

Sun City Church (El Paso, TX)

Philosophy of Ministry

Our desire at Sun City Church (SCC) is to be both thoughtful and biblical in all that we believe, teach, and practice. Below are the core convictions that guide and shape our teaching and practice as a church. Members and visitors of SCC can expect the elders and other church leaders to instruct and lead the church in accordance with the following convictions.

[1] Beliefs, Creeds, and Confessions

Foundational to all that we believe, confess, and practice as a Christian church is the faith once for all delivered to the saints. We humbly but resolutely stand in line with historic Christianity, highly valuing the great creeds of the faith (including the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Chalcedonian Definition).

We have therefore identified and affirmed nine essential Christian beliefs in the "SCC Core Beliefs," which all SCC covenant members must affirm to remain as a member in good standing with the church:

1. There is one triune God.
2. The Bible is God's Word.
3. People are created in God's image.
4. People are in need of redemption.
5. Jesus is both Lord and Christ.
6. Jesus is the only way of salvation.
7. Salvation is by faith alone.
8. The Church is Christ's body.
9. Jesus Christ will return.

These core beliefs do not exhaust the extent of our faith. Concerning secondary and tertiary beliefs and practices, pastors and church leaders will teach and lead the church in accordance with this "Philosophy of Ministry" document and in broad sympathy with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 and Abstract of Principles

On other matters, the elder team, under the authority of the Scriptures, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with the cooperation of the congregation, will lead the church to walk in faithfulness to Christ—in belief, in witness, and in practice. We commit, therefore, to be scripturally faithful and charitably diverse in non-essential beliefs and teachings.

Scriptures: Gen 1:2, 26; Deut 6:4; Isa 6:8; 42:8; 63:10-11; Matt 1:21; 3:16-17; 28:19-20; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:1-4, 14; 3:3; 5:24; 6:29, 44; 14:3; 17:3; Acts 1:5-8, 11; 2:1-4, 42-47; 14:23, 27; 17:31; 20:28, 32; Rom 3:23-26; 5:10; 8:9-11, 23; 1 Cor 12:4-6; 15:4-5; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 5:16-25; Eph. 2:8-10; Phil 1:29; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Pet 1:3-16; 2:24; 1 John 4:8-11, 19; Rev 19:7-8; 20:15; 21:1-22:5

[2] Worship

We believe worship is a way of life. Worship is the honor and adoration of the Triune God, warranted, commanded, and prescribed by God. Worship is the all-encompassing purpose of all creation. It is the recognition of and proper response to who God is as Sovereign Creator and Redeemer. Our worship exalts and exults in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through worship, we participate in the chief purpose of all things—the

glory of God. Worship flows from the heart and expresses itself in visible ways. During SCC gatherings, worship is directed by the Scriptures and expressed primarily through reading, teaching, fellowship, the ordinances, songs, and prayers. In these, we remember and rejoice in who God is, what God has done, what God is doing, and what God will do.

Scriptures: Exod 20:1-21; 1 Chron 16:29; Ps 29:2; 53:17; 95:6; Mark 7:6-8; John 4:24; Acts 2:41; 20:7; Rom 11:36; 12:1-2; 1 Cor 11:18-34; 14; 16:1-2; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16-17; 4:16; 1 Tim 4:13; Heb 12:28-29; Rev 15:4

[3] Preaching

Because of our high view of Scripture, we value Bible-saturated preaching. We typically preach verse-by-verse through books of the Bible. Because we view the Bible as a unified story, of which Jesus is the Hero, we aim to exalt Jesus each week in our preaching—regardless of our selected passage. We believe the best way to help people grow into the image of Christ is by following this approach, so it is our delight to explain what God has said in His Word, to declare what God has done in His Son, and to apply this message to the hearts of people (both believers and unbelievers) with the aid of the Spirit.

Scriptures: Gen 1:3ff; 3:15; Ex 20:22; Deut 1:1ff; 1 Sam 3:19; Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:1-8; Jer 1:7-9; Ezek 2:4; Matt 3:1; Luke 4:17-21; 24:27, 44-47; John 1:45; 5:39, 45-46; Acts 2:14-41; 5:42; 6:4; 8:4; 13:13-52; 17:1-4; 18:1-11; 19:8-10, 20; 20:27; 28:28-31; Rom 1:15; 10:14; 12:7; 1 Cor 2:1-5; 15:1-11; Eph 4:11; Col 1:28-29; 1 Thess 2:13; 1 Tim 3:1-7; 4:13; 2 Tim 3:14-4:4; Titus 1:5-9; Heb 13:7; Jam 3:1; 1 Pet 4:10-11; Rev 22:6ff

[4] Baptism

We practice the Christian ordinance of baptism, in which one who has repented of their sins and trusted Christ alone for salvation is immersed in water, into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Baptism, which does not save, is an act of obedience, commitment, and proclamation, indicating the believer's identification with Christ and his Church. This identification with the crucified, buried, and risen Christ signifies the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in a new and holy life. It is likewise a testimony to the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead.

In baptism the church testifies to the faith and repentance expressed by the believer and commits to encourage and assist the believer in this new life in Christ. God likewise acts through baptism to remind believers of his saving grace and call them continually to faithful obedience.

Scriptures: Matt 3:6, 13-17; 28:18-20; Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:21-22; John 3:23; Acts 2:38; 8:36-39; 16:30-33; 18:8; Rom 6:3-4; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:26-27; Col 2:12; 1 Pet 3:21

[5] Lord's Supper

As with water Baptism, the Lord's Supper is a Christian ordinance that the Lord Jesus has given to His church. The Lord's Supper is a sign to those partaking and observing of the death of Christ for sinners, of His sustaining work in our lives, and of future participation in the Wedding Feast to come in the New Creation.

Those partaking in the table participate in this ordinance through the breaking and eating of bread and the drinking of the fruit of the vine. This bread and this cup point to our Lord's body and blood. Followers of

Christ should partake in the Lord's Supper under the authority of the local church, insofar as they have received Christ's atoning work by faith, examined themselves in repentance and remain in good standing with their local church.

As baptism is the ordinance that Christ has given as a sign connected with entrance into the community of faith, the Lord's Supper is an ongoing ordinance given to the community of faith; thus it should be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian's life as a continual reminder of Christ's atoning work, imminent return, and as a sign of unity in the church. SCC observes this ordinance weekly, as was the pattern of the NT church and in keeping with Paul's instructions to the Corinthian church to "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

Scriptures: Matt 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-30, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 11:17-34, Rev 19:6-10

[6] Community

As a covenanted gospel community, we seek by God's grace to bear one another's burdens, celebrate one another's victories, meet one another's needs, and invest in one another's spiritual maturity—regardless of any apparent or real differences that may tend toward division (background, socio-economic statuses, race, interest, etc.). We therefore seek to be actively involved in one another's lives, even as we open our own lives to receive others. Practically, we cultivate this community involvement through regular, disciplined gatherings in both large and small groups.

As a reflection of God receiving us into his fellowship, and as an expression of the grace and love available through Christ Jesus, we likewise eagerly extend this community and care to those outside the church.

Scriptures: Gen 2:18; John 17; Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; Rom 1:11-12; 12:1-21; 1 Cor 12; 2 Cor 1:6-7; Gal 6:2; Eph 2:11-22; 4:1-16; Phil 1:5; 2:1-12; 1 Thess 2:8; Heb 10:24-25; James 2:1-13; 1 John 3:11-24

[7] Church Membership

We believe church membership should be meaningful, in keeping with the pattern of the New Testament Church, which emphasized belonging and accountability for every Christian. We believe meaningful membership closely reflects the language of Scripture (Paul's use of "member" imagery in 1 Cor 12) and follows the New Testament prescription for accountability to other believers (1 Cor 5) and to the elders of the church (Heb 13:17).

Consequently, we believe every Christian ought to live as a member of a local church. SCC admits into membership those with a credible gospel testimony, who have experienced believer's baptism, who agree with our "Core Beliefs," and who are willing to sign the SCC Church Covenant and fulfill its commitments.

Scriptures: Acts 2:41-47; 1 Cor 1:2, 5, 12; Heb 13:17

[8] Church Discipline

SCC practices restorative, corporate church discipline, as commanded in the New Testament. We believe Christ has given us this practice for the glory of God, the good of the one being disciplined, the health of the church, and the church's public witness.

Discipline glorifies God and preserves the public witness because the church is called to be a “pillar and buttress of the truth.” The church’s witness and God’s glory are harmed when there is rampant, repetitive, public, serious, unrepentant sin in her midst.

Discipline is also for the good of the one disciplined. Both in Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5, Church discipline is given not ultimately for the punishment of the unrepentant sinner, but for his or her restoration to the church. Because living in sin is a path that leads to destruction, church discipline is a loving act that seeks to rescue the sinner from that end.

At SCC, we will practice church discipline as our Lord outlined in Matthew 18 and under the leadership and oversight of the elders. If someone is guilty of public, serious, and persistent sin, yet remains unrepentant (even after being approached by one, then two or three), we will take it before the covenant members of SCC. If the person refuses to listen “even to the church” they will be removed from membership and the Lord’s Supper.

Scriptures: Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5; 2 Cor 2:5-11

[9] Elders and Deacons

Congregation

The congregation shares the responsibility of living as a covenant community, including the responsibility to affirm new leaders, practice church discipline, preserve the church’s doctrine, and participate in her mission. There are two offices provided in Scripture for leading the congregation: elders and deacons.

Elders

Elders will be men who are responsible for knowing, leading, feeding, and protecting the church and her individual members through prayer, counseling, discipleship, preaching, etc. We practice a plurality of elders, seeing this to be the best reflection of the New Testament pattern. All elders are endowed with the same level of authority, with different areas of responsibility in the leadership of the church—all while sharing in the same accountability before God. If any man inspires to be an elder candidate then he must complete our comprehensive training program.

Deacons

Deacons assist the church in its ministry (Acts 6; 1 Tim 3). Deacons are lead servants in the church, and they must meet the qualifications set forth in Scripture. They bear various, practical responsibilities, so elders can devote more time and energy to their pastoral duties. We believe Scripture opens the office of Deacon to both men and women. If any man or woman inspires to the office of deacon then they must attend our training workshop.

Scriptures: Matt 18:15-20; Acts 6:1-7; 11:21, 29-30; 13:1-3; 14:23-28; 15:22; 20:20-35; 21:18-25; Rom 12:5; 16:1; 1 Cor 5:1-5, 11-15; 2 Cor. 2:6-8; Gal 1:6-9; 6:1; Eph. 4:5-6, 11-16; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:17; Titus 1:3-9; 3:9-11; Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Pet 2:9; 5:1-11

[10] Spiritual Gifts

We believe all true Christians have been gifted with the Holy Spirit upon their conversion. Believers are likewise given varied gifts by the Spirit for the advancement of the gospel and the building up of the body of Christ. Likewise, the Holy Spirit has equipped the church with those gifts necessary for the building up of the body of Christ into maturity and health. We encourage church members to actively use their gifts to serve the body and advance the kingdom in accordance with the Scriptures.

Scriptures: Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12-14; Gal 5:22-23; Eph 4:1-16; 1 Pet 4:7-11

[11] Church Planting

God's purpose has always been to have a people for Himself, a people to whom He reveals His glory, and a people through whom He displays His glory. Church planting is part of this grand narrative. The Great Commission points to church planting, as Jesus emphasized the making of disciples by baptizing and teaching all people groups. The book of Acts tells the story of the spread of the gospel in unreached places, and the subsequent planting of local churches. And the rest of the New Testament is largely an anthology of church plants. We seek to follow the model and spirit of the New Testament. Because we value church planting, we teach on it; we pray about it; we have an internship that prepares planters for it; we give resources to it; we encourage members to consider it; and we regularly celebrate and evaluate our work in it.

Scriptures: Exod 6:7; 19:4-6; Deut 4:6-8; Isa 2:2-4; 49:6; Hab 2:14; Ps 96; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2:41-47; chs. 13-20; 14:21-23; Rom 15:19-21; 1 Cor 12:1-31; Phil 1:5; 4:10-20; 1 Tim 3:15; 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 2:14; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 2:9-12; Rev 5:9-10; 21:3

[12] Evangelism, Disciple-Making, and Missions

All Christians, by virtue of their salvation through Christ, have been called to participate in the mission of God through evangelism and disciple-making.

We desire that all SCC members work to make disciples by intentionally working for the spiritual maturity of others through evangelism, instruction, correction, modeling, and encouragement. These disciple-making efforts can and should take a variety of forms—ranging from formal and structured methods (classes, discipleship groups, etc.) to less-formal and organic practices (sharing meals, casual spiritual conversations, etc.)—all directed at helping others follow Christ.

In evangelism, we work to verbally proclaim the message of the gospel to non-believers, seeking to persuade them of the truth of the gospel and calling them to respond in repentance and faith.

Because all people are in need of the gospel, and because Christ is worthy to receive glory and honor from all, we want to evangelize and make disciples “of all nations”—both locally and globally. This means living with missional intentionality in our everyday lives and relationships. It also means giving special attention to engage people around the world through missionary and church planting efforts. We desire for missionaries who have been sent out to remain connected to the local church, receiving both care and pastoral oversight.

In evangelism, disciple-making, and missions, our central message is the gospel of Jesus Christ, our primary tool is the Scriptures, and our sole power is the Holy Spirit.

Scriptures: Matt 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 11:17; Luke 24:47; John 4:39; Acts 1:8; Rom 1:5; 2 Cor 5:20; Col 1:21-22, 28-29; Rev 5:9-10; 7:9

[13] Mercy and Justice Ministry

Believing everyone is made in the image of God means that we will care for everyone “from the womb to the tomb.” To be “pro imago Dei” means recognizing pre-born children and the tragedy of abortion; encouraging adoption and orphan care; valuing people with special needs; working to end human trafficking; promoting racial reconciliation; seeking to eradicate poverty and death from preventable

disease; engaging in prison ministry; serving immigrants and refugees; and caring for those at the end of life.

Both the Old Testament and New Testaments emphasize the mandate to love our neighbors as ourselves, especially the weak and vulnerable in society. Faithful Christian living involves such concern for justice.

Scriptures: Gen 1:26-27; Exod 22:21-24; Deut 10:17-19; 14:29; 15:4; 27:19; Job 29:12-17; 31:13-28; Ps 33:5; 68:4-5; 139:15-16; 146:7-9; Prov 14:31; 31:8-9; Isa 1:17; 42:1-7; 58:6-7; Jer 22:3, 16; Micah 6:8; Zech 7:10-11; Matt 22:34-40; 23:23-24; Matt 25:31-46; Luke 1:40; 4:17-18; 10:25ff; 11:42; 14:12-13; Acts 4:34-35; 6:1-7; 20:35; 2 Cor 8:9; Gal 2:10; 6:10; 1 Tim 5:3-16; James 1:27; 2:1; 2:15-17; 3:9; 5:1-5; 1 Jn 3:16-18

[14] Leadership Development

SCC is committed to equipping leaders who will lead in pastoring, planting, and otherwise serving local churches (1 Tim 2:1-2). The elder team actively work to equip future elders, deacons, bible study leaders, etc. for service and ministry in the context of SCC for the good of the church, the lost, and the city (Eph 4:12).

In addition, SCC is committed to training missionaries, church planters, and pastors who will, in turn, multiply missionaries, church planters, and pastors throughout the world. We will develop leaders through various avenues of discipleship classes, cohort training, mentoring, and more.

Scriptures: Matt 28:18-20; Acts 13; Eph 4:12; 2 Tim 2:1-2

[15] Gender and Sexuality

We believe God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between one man and one woman who are married to each other (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4). We believe God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between one man and one woman. We believe any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10).

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of SCC as the local church, and to provide a biblical role model to SCC members and the community, it is imperative that all persons in leadership at SCC in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this statement on "gender and sexuality" (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22).

We believe God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11). We believe every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). We renounce any hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual and consider them not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of SCC.

Scriptures: Gen 1:26-27; Matt 5:16; 15:18-20; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31; Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:8-11, 18; 7:2-5; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:2; Heb 13:4

[16] Marriage and Family¹

Marriage

We believe marriage is a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman before God, for the purpose of loving God, loving one another, and displaying the Christ-church union. We recognize and celebrate the distinct and complementary roles and responsibilities God has given to men and women in living out the marriage covenant.

Family

God designed parents to be the lead worshipers and primary disciple-makers in the home. SCC desires to serve and partner with families as we seek to teach children to love God and others.

Singleness

We also believe God has given some people the gift of singleness, not as a secondary status but as a worthy and holy calling free from some of the “worldly troubles” of marriage. We desire to see single individuals thrive in serving the Lord and the church.

Divorce

In accordance with our beliefs about marriage and in line with the Scriptures, we generally counsel couples away from divorce and toward reconciliation and renewal, which is a reflection of the gospel itself. As a church body, we seek to provide all married couples with support and encouragement toward building strong and healthy marriages that are able to resist divorce and overcome relational conflict and sin.

Scriptures: Gen 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Exod 12:26-27; 13:14; 20:1-21; Deut 4:1-10; 6:4-9; 31:9-13; 1 Cor 7:1-40; Eph 5:21-6:4; Col 3:18-23; 1 Tim 3:4-5, 12; 2 Tim 3:10-17; Titus 1:6; Heb 12:4-11; 13:4

¹ *This document does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For the purposes of Sun City Church's faith, doctrine, practice, and policy, our elder team is the final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.*