



Safe Harbor OC Church Statement of Faith

Before We Start

We hold the value of growth and change when certain beliefs or values no longer serve our community or we learn more about how to love our neighbors better. Therefore, we will always be open to modifying or changing this Statement of Faith as we seek to do better. Just as we think faith is not stagnant, nor do we believe a Statement of Faith needs to be stagnant. With that, here is our Statement of Faith.

Our Vision

Safe Harbor is a Jesus-centered community reimagining inclusive spaces to rest, restore, belong and become.

Our Mission

This is how we live out our vision:

- **Jesus-centered Community:**

We recognize that "Jesus-centered" can be a loaded term. Many people across time and cultures have defined Jesus-centered differently. For some of us, Jesus-centered can be a triggering statement. On the flip side, our community is big on reimagining and reclaiming language and faith. We believe that Jesus is at the center of what we do and how we live. From serving the broader community to providing mutual aid within our church community, we want the model of Jesus to be our driving force. Since we are a diverse group, we are open to many interpretations of how to be like and live like Jesus as long as it meets our Harm Criteria (see below).

We welcome various interpretations of who Jesus was, whether they were the Messiah, Teacher, God, Son of God, or all of the above. We still find Jesus absolutely relevant today and model our church after his teachings. Love God and love your neighbor as yourself—as simple yet as complicated as that.

- **Reimagining Inclusive Spaces:**

We recognize that there aren't a lot of church spaces for people to have different Christian perspectives (without them being labeled a heretic). We hope that spiritual refugees and outcasts can call SHOC and churches like it home. At Safe Harbor, this might mean you're big on the Holy Spirit but aren't sure what God is or looks like. This might mean you resonate with Jesus as God and Savior but reject specific atonement theories. This also might mean you don't believe in a literal afterlife (Heaven and Hell), but you want to bring Heaven on Earth as Jesus instructed. Reimagining inclusive spaces means making space for the spiritual refugees and heretics who haven't quite fit into Church. This includes but is not limited to centering perspectives from women, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ folks, and Disabled folks.

- **To Rest, Restore, Belong and Become:**

Many of us at SHOC have served in large capacities within churches and have seen the negative impact of burnout culture within ministry. As a result, one of our values is rest. You might notice we don't have Sunday services every week. This is to limit burnout and care for our church community. However, we ensure weekly rhythms like small groups, dinners, and hangouts to rest, restore, belong, and become while in community. Our goal in holding these values is to be a healing space, not a harmful space.

Some Practical Theology

Part One - How does a community that centers many voices hold together?

One of the big challenges to holding our diverse community together comes from how we each understand the Bible, so we've had to think about the place the scriptures hold in our church.

We value scripture deeply and, at the same time, recognize its complexity. Christians continue to differ on several key ideas. One of the distinctions of Safe Harbor OC Church is that we live in and embrace that tension. We value diverse theological perspectives and how they challenge us to follow Jesus well, learn intentional listening, practice authentic love, and develop deep thought. However, we recognize that certain beliefs and values are non-negotiable when certain theological perspectives teach us to harm instead of love our neighbor.

For complex topics and considering what is harmful, Safe Harbor uses the **Harm Criteria** to discuss within our **guidance team**, which reflects the community we want to build at SHOC.

Harm Criteria Questions:

- Does this belief or value cause spiritual abuse as [defined here](#)?
- Does this belief or value "other" or ostracize a certain group of people?
- Does this belief or value oppress a particular group of people?
- Does this belief or value align with the overwhelming data, science, and research of today?

Scripture exists to illuminate how to be like Christ. As we gather around the Jesus revealed in Scripture, we find ourselves as a community holding to a few core beliefs and values. We share these core beliefs and values while embracing diversity around interpretation and less central beliefs. You may notice our beliefs are very simple. We don't think beliefs need to be complicated. Simply put: **we believe in a faith that liberates, not one that binds.**

Part Two - What are our Core Beliefs?

The Jesus-centered nature of our faith is captured in the simplicity of what Jesus says are the greatest commandments:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." Mark 12:30-31 NIV

With intentional love at our core, we have the following core beliefs:

We believe that

- **God is present**
 - Classical theism introduced the idea that God is omnipresent. That God is everywhere. But what does it mean to believe that God is everywhere? We take it as that God is always present with us. That God is there in our highs, lows, and everywhere in between. We think of Isaiah 57:15, which says, "For thus says the high and exalted One, who lives forever, whose name is Holy, 'I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.'" God is not a disengaged God. God is present and engaged in the world and the ins and outs of every person's life.
- **God cares**
 - We believe we cannot separate how God cares from God being present. Without God caring, God's presence either falls flat or is not good news. One of the many Bible verses that shows how God cares is Isaiah 41:13, "For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear, I will help you." Not only does God care when we are suffering and will help us, but God also cares and celebrates our joyous moments. God also finds all of who we are intrinsically valuable. God cares about ALL of who we are. All of our identities, experiences, and relationships. And God engages with all of it throughout our lives.
- **God invites us to join God**

- As God is present and cares for everyone, God desires to help. God wants for all to experience shalom. For things on Earth to be as it is in Heaven. And as God is working towards bringing Heaven on Earth, God invites us to join in the work. To be a part of how people experience God's goodness, honor, hope, joy, love, etc. God wants us to participate in bringing wholeness into our lives and the lives of the people around us.
- **God wants us to feel liberated, not bound**
 - We believe that wholeness in our lives includes feeling liberated to be and express all of who we are. Part of being separate from God is that we live in a world and reality where parts of ourselves are rejected by others and/or ourselves. That we cannot show certain parts of ourselves. We believe that since God cares about all of who we are, God wants the Good News of Jesus to touch and transform all of who we are. That God wants us to be free to be who God made us to be. Our goal as a community is to discover, encounter, and embrace more of who we are, which will bring more of Heaven on Earth. We want to create brave spaces where people can learn who they are and be themselves. To highlight, celebrate, and embrace all of our identities (i.e., Queer, BIPOC, disabled, etc.).
- **God sees our intrinsic worthiness (has radical compassion for us)**
 - We believe that God finds all of who we are to matter because we believe that everyone, regardless of action and intent, is created in the Imago Dei [image of God] (Genesis 1:27). We also believe that God is love (1 John 4:16). Therefore, everyone has intrinsic worthiness. God's radical compassion compels us to love God and our neighbors as we love every part of ourselves (Mark 12: 30-31). The more we tap into all of who we are, the more we encounter and reflect our intrinsic worthiness and the intrinsic worthiness of others.

Part Three - How do we live this out?

In light of our vision to be a Jesus-centered community reimagining inclusive spaces to rest, restore, belong and become, here are some of the practical ways we live out our convictions towards that end:

- We intentionally meet in homes, coffee shops, and breweries, and we gather on Sundays in a local school auditorium, reminding us that the church is not a building but a relational community.
- We cultivate our church's leadership to reflect the diversity of our community and Orange County in general.
- We serve communion twice a month, and all who want to participate are invited to the table.
- We support global and local causes that align with our core values, emphasizing the Orange County community.

- We select our leaders according to their character, calling, capacity, and fit, gladly welcoming people of all gender identities and sexual orientations into all aspects of church life and leadership.
- We practice regular reading and reflection on the Bible and other books related to Faith, God & Spirituality in our Sunday teachings and group life.
- We express our convictions about being a covenantal community by baptizing children and adults.

If this sounds like the kind of community you have been seeking, we would love you to join us in reimagining church and faith together!

*This Statement was adapted from [City Church of Long Beach](#)