

Steadfast Church Philosophy of Ministry Document

Approved 3/5/21, Amended 11/8/22 (Marriage language)

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide details and explanations of how Steadfast Church seeks to be “a family of disciples committed to gospel-centered worship, tight-knit community, and life-giving hospitality for the glory of God.” This document is meant to be a public document that all members and attendees of Steadfast Church can access and serves as a complement to the church’s bylaws.

Statement of Faith

While an autonomous church, Steadfast Church voluntarily affiliates with the Evangelical Free Church of America. The Evangelical Free Church of America is an association and fellowship of autonomous and interdependent churches united around the same Statement of Faith.

God

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

The Bible

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

The Human Condition

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God’s saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled, and renewed.

Jesus Christ

4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

The Work of Christ

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

The Holy Spirit

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

The Church

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

Christ's Return

9. We believe in the personal, bodily, and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service, and

energetic mission.

Response and Eternal Destiny

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

Secondary Theological Convictions

Our Statement of Faith represents our understanding of the gospel message. Our secondary theological convictions listed below are positions on issues that don't pertain to salvation. In some cases, these convictions are issues Christians have disagreed on for centuries. In other cases, these are cultural issues that have a tendency to divide. Our intent in sharing these theological convictions is for you to understand the "family of disciples" you are entering into. Disagreeing with one or more of these convictions would not necessarily mean you could not be a member of our church. We strongly believe in the saying: "In essentials unity; in non-essentials charity; in all things, Jesus Christ."

Baptism

We practice believer's baptism by immersion and, as such, do not baptize infants. Baptism is one of two ordinances given to the church (along with Communion) to visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Baptism is a powerful, symbolic act for a believer to participate in to identify with the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:1-4). While it seems clear that baptism is not a requirement of salvation (see the thief, Lk. 23:43), there is a pattern established in the New Testament where salvation is closely followed by baptism. We would strongly encourage anyone who has put their trust in Christ to be baptized.

Image of God

We acknowledge that all human beings are made in the image of God and are worthy of dignity and respect. As such, we deplore racism, prejudice, and oppression as sins against fellow human beings who are created in the image of God (Gen. 1-2). Realizing that even as Christians we are not immune to these sins, we resolve first of all to search our own hearts and repent of any attitudes that violate the image of God in other people. We commit to holding our church body accountable for any belief or action that violates the image of God in others.

Gender Roles

Men and women are distinct but dependent, enjoying a great amount of sameness and difference. Both are created in the image of God (Gen. 1-2). Both are given the mission of God. Both are given spiritual gifts to serve the local church. Yet, men and women are distinct. They are physically different. They have been cursed differently (Gen. 3). Men and women have been given different roles in marriage (Eph. 5:22-23) and in the church. In the church, only qualified men are to be Elders (1 Tim. 3:2), while both qualified men and women can serve as Deacons (Rom. 16:1). In marriage, husbands and wives both uniquely model Christ and the Church. Husbands put the gospel on display when they sacrificially serve their wives as Christ served the church. Wives put the gospel on display when they sacrificially submit to their husbands as to the Lord. In this work, the husband and wife are both displaying self-denial and service. When done rightly, a husband's sacrificial service to his wife will encourage his wife to sacrificially submit. Similarly, a wife's sacrificial submission to her husband will encourage her husband to sacrificially serve. Thus, a beautiful cycle that constantly testifies to the gospel.

Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:4 states, "there are a variety of gifts but the same Spirit." The Holy Spirit gives gifts to believers for the common good of the body. All gifts are equal and all people have differing gifts. In regards to the charismatic gifts of the Spirit (healing, tongues, prophecy), we are cautious continuationists. Continuationism is the belief that the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit taught in the Bible—such as prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings, and miracles—have not ceased and are available for the believer today. Continuationism is the opposite of cessationism, which teaches that supernatural gifts have ceased either when the canon of Scripture was completed or at the death of the last apostle. We believe these gifts are still in operation today; yet, as leaders of the church, we are committed to "testing everything (1 Thess. 5:21)." We are committed to shepherding our church to use whatever gift(s) God has given them for the betterment of the body.

Sexuality

We understand that Scripture teaches: (1) marriage is a good creation of God; (2) marriage is a sacred institution which images the mysterious and wonderful bond between Christ and His Church; (3) marriage is the original and foundational institution of human society, established by God as a one-flesh, covenantal union between a man and a woman that is life-long (until separated by death or in the case of divorce because of sexual immorality or abandonment), and exclusive (monogamous and faithful); and, (4) marriage is optional: some (like Jesus and Paul) live complete and fulfilled lives as celibate singles. The only sexual relationship that is positively affirmed in the Bible is between one man and one woman in a loving marriage. Any sexual relationship outside of the bounds of biblical marriage is contrary to God's design (Gen. 2:23-24; Matt. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:22-33). Yet, all people are created in the image of God and we seek to treat all people with equal dignity and respect, regardless of their sexual identity or

practices. We seek to demonstrate this posture in our thoughts, speech, and behavior. Speech, including humor, which demeans LGBTQ people, has no place in our community. Likewise, we oppose any bullying or violence against those who identify as LGBTQ.

Commitment to Steadfast Living

We desire to be a family of disciples. To be a family requires a sense of belonging and devotion to the whole body from each member. The source of this belonging and devotion is Christ himself and the outworking of this commitment is that we encourage one another to spend time with Jesus to be like Jesus to be on mission for Jesus. With this in mind, we commit ourselves to:

1. Faithfully attending and participating in worship gatherings, meetings, and other church functions. We have no desire to be legalists with this. We are merely asking for members to make a commitment to attend family functions as much as possible.
2. Being devoted to one another in love and pointing each other to Christ. Within our family, we commit to encouraging one another, building up one another, sharpening one another, exhorting one another, rebuking one another, rejoicing with one another, weeping with one another, and praying for one another.
3. Being a faithful presence in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and community. We commit to being welcoming to those outside the faith and to be looking for ways to invite others to follow Jesus and join our community.
4. Pursuing personal holiness through confession, repentance, and obeying Scriptural commands with a goal of Christlikeness.
5. Cheerfully stewarding our time, treasure, and talent for the good of the church, the good of our community, and the good of the kingdom

Elders

The current Elders of the church are Tim Briggs and Dave Joffe.

Officers

Tim Briggs serves as the President, Sumner Andrews serves as the Treasurer, and Dave Joffe serves as the Secretary. More details regarding officers can be found in the church's bylaws.