship with a defined group of people. Church leaders need to know who they're giving account for, for example.

- And it has to be a voluntary association but one in which you're giving these people permission to do things for you that you may not necessarily like at the time—as we saw in the 1 Corinthians 5 example of church discipline.

Now, what do you call this kind of committed relationship with a defined body of believers where you give them permission to speak truth into your life?

We've decided to use the term the apostle Paul uses in his letters as he describes Christians as members of the body of Christ. There's no place in Scripture where you'll explicitly see a command to sign a piece of paper and become a member of a local church. But when you piece all these “one another” commands together, what it adds up to is what Christians through the centuries have referred to as... church membership.

And it's why we make such a big deal about membership in this church. Because next to your commitment to follow Jesus Christ through baptism, becoming a church member is the most basic commitment that you will be called to make in your spiritual life.

Conclusion

Why is church membership important? Because it enables us to live out the “one another” commands of Scripture—and in so doing it validates the power of the gospel. But ultimately, it's important because God loves the church.

In Acts 9, Saul (later Paul) has a run-in with the risen Christ. Jesus appears to him and Saul falls to the ground. Do you remember what Jesus says to him?

He doesn't say “Saul, Saul, why are going to persecute those Christians?”

He doesn't say “Saul, Saul, why are you going to persecute the church?”

He says, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting **me**?” (Acts 9:4)

Jesus so clearly and closely identifies with the local church that he refers to the congregation of Christians in Damascus as “me.” That's why I think Paul got his image of the church as the body of Christ, and Christians as its members. His first Christian conversation, I think, had that truth at its core. As he says many years later, the church is the body of Christ, that God bought with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

Friends, this is what God is all about! He loves his church, and he has made the local church the centerpiece in his plan to make his glory visible to all people under heaven. Whether it is this body or another, our prayer is that you will join yourself into a local church as the Bible instructs you and that you will have the privilege of seeing God's kingdom lived out.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Church membership can be defined as a committed relationship with a definite body of believers where you give them permission to speak truth into your life. How can God use this commitment to help us grow spiritually?
2. Besides attending on Sunday mornings for worship, what is one other thing you could do in the next few weeks to get more connected?

WHAT'S NEXT?

How can I get more connected here at Hinson as a non-member?

Here are a few ideas:

- Keep making every effort to keep attending on Sunday mornings to worship God and hear from His Word with us when you are able.
- Come on Sunday evenings to hear about what's going on in the life of the church and pray with us.
- Join a Sunday school class. These are age-integrated venues for deeper relationships in a smaller setting. These classes are great venues for getting to know people.
- Feel free to take the initiative to ask a member at Hinson if they would be interested in meeting up during the week. There is a growing culture of hospitality, so that would not be seen as strange. (Hopefully someone has already asked you!)
- The Pastors at Hinson would love to get to know you! We are always glad to meet and get to know our visitors. But if, for whatever reason, you haven't connected with any of them, introduce yourself to one of them, and he would love to meet with you.
- There are many other groups that meet during the week, from Bible studies, to young moms groups, to missionary circles, to men meeting up for discipleship, and so on. Again, talk to one of the Pastors or contact the church office if you would like to learn more about these.
- Most importantly, consider joining the church! The reason we have all these activities is because we want to foster committed relationships, rooted in the gospel. Apart from that commitment to Christ and to one another, these activities lose their primary meaning.

What's the membership process?

If you are interested in joining Hinson, here are the steps you would need to take:

1. Read through this booklet and write down any questions you might have.
2. Contact the church office (503-232-1156; info@hinsonchurch.org) or talk to any of the Pastors and let them know you would like to schedule membership interview.
3. Participate in a membership interview with one of the Pastors. The purpose of this interview will be to for us to:
 - Answer any questions about the church that you might have (see step 2)
 - Make sure that we believe in the same gospel - we'll ask you to explain to us the gospel
 - Hear how you became a Christian and how God has worked in your life

That's it! After that, the remaining process would be for the Elders to approve your membership application and to present it to the congregation at the next congregational meeting, where they would vote on your membership. If a baptism needs to be scheduled, we would arrange for that after your membership interview.