

Peace Haven Baptist Church

New Members Guide



Introduction

The Leadership and Members of Peace Haven are excited that you feel like this is where you belong. Before we begin our class and study time together, we want to give everyone an opportunity to introduce themselves and open with a word of prayer.

Beliefs

Peace Haven is a church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, committed to contending for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. The basic doctrines within *The Peace Haven Statement of Faith* represent what we believe to be core elements of biblical teaching. We expect all members of The Peace Haven to affirm these doctrines.

You can find our *Statement of Faith* on our website at findpeace.today

We will not be covering every belief in our *Statement of Faith* in this class, but we do want to highlight several of these core elements to give you an opportunity to ask any questions that you may have.

Mission Statement

Peace Haven exists to glorify God through worshipping Him, becoming mature in Christ, and reaching the world with the Gospel.

The Doctrine of Scripture

The Bible was written by men divinely inspired by God as His self-revelation to man.

When we say that Scripture was *divinely inspired*, we are saying that the men who wrote the Bible “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21).

Since God is the author, all Scripture is completely true and trustworthy and is “profitable for teaching, reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). Scripture is the ultimate authority and supreme standard by which all things should be weighed.

All Scripture points to Jesus, providing affirmation that he is the Messiah, and providing confirmation of his death, burial, and resurrection (Luke 24:13-35).

The Doctrine of God

We believe in one God, eternally existing as one essence in three distinct persons.

God the Father spoke creation into existence and reigns over all of human history with providential care (Ps 33, Acts 17:28).

God the Son is the incarnated Jesus Christ, conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary (Matt 1:23). He identified with mankind yet was without sin and his substitutionary death on the cross makes provision for the redemption of man

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from sin (2 Cor 5:21). He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and he ascended into heaven where he stands as the sole mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5). One day, he will return in power and glory to judge the world, and he will restore and reign over all things (1 Thess 4:16-17).

God the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture and enables men to understand Scripture's truth. Upon regeneration, he baptizes and seals every believer into the Body of Christ (Eph 4:30) and begins to cultivate Christian character (Gal 5:22-23).

The Doctrine of Man

All humans bear the image of God and possess intrinsic dignity and worth, yet all people inherit a sinful nature, inclined toward sin, and are transgressors against God who justly deserve condemnation and desperately need a Savior.

It is clear that human beings are unique among God's creatures and made in his image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27) Our first parents were to live in the presence of God, and they were to glorify God by filling the earth with his glory (Gen 1:28).

However, Adam and Eve did not listen to the instruction of God, nor did they rest in his good provision (Gen 1:29, 2:16-17) When our first parents were tempted to sin against God (Gen 3:1), they chose to seek autonomy from God and brought humanity and creation under the curse of sin (Gen 3:16-19, Rom 5:12).

All of humanity inherits the sinful nature of our first parents, and we verify that we are sinners by nature as soon as we are capable of moral action and become condemned as transgressors of God's law (Ps 51:5, Jer 17:5, Rom 3:10-18).

The Doctrine of Salvation

Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, our thinking, our desires, and our actions. It is a free gift of God's grace to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior through faith (Eph 2:8-9).

Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace by which believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ezek 36:26)

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ Jesus, bringing the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God. (Rom 5:1, Col 1:20)

Sanctification begins in regeneration and is the process by which the believer progresses toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in Him. Sanctification is a continual and ongoing process throughout the life of the believer (Rom 7:15-8:18).

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The Doctrine of the Church

The Church is the body of Christ, sent into the world to shine forth the glory of God.

The New Testament church is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. The church observes the ordinances of Christ (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), is governed by His laws, and exercises the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word (1 Cor 11:23-25, Matt 28:16-20).

Each local assembly operates under the Lordship of Jesus through the democratic process, and each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. The scriptural offices of the church are elders and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of elder is limited to men as qualified by Scripture (Acts 14:23, 1 Tim 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9).

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation (Rev 2-3, 21:2-3).

The Doctrine of Last Things

Jesus will return according to His promise, to judge the living and the dead, consigning the unrighteous to Hell, the place of everlasting death, and delivering the righteous to Heaven and everlasting life.

God in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised, and Christ will judge all men in righteousness.

The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord Jesus (Matt 16:26-27, 2 Cor 5:10, Heb 11:10, 1 Thess 5:2, Rev 5:10, 11:15-22).

Introduction to Structure and Leadership

Jesus is the supreme authority in the church (Eph 1:22, 5:23, Col 1:18) and the foundation of our faith (Heb 12:2, 1 Cor 3:11). The authority of Christ to govern the local church was given to the apostles, and today Jesus still rules through the words of the apostles preserved in Scripture (2 Tim 2:2).

The ministry of the local church is primarily the work of its members in the activity of worship, toward God, nurture toward each other, and witness toward the world. Internal structures of church government are not the primary ministry of the Church, but are necessary for equipping and mobilizing the saints for the work of ministry. (Eph. 4:11-12)

Spiritually, all members of the local church are on level ground before Christ, each having equal access to intercede for the good of all as a community of

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priests (Gal 6:1-3, 1 Pet 2:9). The local government is invested in the local body under the headship of Jesus according to the Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (Eph 4:15-16, Ezek 34:1-5).

The local church body is composed of one body with many members all of whom are in vital relationship with Jesus Christ, Executive authority or leadership is invested by the congregation, as authorized by Scripture, in a plurality of elders who lead the church and to whom the congregation is to submit under the headship of Christ. These men have the authority and responsibility to delegate to individuals, committees or other Teams the authority and responsibility to carry out the business or ministry of the church in spiritual and physical (material) matters (Acts 20:28, 15:6; Eph. 4:11-12; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17).

In using its delegated authority, and in making its decisions, the Team of Elders must seek to be guided by the Scripture, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and by input from the congregation (Acts 20:32, 6:2-5a, 11:22, 15:22; 2 Cor. 8:19).

In the event of the misuse of the delegated authority, the church has the authority and ability to enforce appropriate church discipline.

The Elders and ministry leaders of the Church should be people who are spiritually mature and exemplary (1 Tim. 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9), gifted for the ministry given to them (Rom. 12:6-8), have a sense of divine urging (Acts 20:28), and who are in harmony with the duly established leadership of the Church (Phil. 2:2). Spiritual qualifications should never be sacrificed to technical expertise. (Acts 20:28, Rom. 12:6-8, 1 Tim. 3:1-13)

The Role of Elders

Those who have been called by God to oversee and teach in the church are called elders, pastors, or overseers. As numerous passages in the New Testament indicate, the words "elder" (*presbuteros*), "overseer" (*episkopos*), and "pastor" (*poimén*) all refer to the same office. In other words, overseers and pastors are not distinct from elders; the terms are simply different ways of identifying the same people (Acts 20:17, 28, Eph 4:11-12). Elders are shepherds who exercise spiritual oversight over the church body -- teaching, admonishing, nurturing, praying, and disciplining.

The ministry of Peace Haven operates under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ working in and through a plurality of Elders. The elders will be the primary decision-making body within the church. However, it is critical that the elders make decisions based on carefully assembled facts, scriptural insight, the individual and corporate leading by the Holy Spirit, and input from the body (Acts 6:5, 15:6, 22; Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13).

The church is not a democracy or a government where the majority rules. Jesus Christ Himself is the Head and Ruler of the church. However, the Lord Jesus leads and directs through both the body and the elders. Since the Lord Jesus dwells in each member of the body of Christ, it is important and necessary for the elders to seek input, information, and guidance from the body, especially on practical matters of church life.

In major decisions of church life, the congregation will meet to affirm elders' recommendations, to show a unified movement toward the direction in question

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and to show a sense of God's leading. The elders will not move forward with a decision until the majority of the body is unified on the matter.

Though a plurality of elders is the New Testament norm for every church, Scripture does not specify the number of elders each church should have, nor does it dictate the length of an elder's term of office. When the need arises for a new elder (either for a new position or to replace an elder who has left), the existing elders should assume a guiding and directing role in the search for the right man based on the qualifications listed in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus. 1:6-9, Acts 14:23).

The Role of Deacons

The word for 'deacon' means 'servant'. As such, deacons play a crucial role in the life of a healthy church. Specifically, deacons provide 'any kind of service that supplies the need of another person'. Being subject to the elders, deacons serve in the capacity of assisting the Elders / Pastors with administrative responsibilities, business affairs, and practical care of the church body (Acts 6:1-4). The church shall set apart, according to its need, men who evidence the scriptural qualifications for that role (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

In Acts 6:1-4, certain men were appointed to minister to the physical needs of the church body, to relieve the elders so they would have more time to concentrate on prayer and on the Word. Deacons shall be helpers of the elders in ministering to the needs of the body, especially the physical needs (such as caring for the building and property), though they may serve in other capacities as their gifts and training allow.

Deacons will be appointed as the need arises. They shall be appointed to serve as long as they are qualified and willing to serve and as long as a need for their ministry exists. 1 Tim. 3:10 teaches that potential deacons are to be tested. The primary means of testing is time; time for the church body to evaluate a man's commitment to the Lord, his qualifications according to 1 Tim. 3:8-12, his doctrinal understanding and his willingness to serve the local body.

The church body and the Team of Elders should be on the alert to those men who demonstrate the qualifications of a deacon. However, only qualified and willing men will be appointed. If no qualified men are available, or if those qualified are unable or unwilling to serve, no appointment will be made. The church shall wait on the Lord to provide a qualified man or men to meet the need.

While deacons are not tasked with governing the church, they possess and exercise authority to carry out their calling of serving the church. We can see this point, for instance, in what is likely the establishment of the office of deacon in the church, Acts 6:1-6. The deacons take up from the apostles the work of daily distributing food to the church's widows (Acts 6:1). The details of this kind of work find elaboration in 1 Timothy 5:1-16. Here, Paul's instructions regarding diaconal ministry to widows assume spiritual authority on the part of the deacons. These deacons, after all, are charged with determining which widows qualified to receive the church's benevolence. As officeholders in the church, deacons possess and exercise God-given authority to serve the congregation's needs.

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In light of the qualifications listed for deacons in 1 Tim 3:8-13, and because of the responsibility and authority that is exercised by those serving in the role of deacon, the body of Peace Haven has concluded that the role of deacon should only be filled by qualified men. This does not mean that women cannot be “servants,” as all members of the body of Christ are called to be servants of Jesus Christ, but it does prohibit women from serving in the role of deacon at Peace Haven.

We encourage every member of Peace Haven, regardless of gender, to cultivate and utilize their spiritual gifts for the glory of God, serving him by encouraging one another, and sharing the message of the Gospel. (1 Thess 5:11, Titus 2:1-15).

Scripture does not specify the number of deacons each church should have, nor does it dictate the length of a deacon’s term of office. When the need arises for a new deacon (either for a new position or to replace a deacon who has left), the elders should assume a guiding and directing role in the search for the right man based on the qualifications listed in Scripture.

You can find those who are currently serving as Elders and Deacons on our website at findpeace.today

Ministry Teams

A Ministry Team is a group of people who have complimentary gifts and skills, who share the common purpose of carrying out one specific area of ministry that contributes to implementing Peace Haven’s mission.

The Ministry Team concept is in keeping with the principle of each part functioning to profit the whole body (Eph. 4:16). Ministry Teams may be appointed by elders as needed, and affirmed by the church body tasked with the responsibility of setting objectives and goals, working together to plan and implement activities, events, and methodologies, and consistently evaluate all programs associated with their ministry.

The purpose, structure, and desired outcome of each team will be developed by its leaders, presented to the elders, and affirmed by the body. Each team will keep an accurate record of its proceedings and report to the Elders. A Ministry Team will cease to exist at the point when it loses its purpose or no longer operates within the vision and values of Peace Haven.

Current Ministry Teams

The Mission Team is responsible for overseeing the support and encouragement of our Mission Partners.

The Local Outreach Team is responsible for engaging and serving our local community.

The Finance Team is responsible for stewardship of church finances.

The Worship Team is responsible for leading worship through music and song.

The Audio/Visual Team is responsible for the maintenance, setup, and oversight of church audio, lighting, and presentation.

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The Digital Media Team is responsible for the church website, social media presence, and overseeing the church live stream.

The Discipleship Team is responsible for discipling and equipping church members through Life Groups and Sunday School.

The Building and Grounds Team is responsible for the oversight and maintenance of church facilities.

The Childcare Team is responsible for childcare during our worship gatherings.

We encourage and expect that each Covenant Member of Peace Haven will be willing to make use of their time, talents, and treasure to help fulfill the Great Commission by joining a Ministry Team and volunteering to serve when needed.

Covenant Membership

At the time of personal faith in Jesus Christ, the believer is called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and joined into union with the universal body of Christ, the church, by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col. 1:18).

When a believer enters into the fellowship of fellow members of a local body, they share and participate in the various blessings and ministries of the body of Christ. This fellowship is more than a loose relationship of a believer or believers to a particular body or assembly. It involves commitment, responsibility, and submission to both the leadership and to each other. (1 Pet. 5:2-3; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).

Scripture does not contain a mandate for nor a command against an official membership roll. In Acts, we see that believers were added to the church in Jerusalem, however, this serves primarily to show the growth in the early church, as believers devoted themselves to a local assembly and its leadership for teaching, leadership, fellowship and worship (Acts 2:42-47, 9:31, 16:15).

There were also letters of commendation or acceptance written on behalf of both men and women to be welcomed and accepted into the fellowship or various assemblies. These letters commended believers to other assemblies regarding their faithfulness and ministry and thus they were not a transfer of membership by letter (Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 16:10; Col. 4:10; 2 Cor. 3:1, 8:16-24).

The emphasis of these Scriptures is that every believer becomes identified and committed to a specific local assembly of believers following the leading and direction of God. This commitment is revealed by their attitude, faith, attendance, involvement, giving and submission to that assembly. Thus a membership roll cannot, in and of itself, serve as the sole means of commitment a believer has to a local body.

What is Covenant Membership?

Over and over again in the Scriptures God makes covenants (i.e. sacred promises) to and with his people. In the process, he calls them to a pattern of life and worship that is best for them and most glorifying to him. In addition to divine covenants, you will find a variety of human covenants in the bible, where people make different kinds of commitments to one another.

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These biblical realities represent the heart behind our decision to adopt the language of Covenant Membership at Peace Haven.

Membership in our culture brings to mind ideas of privileges and rights that members receive if they pay certain dues. Covenant Membership communicates active participation, intentionality and mutual commitment within the context of a sacred relationship between God and all those who voluntarily choose it. Covenant Membership communicates that there is honor and value in publicly and intentionally prioritizing a commitment to that which is most valuable—God, his people, and his mission.

Covenant Membership at Peace Haven is participation in a family, a local expression of the universal household of God. All members are united in Christ and therefore, to each other. Our unity is demonstrated by our love for God and for others, both within and outside of our church family. Since we are identified with Christ, it is our desire to display the message of the gospel in a manner that honors God and reflects his character.

This Membership Covenant is composed of general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, regardless of membership at Peace Haven or any other local body, are required to submit to the authority of Scripture, pursue holiness, be good stewards of their resources, and continually repent and confess their sin to a holy God.

Covenant Membership is a voluntary decision of the believer expressing his or her commitment to their responsibilities before God to encourage and instruct one another, and remain faithful to each of these obligations.

Any time an individual covenant member feels that the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to these requirements, it is the individual's responsibility to lovingly and humbly express these concerns to the leadership of the church.

Annual Covenant Renewal

Because Covenant Membership communicates active participation and intentional, mutual commitment, all covenant members will be asked to affirm their membership annually through an online form and verbally in a worship celebration focused on Covenant Membership.

We will communicate the need for reaffirmation annually, and provide a paper option for those who are not able to complete the form online.

If a member chooses not to participate in the annual reaffirmation process, this choice could be considered a voluntary withdrawal from membership.

Church Discipline

Covenant Membership is not only about the active participation and intentional, mutual commitment of the believer, it is also about mutual accountability and God's desire for the church to be holy, and set apart unto Him (1 Pet 1:16, Heb 12:11).

Church discipline is founded on a concern for the glory of God and the testimony of His church. The purpose of Church Discipline should always be the restoration and building up of a sinning believer (2 Thess 3:14-15, Heb 12:10-13, Gal 6:1-2), and discipline always includes a readiness to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm (2 Cor 2:6-8).

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Great care must be used before beginning the process of church discipline, and any consideration of its use should be bathed in prayer. According to Scripture, there are five categories that might warrant the use of church discipline. When there is a conflict between members (Matt 18:15-17), divisiveness (Rom 16:17-18, Titus 3:9-11), disorderly conduct that is clearly outside of the lines of Scripture (2 Thess 3:6-15), sins mentioned in 1 Cor 5; incest, immorality, covetousness, idolatry, abusive speech, drunkenness, and swindling, and false teaching (1 Tim 1:20, 2 Tim 2:17-18).

The church discipline process is not intended to be used for single instances or occasions of sin, but is rather reserved for unrepentant patterns of sin in the life of a believer. Every effort should be made to attempt to correct and/or reconcile with an offender privately before escalating an issue and involving the leadership and body of the church. (Matt 18:16-17, 2 Tim 4:2, 1 Thess 5:12-14, Titus 2:15).

Global Missions Focus

We believe that the Gospel of grace in Jesus Christ is the only hope for all mankind (Jn. 14:6; Rom 3:21-26), and that God has mandated the Body of Christ to engage all peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Rom. 10:14-15, 16:25 -27) with the message of the Gospel as His ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20-21).

Therefore, as a local church, we are committed to sacrificially utilizing our resources (time, finances, gifts, facilities, etc.) for the sake of making disciples locally and globally. We will engage in, and evaluate all outreach ministries as guided on the following principles:

1) Balance: We see the value of pursuing balance in terms of local and global ministry for the sake of obedience and vitality. Each member should understand and be engaged in both their local and global role in disciple-making.

2) Partnerships: We recognize the advantage and privilege of forming partnerships in the Gospel (Phil. 1:3-6, 4:15-20). Therefore, we will intentionally seek partnerships with individuals and organizations who are like minded in beliefs and values. Our partnerships must never replace our own responsibility to make disciples as a local church, and as individuals.

3) Least Reached: Because God desires people from all tribes, tongues, and nations to know and glorify Him (1 Tim 2:4; Rev 5:9-10), we place a priority on carrying the Gospel to places and people, both locally and globally, where the revealed knowledge of the Gospel is scarce or non-existent.

4) Focused: We must continuously evaluate our efforts and partnerships to ensure that we are pursuing and accomplishing our primary aim: to make disciples to the glory of God.

The Digital Directory

The Digital Directory of Peace Haven is a convenient way for our church family to look up the contact information of other members. This information is only accessible to members who have agreed to be listed in the directory and is not accessible to the general public.

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Once your information is listed, you will have the ability to edit and update the information for those in your household as needed, and you will also have the ability to decide what information is visible or hidden to those in our church family.

Members of Peace Haven Baptist Church can access the Digital Membership Directory through Peace Haven's dedicated page within the "Church Center" app for Android and iPhone or through Peace Haven's dedicated "Church Center" web interface at findpeace.churchcenter.com

The contact information for your household will not be published in the directory without your permission.