

Ambassador International Church, Hong Kong

**Beliefs,
Practices
& Promises**

Beliefs

Members¹ of Ambassador are required personally to subscribe to the following beliefs:

1. God

There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in his holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator, Savior and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to his sovereign will for his own glory.

Genesis 1-2; Exodus 15:1-18; Isaiah 45:5-18; Psalm 90:2; Psalm 96:10-13; Daniel 4:34-35; John 16:7-15; Titus 3:4-7; James 1:17.

2. The Bible

God has revealed himself in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. Every word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

Psalm 19:7-11; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

3. The Human Race

All men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God. Every person is therefore under the just condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please him.

Genesis 1:26-27; 3:1-24; Psalm 8:3-8; Matthew 22:34-40; John 3:1-8; Romans 1:18-32; 5:12-19; 2 Corinthians 5:16-19; Ephesians 2:1-3.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all his words are true. On the cross he died in the place of sinners, bearing God's

¹ The word "member" in this document refers to those who have become formal members of Ambassador International Church.

punishment for their sin, redeeming them by his blood. He rose from the dead and in his resurrection body ascended into heaven where he is exalted as Lord of all. He intercedes for his people in the presence of the Father.

Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:1-18; 7:16-18; Acts 2:22-36; Colossians 1:15-22; Hebrews 2:14-18; 7:23-28; 10:11-14.

5. Salvation

Salvation is entirely a work of God's grace and cannot be earned or deserved. It has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and is offered to all in the gospel. God in his love forgives sinners whom he calls, granting them repentance and faith. All who believe in Christ are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

John 1:12-13; 5:24-26; 6:35-51; Romans 3:21-26; Galatians 2:15-16; Ephesians 2:4-9; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; Titus 3:4-7.

6. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ and to apply his work of salvation. He convicts sinners, imparts spiritual life and gives a true understanding of the Scriptures. He indwells all believers, brings assurance of salvation and produces increasing likeness to Christ. He builds up the Church and empowers its members for worship, service and mission.

John 3:1-8; 16:5-16; Romans 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 3:17-18; 12:1-31; Galatians 5:16-26.

7. The Church

The universal Church is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved belong. It is made visible in local churches, which are congregations of believers who are committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:1-6; 5:25-33; Philippians 2:1-11; Colossians 1:18

8. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been given to the churches by Christ as visible signs of the gospel. Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into his Church but does not

impart spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all and involves no change in the bread and wine. All its blessings are received by faith.

Matthew 28:19; Luke 22:14-23; Romans 6:3-10; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32

9. The Future

The Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment and the righteous will be welcomed into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God. God will make all things new and will be glorified forever.

Matthew 24:1-44; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:11-21:4; 22:1-5

(These beliefs are taken from the Statement of Faith of the FIEC, UK)

Practices

1. Name

Ambassador International Church, Hong Kong

2. Vision

At Ambassador our² vision is summarized as follows:

We are an independent evangelical church whose purpose is to make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ among English-speaking people in Hong Kong.

In order to help us fulfill this purpose, the following framework helps us express our commitment to the discipleship of each member:

- **Knowing God**
We want everyone to be clear on the basics of the Christian faith and to continue getting to know Christ better through his Word.
- **Growing together**
We aim to grow and mature in our faith both individually and collectively. This means each member loving and caring for one another and using their gifts for God's glory and the common good.
- **Going into the world**
We must be active in evangelism, reaching out to people in Hong Kong and beyond with the good news about Christ.

3. Membership

3.1 Application and conditions of membership

Church membership is for all born-again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who are in regular attendance at Ambassador and who are in agreement with our statement of faith. Members must have received a Christian baptism recognized by the elders.³ Baptism as a believer is not a requirement for membership.

² Words like "our" and "we" in this document are used when we are referring to our beliefs and practices as a church.

³ The word "elder" in this document includes both staff elders (see 5.3 below) and lay elders.

Applications for membership should be made to the elders. The elders will also encourage people to consider membership. The decision to admit a person into membership rests with the elders who will decide on the person's suitability for membership, following the process outlined at 3.2 below. The church⁴ will be notified of those who are received into membership.

3.2 Process for membership

Ordinarily, the process for joining Ambassador would involve:

- Attending an information meeting or membership class.
- An informal interview with two current members including at least one elder. Among other things the interview will involve the person sharing briefly how they became a Christian.
- Affirming the church's statement of beliefs and promises.
- Being welcomed into membership.

3.3 Cessation of membership

In line with the promises that members have made, a member seeking to resign from membership will usually be doing so because they intend to join another church, whether in Hong Kong or elsewhere. A member may usually resign from membership simply by informing one of the elders. The church membership will then be informed. We will aim to pray for a departing member on their last Sunday at Ambassador, at which point their membership will end.

In exceptional cases, where membership of a new church is not possible, membership at Ambassador may be maintained as long as there is agreement to maintain real links of fellowship, including regular communication with the elders.

If a member does not attend Ambassador for an extended period, the elders will seek to contact them to ascertain the reason. A member who has not attended for a period of one year, or who cannot be contacted, may be removed from the membership list unilaterally.

If a member's belief, conduct, or commitment to the church, willfully deviates from clear Biblical teaching, the church will take steps to encourage their repentance and restoration following the steps outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. If the member is unwilling to repent, the

⁴ The word "church" here refers to the entire gathered congregation on a Sunday morning and not only the members.

elders may recommend to the church that the person's membership be terminated or suspended. The resignation of a member in order to avoid such church discipline will not be accepted.

The following references are a guide to our thinking and practice in these matters: Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Galatians 6:1, 1 Timothy 5:20, Titus 3:10-11.

4. Practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper

4.1 Baptism

We believe in the baptism of Christian believers in obedience to the command of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). Application for baptism should be made to the elders. While as a church we practice baptism only for those who have professed faith in Christ, rather than also for the children of believers, agreement with this position is not a requirement for membership.

4.2 The Lord's Supper

We will regularly observe the Lord's Supper together in obedience to Christ's command (Luke 22:14-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). All those who believe in him as their Savior and Lord will be welcome to participate.

5. Elders

5.1 Responsibilities and qualifications

Elders are under-shepherds of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the head of the church. They are responsible for leading the church, the teaching of the church, and pastoral oversight of all areas of church life. They are to care for and lead the church with a loving, servant-hearted attitude (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Each elder must fulfill the New Testament qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9), which we believe limits the role of eldership to men.

Elders must have been baptized as believers (in keeping with Ambassador's practice in section 4.1) and be able personally to subscribe to the distinctives of the church laid out in section 11.

5.2 Selection and appointment

As part of their responsibility to encourage the use of the gifts of the church's members, elders are expected to work actively to disciple future leaders. When there is a need for more elders, the elders will ask the members to nominate suitable candidates. The elders will then discuss these names, and if someone is found to be qualified, and willing to serve, then their name will be brought to the church.⁵ If it is found that there is no reason why they should not serve in this role then they will be appointed.

5.3 Pastors

Roles such as Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor are appointed by the elders and serve as staff elders. Their responsibilities are the same as the lay elders but they are able to give themselves to the work full-time, and may also take special responsibility for certain areas of ministry (for example, teaching or small groups). The Biblical requirements for those who are pastors is the same as for elders. When appointing an external candidate, the membership must be allowed adequate opportunity to assess the suitability of the candidate and their feedback actively sought. A pastor who leaves the employment of the church ceases to be an elder unless he is re-elected as a lay elder afterwards.

5.4 Period of service

Lay elders will serve for a period of three years, after which they will have the option to serve for another three years. Once this six-year period is up, they are required to take a sabbatical of one year before being re-eligible for nomination. This term limitation does not apply to staff elders.

5.5. Removal from office

If any elder is suspected of heresy, gross incompetence, immoral conduct, or otherwise being unsuitable for the office, then the elders will investigate such matters. If it becomes necessary to terminate the office of an elder, the church membership will be notified and the elder will be asked to step down.

⁵ The word "church" here refers to the entire gathered congregation on a Sunday morning and not only the members.

6. Ministry Leaders

Ministry leaders are those who have responsibility for the day to day running of a particular area of practical ministry within the church (e.g. hospitality and communion or crèche). They are equivalent to deacons in the Bible and are appointed with the knowledge and approval of the elders.

Each ministry leader must fulfill the New Testament qualifications for deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13). We believe that this role is open to both men and women.

7. Other staff positions

The elders may appoint staff other than a Senior or Associate Pastor to assist in the ministry of the church. Possible examples might include a director of music, someone to oversee the pastoral care of women, or a church administrator.

8. Meetings

The church members will have opportunities to meet regularly to pray for the church, to discuss its business, and to give the elders an opportunity to seek feedback about future decisions. It is envisaged that these meetings will take place at least quarterly.

9. Responsibilities of members

The responsibilities and expectations for members are set out more fully in the church covenant but, based on the New Testament, we believe that this includes:

- **Attending**
It is expected that members will attend on a Sunday unless they are unwell or out of Hong Kong. Persistent non-attendance, without a good reason, is often a sign of spiritual problems, and is often a sign that someone is drifting away.
- **Praying**
Members ought to pray regularly for the work of the church, including its public worship, the preaching of God's Word, its outreach and leaders.
- **Giving**
All we have comes from God including our finance and possessions. Therefore, members should prayerfully consider setting aside a portion of their income to give

to the church for God's work. Standing orders are a helpful way to do this, as they allow giving to be regular and enable the leadership to plan more consistently.

- **Serving**

God has given all of us gifts to use for the building up of the body in both formal and informal ways. Formally, members should consider serving as part of a regular ministry "team"; informally, all Christians are called on to serve and bear one another's burdens as part of the body.

- **Witnessing**

All Christians are called to be witnesses to Christ's work in their lives. Our goal as a church is to make Christ known in Hong Kong and so we will seek to take every opportunity to speak about him and demonstrate his love and goodness through our deeds.

- **Living a life worthy of the gospel**

As those who are redeemed, we are called to live new lives that honor Christ and glorify God. While none of us will be perfect until the New Creation, we recognize that where we fail to do this it reflects badly on the church and the God whom we serve.

10. Primary and Secondary Issues

As a church, we understand that genuine Christians in good faith will come to different conclusions about what the Bible teaches on some matters. We encourage all members of Ambassador to search the Scriptures in order to come to their own personal convictions (Acts 17v11).

In becoming a member of the church, each person recognizes that they are committing to hold to certain truths as the essential teaching of the faith, which is laid out in our "beliefs", while also recognizing that there are other non-foundational areas of doctrine over which genuine Christians might legitimately disagree.

As any definition of such secondary matters would not be comprehensive, our desire is to emphasize the fundamental truths that we hold together in unity. Nevertheless, we recognize that we are all called to work out such matters in accordance with the Bible, under the teaching and preaching of the church, and with on-going love for one another.

11. Distinctives

While there are many issues that the church may be required to have a view on, the elders agree to the following non-exhaustive list, and regard them as distinctives of Ambassador:

Expositional Preaching – the point of the text is the point of the sermon.

The priesthood of all believers – each believer has full access to God. In practice, by way of example, this means that baptism and the Lord's Supper may be administered by "non-ordained" believers.

Gender – God created us male and female, and calls us to live according to our gender, which is the same as our biological sex at birth; it may not be changed or reassigned.

Male and female roles – we hold a "complementarian" position on the roles of men and women. That is that men and women are equal in dignity and value to God, both in creation and salvation, but that in marriage and in the church, they have complementary roles where men lovingly lead.

Marriage – as a church, we believe that marriage is the sacred union between one man and one woman and is intended to last until the death of either spouse (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6). We believe that sex is a good gift from God and is to be enjoyed and celebrated within the context of marriage (1 Corinthians 7:2-6). Human marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-33) and points forward to the marriage feast of the Lamb in the New Creation (Revelation 19:6-9) where Christ will be united with his bride.

Sex – we believe that all sexual activity outside of marriage is sinful, and this includes both heterosexual and homosexual practice (Romans 1:24-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). We hold out God's offer of forgiveness and power to all who have engaged in sexual sin, recognizing that all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's standards. In affirming the Christian view of marriage, we also want to show compassion to those who struggle with same-sex attraction.

Divorce – as stated above, we believe that marriage is the sacred union between one man and one woman, and is intended to last until the death of either spouse (Mark 10:1-12, Genesis 2:18-25). We also recognize that divorce is not always sinful: it may be permitted (though not required) on the grounds of sexual immorality (Matthew 19:1-12), or desertion (1 Corinthians 7). Where there is a serious problem in a marriage involving Ambassador members (and without the church attributing any "guilt") both parties will be

expected to take a sabbatical from serving in order to focus both on their relationship and any issues that may arise from it.

Marriage to an unbeliever – as a church, it is our policy that a Christian ought not to marry an unbeliever as this would go against the teaching of Scripture (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14).

12. Affiliations

Although Ambassador is an independent church, it seeks to have healthy links with like-minded churches around the world in order to fulfill its vision.

13. Amendments to the constitution

The church's beliefs, its practices, and its promises, may be amended by the elders. The members will be notified of any proposed amendments with feedback sought from them.

Promises

As Christians, we believe that we were dead in our sins and deserving of God's wrath; but because of his great love and mercy God has given us new life in Christ. In Christ we are forgiven, accepted, and adopted by God. All this is through God's incomparable grace and is only received by faith. In view of God's mercy to us we make these promises in dependence on God and the work of his Spirit in us.

We promise to grow in the knowledge of God:

- We will give thanks and praise God for his goodness to us
- We will seek to repent of our sin and rejoice in our forgiveness
- We will celebrate our new life in Christ and walk humbly with God
- We will seek the guidance and leading of the Spirit of God in everything we do
- We will live a life that honors God in obedience to his Word
- We will express our dependence on God in prayer
- We will give God glory for all his work in us and in the world

We promise to grow together as a community of God's people:

- We will endeavour to meet together regularly
- We will make every effort to keep the unity of the church as those whom Christ has reconciled
- We will forgive each other as Christ forgave us
- We will embrace our responsibility to love, care, and pray for each other as God's family
- We will use our gifts to encourage and build each other up
- We will contribute to the church's financial support
- We will respect and honor the leadership of the church

We promise to go into the world with the good news about Jesus:

- We will bear witness to the good news of the gospel through our words and actions
- We will welcome new people into the life of the church
- We will seek to do good to all people to show the love of God
- We will accept suffering for the sake of the gospel
- We will pray for the spread of the gospel throughout Hong Kong and across the world
- We will, if we move from this place, as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of these promises and the principles of God's Word