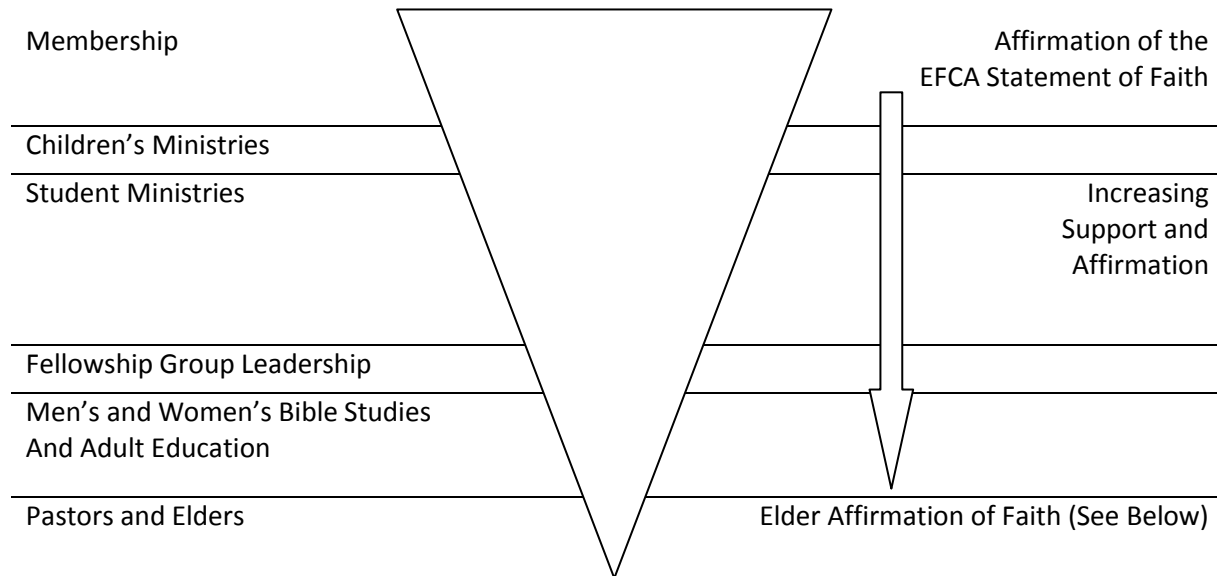


Theological Distinctives of Four Oaks Community Church

There are a number of important, theological issues and positions that are not addressed by our Statement of Faith, which we have distinctive positions on as a church leadership. This includes but is not limited to: the role of men and women in the church and home; spiritual gifts; Reformed Theology; baptism and the Lord's Supper; various social issues; sexual ethics; and church government

What Is the Relationship Between Our Statement of Faith and Other Doctrinal Distinctives?

We represent the relationship between what our pastors and elders believe as a leadership team and what members are called to believe as an affirmation of their membership using a "Funnel" metaphor. As is represented below, the top of the funnel is broad and indicates the threshold and nature of doctrinal affirmation needed to become a member of the church. The bottom of the funnel is narrow, and indicates that a more precise and doctrinally coherent position on a variety of issues is needed to provide unity and



direction for the elders and pastors of the church. As members move down the funnel of leadership into various ministries of the church, it becomes more and more important for the doctrinal commitments of the leadership to be understood, supported, and affirmed.

Doctrinal Distinctive and Theological "Plumb lines"

We live in a "doctrinally challenged" age that views theology as either reserved for the trained minister or irrelevant to daily life. However, this undercuts the teaching of the whole Bible that doctrine IS life (Deuteronomy 6; II Tim 3) and that what we believe is a matter of honoring and glorifying God. In the words of Frances Shaeffer, the question is not whether you are a theologian or not; in fact, everyone is a theologian. The question is whether you are a good one or bad one. It is not possible to NOT have a position on these issues, and we want you to be able to wrestle through them.

Our theological and biblical distinctives are grouped into four, primary categories. These categories are theological 'plumb lines', which means that they serve the purpose of tethering everything we do and say in our ministry to a fixed, theological principle. This helps to insure that there is unity and clear direction for both the leadership and the church family. These plumb lines are grouped into four, broad categories and are represented in the illustration below. In addition, there is a fuller explanation of each of these distinctives on the church website under the resource section.

REFORMED THEOLOGY

The body of theology adhered to by the Protestant churches in the Reformation during the 1500's is broadly identified as "Reformational Theology" and was articulated around the core doctrines of justification by faith alone, the authority of Scripture over all of life (including the church), salvation by grace, and the priesthood of all believers. In this sense, most evangelical churches are a product of the Reformation in terms of adhering to these core doctrines.

More specifically, Reformed Theology has also come to define the system of theology closely associated with many of the leaders of the Reformation and other leaders in church history, including Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Calvin. Reformed Theology is most often characterized by a firm belief in the sovereignty and holiness of God; God's sovereign choice in election/predestination; man's inability to save himself apart from the Holy Spirit drawing a person to God; true believers persevering in faith until the end of their lives; and a firm God-centeredness in all theology and application. In short, embracing Reformed Theology means that as a church family we are committed to the centrality and sovereignty of God and His glory in all things.



To say that we are 'reformed' also means that we embrace a worldview that sees the hand and purposes of God in all things, including salvation, suffering, and blessing. As Abraham Kuyper, Dutch theologian of the 19th century stated, "There is not one square inch of the entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry out, 'this is mine! This belongs to me!' Our heart for the Four Oaks family is that we live all of life to God's glory, understanding that His sovereign grace and purposes are at work in every area of our lives.

COMPLEMENTARIAN RELATIONSHIPS

At Four Oaks Community Church, we believe that God has made both men and women to be his image bearers, that each has identical value and worth in His eyes and that men and women are equal and co-heirs with Christ. We also believe that God created men and women to function differently in distinct roles in the family and in the church, complementing one another in these equal but distinct roles. We believe that male and female roles and functions find their origin in the Trinity, where within the Godhead there is equality of being with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, there is also a distinction of role, function, and hierarchy, as the God the Father decrees, God the Son carries out the will of the Father, and God the Holy Spirit applies the work of the Son to believers.

In the home, we believe that men are to lead their homes and families as those who themselves are under the authority of Christ, loving their wives as Christ loved the church and teaching their children to obey and respect their parents, and ultimately God. Wives, in turn, are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord and to care for and nurture the affairs of the home. In the church, we believe that God has reserved the office of elder and pastor to qualified men, who are called to teach, shepherd, and exercise Christ-like authority over the church family (I Timothy 2). Women are created equal in value and are esteemed as highly as are men. They are also appreciated for their productivity in the church as they use their God-given talents to further the mission of the church. The prohibition against women teaching or exercising authority over men does not negate a woman's value or dismiss her usefulness; it simply defines the arena in which men and women operate. Thus, in both the home and church, men and women exercise different but complementary roles.

Male elders who are affirmed in their leadership role by the congregation govern Four Oaks. The elders, who include both lay members of the church and members of the pastoral team, are given the biblical charge to teach and shepherd the flock of God. We are thus an elder-driven church in that we believe that rule and authority has been given to that group of men entrusted by the Lord Jesus to lead his church. We also have a board of deacons that attends to the physical needs of the church and is responsible for leading the church by example into greater acts of ministry and service. The office of deacon is open to both men and women, as we understand the role of deacon to be one primarily of service and not of authority.

SPIRIT-FILLED LIVES

We fully affirm and believe in the active, life-giving, ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit within the context of the local church and individual believers' lives. This affirmation is based upon the biblical reality that Jesus Christ himself lived out his life and ministry through the power of the Holy Spirit, who anointed Him at the onset of His three-year public ministry on earth. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is always in perfect unity with the Word of God as He speaks through the inspired Scriptures. Thus, all fillings, leadings, impressions, and experiences of the Spirit on the part of the believer must be subjected to the authority of God's Word as the final rule for faith and practice, having such authority test all such experiences for their biblical validity.

Four Oaks is not charismatic in its theology, as the word "charismatic" is an emotionally-laden and often imprecise term that has been attached to many beliefs and practices in the evangelical church. In its traditional usage, "charismatic" has been used most often within a Pentecostal theological system to communicate the idea that speaking in tongues and other "sign" gifts (prophecy, healing, etc.) are evidences of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Such a baptism has been seen in Pentecostal theology to be a separate event from conversion and to be pursued and practiced by all believers.

At Four Oaks, we reject this kind of "two-tier" conversion experience and believe that all believers are baptized in the Spirit at the point of conversion, and that such conversion need not be accompanied by speaking in tongues, either then or later. Neither, though, do we adopt a cessationist position that holds to the view that all of the sign gifts disappeared at the end of the apostolic age. We believe that all of the gifts of the Spirit as outlined in I Corinthians 12-14 are available to the New Testament church and are to be regulated by Scripture. In this sense, we affirm the right use of the biblical term 'charismata' to denote the gifts and God-ward affections that Christ pours out upon His church.

MISSIONAL CHURCHES

Acts 18: 10 tells us that what motivated the Apostle Paul to endure in His ministry, even amidst deep trials and suffering, was the conviction that God had "many in this city who are my people", but who had not yet come to faith in Christ. Our desire at Four Oaks is that our church family see that missionaries are not those just sent out to foreign countries to reach unreached people groups with the gospel (although they are), but that all of us are in fact missionaries sent out to reach others with the Good News within whatever context

God has placed us. Ministry is not just reserved and given over to the professional minister who does the work of ministry for others, but ministry is in fact given to all of God's people.

Being a missional church means that we see that there is a gospel impulse to everything we do, that the local church exists not only to minister to and build up its own people (which it does), but also to imitate Jesus who came to "seek and save, that which is lost." To that end, we desire to both contend for the truth as well as to contextualize with the truth, bringing the gospel to bear in creative, strategic, and purposeful ways to those in our city. While this missional impulse should never result in watering down or adapting the gospel message, it should mean that we are looking for wise and winsome ways to connect with the unchurched and non-Christians with the truth of God's Word, adapting our forms, styles, methods, and preferences accordingly.

In short, we want our people to know why we exist as a church, why we strategize to launch campuses and plant churches, why we send out missionaries, and why we spend hundreds and thousands of dollars every year on ministry. The reason is Jesus; He came into the world to die for sinners like us and we want to share this incredible Good News and story to everyone we can so that they can know Him too. This will mean costly sacrifices of time, effort, money, and energy in this life as we take Jesus into every nook, cranny, neighborhood, and place in Tallahassee and beyond.