

# Church of the Redeemer

Fairhope, AL

## CHURCH DOCUMENTS & THEIR USE

One way that our church seeks to be an orderly congregation is by uniting around a number of church documents that help us agree on our identity, describe the way we operate, and teach newcomers about our fellowship. In this we follow a biblical pattern, for God Himself has given His people written covenants and documents that describe their responsibilities to Him: the Ten Commandments, the Book of the Law, and the New Testament among others.

Our church documents accomplish four purposes:

### 1. Defining what we believe

Our Statement of Faith and Church Confession of Faith fulfill this purpose. We are a confessional church, and our primary unity is in the Holy Spirit, around the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, which we confess together. The Statement of Faith is a brief document with eight articles distilling the essentials of the Christian faith. Every believer who becomes a member of Redeemer embraces this document wholeheartedly because it summarizes biblical truth. It is what we believe to be a concise statement of the biblical faith, a description of Protestant Orthodoxy. The Church Confession of Faith is the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646. This larger, fuller document is a historic achievement in expressing the biblical faith in a brief compass. The WCF is what Redeemer believes and teaches\*. Every member is encouraged to study and know the confession. (\*see approved exceptions to WCF doctrine and practice)

### 2. Defining how we will live together

Our Church Covenant fulfills this purpose. A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties. The Church Covenant is the agreement between the church and God, and between church member and church member, to love one another and live holy lives as brothers and sisters in Christ. The Church Covenant is not something to commit to lightly; the Scriptures require us to fulfill our vows. We envision a church with strong relationships among members that embody the sacrificial love of Christ and show forth His supremacy. The Church Covenant reminds us of what that love and commitment look like. Church of the Redeemer will reaffirm the Church Covenant together periodically.

### 3. Defining how we will govern and conduct ourselves

Our Constitution and By-laws fulfill this purpose. The constitution describes our government, under God's Word and Christ's headship. We have agreed to certain standards and "family

rules” that we affirm and that we embrace as a means of bringing biblical order to our fellowship. In the Constitution and By-laws we describe our membership, leadership, discipline, decision-making, and other vital areas of church life. There may be times when we will need to revise and amend the constitution so that it can best serve us.

#### **4. Defining where we are going and how we will get there**

Our Strategic Plan fulfills this purpose. It tells our mission statement (why we exist), vision statement (where we are going as a congregation), objectives (what we must do in order to be true to our mission), and strategies (how we will accomplish our objectives). In a sense, this document is never finished because we are constantly ready for the Lord to lead us in new directions and through His Word to reveal to us more of who we are to be. The Strategic Plan will be presented to the congregation through communication of the mission and vision and also implementation of the objectives and strategies.

It is our desire that our church documents accurately reflect our church. These documents are created as a tool to serve us. We desire for these documents truly to help guide us to be the church God wants us to be, that Christ may be supreme among us, and God will be glorified. We should return to the documents frequently, reminding ourselves of who we are, what we believe, what we have committed ourselves to, and how we will operate this church that belongs to the Lord God.