

February 2, 2022

Dear First Baptist Church Family,

Over the last few months the Leadership Team has informed you of three motions that were to be discussed at the up-coming CBWC Assembly, to which we send delegates. Recently, we were informed that Motions 2 and 3 have been deferred to a future Assembly and that we will only be discussing the first one which reads:

Motion # 1: Be it resolved that we, the member churches of the CBWC, affirm the Identity Statement.

The Identity Statement is attached at the end of this letter to remind you of what it says.

As the name suggests, it is an attempt to describe who we are as Canadian Baptists in Western Canada. This is a legitimate exercise - Who *are* we as Canadian Baptists and how do we want to introduce ourselves to the rest of the world? The CBWC Board has welcomed any amendments to this document which will then be part of the discussion and vote at the up-coming Assembly. There has already been a lot of discussion on this Identity Statement in many of our sister churches over the last few months. One of the concerns we have with the statement is that it imposes denominational policy on the practice of local churches. Meanwhile, the Identity Statement has omitted any reference to the historic Baptist distinctive of Local Church Autonomy.

We are aware that some other sister congregations are giving Notice of Motion of various other amendments to the Identity Statement. We, as the Leadership Team, are proposing that First Baptist Prince George add our voice and propose an amendment to add a paragraph to the Identity Statement which clearly describes the Autonomy of the Local Church as an important part of our Baptist Identity. This Notice of Motion must arrive at the CBWC office before February 25, 2022 in order to be included in the Assembly docket in May. Therefore, we will hold a Special Business Meeting of First Baptist members at the end of the Sunday Worship Service on February 20, 2022 to discuss and vote on this one issue. Online members will be able to vote on Zoom. This is your official notice of that Meeting.

Moved by the Leadership Team and seconded by Micki Lalonde:

“That First Baptist Church Prince George gives Notice of Motion to the CBWC Assembly of May 2022, to amend the original wording of the Identity Statement by adding the following section entitled “The Autonomy of the Local Churches” after the section entitled Congregational Governance and before the section entitled Church Association as Interdependence.

The Autonomy of the Local Churches

We believe in the principle of local church autonomy, as opposed to other denominations that exercise hierarchy and centralized control. Local church members, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, choose their own leaders; their requirements for membership; their constitution and bylaws; their statements of faith and practice; and their ministry purposes and plans. The local churches voluntarily associate together as the CBWC and participate by choosing to support various denominational initiatives and in assembling delegates together from time to time for fellowship and for governing the denominational organization.

In Christ,
Joe Yarama (Moderator)



Identity Statement of the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada

The Canadian Baptists of Western Canada (CBWC) is a voluntary association of independent Baptist churches gathered under the Lordship of Jesus Christ as revealed through Scripture. As a Spirit-led, multicultural community, we assemble to seek the Father's will together in unity of faith and to celebrate God's past, present and future work among us and through us. Churches choose to associate for the purpose of enhancing our local and global participation in this work of the triune God, as disciples of Christ in word and deed, thus engaging in God's mission in the world.

Standing within the historic orthodox understanding of church and Scripture, as Baptists in name and heritage, we affirm the following statements of faith and practice. They are the core of our identity and are expressed in our policies, practices, and Assembly Resolutions (esp. 1959, 1987, 1988, 2003, 2011, 2015, 2017). Scripture passages referenced are illustrative, not comprehensive.

Statement of Faith

The Canadian Baptists of Western Canada accept wholeheartedly the revelation of God given in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and confess the faith therein set forth. We here explicitly assert the doctrines which we regard as crucial to the understanding and proclamation of the Gospel and to practical Christian living:

1. The sovereignty, love, and grace of God, the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit in creation, providence, revelation, redemption and final judgment.
2. The divine inspiration of Holy Scripture and its entire trustworthiness and supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
3. The value of each human being as created by God. The universal sinfulness of humankind since the fall, which alienates all from God and subjects all to condemnation.
4. The full deity and humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, whose substitutionary sacrifice is the sole ground of redemption from the guilt, penalty and power of sin.
5. The justification of the sinner by the grace of God through faith alone in Christ crucified and risen from the dead.
6. The illuminating, regenerating, indwelling and sanctifying work of God, the Holy Spirit, in the believer.
7. The church as set forth in the New Testament and understood historically by the Baptist community.
8. The expectation of the personal, visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ, our participation in the resurrection, and the hope of eternal life.

Priesthood of All Believers

Loved by God and created in God's own image, each one of us is able to meet with God through the atoning work of Christ. As male and female, equally called, the churches of the CBWC honor each person's responsibility to exercise their giftedness in Christ's body, the church, and to minister to each other as a 'priesthood of all believers.' With Christ as our Lord, each person is to regard others with the same humility that Christ exemplified in the cross. We live in voluntary submission to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Acts 6:1-7; 15:22-35; 17:10-12; Rom 12; 1 Cor 12:1-31; Eph 4; Phil 2:1-18; Heb 4:14-16; 10:19-25; 1 Pet 2:1-10; Rev 1:4-8

This is proposed document which will be discussed and voted on at Assembly 2022

Ordinances

We believe there are two ordinances (sometimes referred to as sacraments): Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We practice these ordinances in faith and obedience until the Lord returns. They are not a means of salvation.

- **Believer's Baptism** – We each come to faith in God through a free, personal decision as convicted by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, whenever possible, we practice the baptism of believers by full immersion in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Since baptism is reserved for those mature enough to make a fully conscious and committed decision as an act of obedience to Jesus' teaching and example, we do not practice infant baptism. *Matt 28:18–20; Acts 2:37–41; 8:12–13, 34–40; 10:44–48; 16:29–34; Rom 6:1–14; Gal 3:23–29; Titus 3:4–7*
- **The Lord's Supper** – On a regular basis (weekly to monthly) we communally remember and identify with the saving death and resurrection of Jesus by sharing in Christ's body and blood through receiving the bread and cup. *Matt 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–20; 1 Cor 11:23–34*

Congregational Governance

We follow a form of governance in which congregants submit to the Lordship of Christ and the authority of Holy Scripture. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they discern and participate in the Father's ministry of reconciliation. Local churches grant membership to those who publicly confess Jesus Christ as Saviour, are baptized, and who demonstrate a desire to follow Christ as Lord in a life of obedience and service. Members are given an equal voice, vote, and opportunity to serve according to their spiritual gifts in an environment of mutual participation and accountability. In accordance with the priesthood of all believers, congregations affirm spiritual giftings and appoint Spirit-led leaders. In partnership with the CBWC, local congregations set apart ministers of the gospel, both men and women, to teach, preach, shepherd, and make disciples of Christ.

Matt 18:15–20; John 14:12–31; Acts 2:37–47; 10:44–48; 13:1–3; Rom 12; 2 Cor 5:16–6:2; Eph 2:11–22; 4:7–16; 1 Tim 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Pet 5:1–5

Church Association as Interdependence

Just as membership in a local church is voluntary and for the sake of interdependence in the life of the church, so participation of Baptist congregations in the CBWC is voluntary and for the sake of interdependence. Under the Lordship of Christ, associated churches reflect the life and teachings of Jesus and the practices of the New Testament church, working together to accomplish the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. The identity of associated churches is tied to the values of the larger CBWC body.

We desire to be grace-filled, compassionate and ever open to God's leading, so that all may come to know and experience God's love through the proclamation of the gospel. Thus, associated churches share resources to fulfill our mandate. We recognize the value of cooperating in mission through such means as training in theology, discipleship and leadership, the ordination of women and men, pastoral support, camping outreach, community development, and local and global evangelism.

Mark 12:28–34; Acts 1:1–14; 1 Cor 16:1–20; 2 Cor 8:1–9:15; Col 3:1–17

Separation of Church and State

We affirm the practice of religious liberty and freedom of conscience to be essential to the security and well-being of both Church and State and recognize the unique and separate functions of each. The Church is called to be salt and light in the world, pointing to the Kingdom of God and contributing to the greater good of all.

Ps 72:1–14; Dan 3:1–30; Matt 5:13–16; 22:15–22; Acts 4:1–21; 5:17–42; Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:11–17; Rev 19:11–21

Marriage

We define marriage as a publicly recognized lifelong covenant between a woman and a man whose relationship is characterized by loving faithfulness. The purpose of marriage is interdependence, mutual responsibility, and potential for procreation. Marriage symbolizes the relationship of God to his people and of Christ to his church.

Gen 1:26–31, 2:18–25; Mal 2:10–16; Matt 19:1–12; Eph 5:18–32

Engaging in Mission

We believe that the gospel has transforming power, rooted in the grace and righteousness of God. We are compelled to proclaim this good news of Christ's atoning sacrifice, to stand firm against injustice, and to practice mercy. In our broken world, God invites us to participate in His work of reconciliation, which involves us in the work of restoring relationships to wholeness—the relationship each person has with God, creation, other human beings, and the self. Because we believe in the God-breathed sanctity of human life from conception to death, we make every effort to demonstrate Christian love to all people.

Gen 1–2; 12:1–3; Exod 19:1–6; Ps 24:1–2; 86:8–13; Isa 58; 65–66; Mic 6:1–8; Matt 5–7; 10:1–11:1; 22:36–40; 28:16–20; Acts 1:1–11; 10:1–48; 17:16–34; Rom 12:9–21; 2 Cor 5:11–21; Jas 1:19–27; 1 Pet 3:8–16; 1 John 4:7–12