

What do we believe?

'What do we believe?' is an important question – the answer indicates the reasons why we do what we do at *Lower Mountains Anglican Church*.

Our beliefs are revealed in the Bible. They are summarised in the *39 Articles of Religion*, and worked out in the principles and theology of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Given this foundation, we believe that:

- the Bible is the clearest way you can know God and is our authority in matters of life and practice.
- you can come to God because of Jesus Christ.
- church is to be an important time where we meet, learn from the Bible, serve, pray, sing and encourage one another.
- the great news about Jesus Christ is not only for private consumption, but with respect and gentleness, is to be offered to all people.

We are evangelical, which means we are Christian and give ultimate authority to the Bible as God's Word, desiring to maintain a Reformed and Protestant character in the expression of our beliefs. From the time of the Apostles, Christians have laid out doctrines of truth. They are definitive statements set forth in a concise fashion as guided by scripture and enable us to guard one another from error and show our unity in Christ.

As an Evangelical Anglican Church, *Lower Mountains Anglican* affirms the truths laid out in the *Nicene, Apostles* and *Athanasian Creeds*.

Core Doctrines

So, what are our Core Doctrines? A 'Doctrine' is another way of saying 'Truth Statement'.

About God

We believe that there is one unique, living, true, sustaining, loving, just and eternal God. He is Father, Son and Spirit – one God in three persons.

This means that God is sovereign in all things including creation, revelation, redemption, judgment and in establishing his kingdom. He is worthy of all glory, honour and praise.

(Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6; John 1:1-3; John 10:30; John 16:13-15; Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 4:11)

About Humanity

We believe that men and women are created in the image of God to live in a special relationship with him and his creation. Together man and woman (under God) have dominion over the created order.

This means that all people should be treated with love and respect.

(Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 145:17; John 15:12)

Yet, tragically, human nature is universally sinful and all are guilty before God. This places us under the wrath and condemnation of God.

This means that people are not perfect, and in sin it is evident that there are broken relationships between humanity and God, others and our natural world. God will judge all people. Apart from Christ all people are unable to turn to God, earn favour, and are without hope.

(Romans 3:9-23; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 1:18-20; Ephesians 2:1-3)

About the Bible

We believe that the Bible (Old and New Testaments) is God's revelation to us. It is divinely inspired and infallible as originally given. It is the supreme and final authority for all matters of faith, conduct, experience and opinion.

This means that the Bible is sufficient both for knowing God and for equipping us with everything we need for life and godliness. The 66 books of the Bible cannot be added to or altered, and its teachings override any human teaching which claims to hold more authority. The Bible upholds that which it describes as true and correct (including that which is Christlike, noble, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, just, compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient). The Bible rejects that which it describes as sinful (including dishonesty, greed, theft, sexual relationships outside of marriage, homosexual relationships, drunkenness, foul language and idolatry).

(Psalm 33:4; Isaiah 1:17; Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:5-17; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 John 5:20)

About Jesus Christ

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God; fully divine and truly human. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. In taking on human flesh, he entered fully into human experience, endured temptation, lived a sinless life in perfect obedience to his Father, yet suffered at the hands of humanity.

On the cross, Jesus took on the consequences of human sin. He died and was buried. On the third day he rose from the dead bodily. He then ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God, as intercessor, advocate and ruler over all. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

This means that we believe that Jesus provides the only solution to our sin and alienation from God. His death was no accident, but was God's plan to provide the only sufficient sacrifice for sin, once for all, as a substitute for sinful people. We need to take his death and resurrection seriously, both as historical fact and as a scriptural truth, which if ignored means rejecting God's offer of rescue. Jesus Christ then is alive today and forever reigning in heaven as Lord and King.

(Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:1-2, 14; Acts 2:32-39; Romans 3:24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-58; Colossians 1:15-20; 2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 4:15, 7:24-25; 9:27-28; 1 Peter 1:3-5, 18; 1 John 2:1-2)

About the Holy Spirit

We believe the Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son yet his primary role is to bring glory to Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit's ongoing role is to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment and to sanctify the believer, transforming them more and more into the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit enables the sinner to live a new life – that is to repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ, bringing them into a right relationship with God.

The Holy Spirit indwells all true believers and works to illuminate believers' minds to grasp the truth of God's Word, the Bible. He grants gifts to all believers for the purpose of service, not for self-indulgence or personal satisfaction, but for the privilege and responsibility of the building up of God's church. He produces good fruit in the lives of believers and empowers his people for witness in the community and the world.

This means that repentance and faith only comes as a result of the Holy Spirit's work in the individual. In faith believers are guaranteed forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life. The proper evidence of this 'new life' is a person's repentance and voluntary obedience to the gospel. And yet, Christians will not be perfect during this life but will progressively become more like Christ as a result of the Holy Spirit's transforming work in their lives. Christians, empowered by the Spirit, will live lives which are prayerful and directed by scripture as they serve, witness, and meet together.

(John 14:15-17, 16:7-11; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:1-9, 26, 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 2:10-15, 12:7-14; Galatians 5:22-25; Ephesians 1:17-19, 4:1-7, 6:17-18; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 1:2)

About Salvation

We believe that salvation is a free gift that comes only by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is not by human merit or good works. It is only through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, our representative and substitute, that the guilt, penalty and power of sin can be removed. In this death, God demonstrates his love for us most perfectly and establishes his victory over Satan and all evil.

This means that no one can earn their salvation – not through rituals, or ceremonies, or good works, or kind acts. There is only one name under heaven by which we can be brought into relationship with God, the name 'Jesus Christ' in whom we must place our trust. And so, as saved sinners, we now enjoy the blessing of union with Christ and the assurance of a right relationship with God, and wait for the final consummation of our hope with the return of Christ, the resurrection of our bodies, and life with him eternally.

(John 1:12, 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 5:1, 6-8; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 2:10-11; Titus 2:11-15)

About the Church

We believe the visible church is the gathering of believers around Christ in his Word. The Church is a community of people who genuinely follow Jesus Christ who exist to worship, serve and glorify God. Within this community both men and women seek to use their gifts to build the church in love and to bear witness to Christ. In leadership, as in marriage, men and women express their equality yet difference within relationships of mutual love and dependence.

This means that we are a family who exist to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our efforts together seek to corporately know and love God more fully, serve him and others more selflessly, in order to grow God's kingdom. We are less concerned about our buildings, ceremonies or traditions but more concerned about the people who gather in response to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We spur one another on towards love and good deeds, value meeting together as a priority, and desire to encourage one another with the different gifts we each may possess.

(1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 1:22-23; Hebrews 10:24-25; Titus 1:5-9)

About Marriage

We believe marriage is an institution which God set up from the beginning of creation and that it is the joining of a man and a woman in a lifelong covenantal commitment to one another, which forms a new family unit. Marriage is a demonstration of the gospel, as it symbolises God's unending love for his people and the union between Christ and his Church. Marriage should be honoured by all. Marriage is a gift for the wellbeing of humanity and it is within a marriage relationship that sexual union should be enjoyed. An established marriage is the best place for the upbringing of children so that they may be loved, nurtured and instructed for their benefit and that of society.

This means that marriage can only be between a man and a woman. That a husband should love his wife as Christ loved his church and that a wife should love her husband as the church is called to love Christ. Marriage should not be entered into lightly or carelessly. Marriage should be a lifelong commitment and divorce is the exception. Sexual relationships outside of a marriage relationship are wrong. Within Marriage, couples should be encouraged and supported in their role as parents.

(Genesis 2:20-25; Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12; Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16, 39; Ephesians 5:22-33; Hebrews 13:4-7)

About Gender

We believe that God is the Creator of all things and that human beings are created in his image, according to his design through and for his beloved Son, Jesus Christ and that as created beings we are not able to create ourselves. From the beginning, God created humanity in the form of two biological sexes – male and female. The Bible never endorses a divergence between biological sex and gender identity or expression. Because of the Fall, human nature was damaged and distorted, but not destroyed even though all people now fall short of the glory of God. This impacts every facet of our human nature, including our biology and psychology.

This means that biological sex is a fundamental aspect of embodiment in God's ordering of human life. Blurring the distinctions between male and female, or seeking to present one's sex as contrary to one's biology, is an attempt at self-creation that involves a denial of the biologically-sexed body that God has given to us.

We recognise this to be a complex and emotive matter. Our first response toward anyone living with sexual or gender confusion should be one of compassion and care, not censure for in rejecting *the ideology* which embraces or promotes both an unbiblical and unscientific misunderstanding of biological sex, we are not wanting to reject *the person* genuinely struggling with gender incongruence. We recognise differing opinions on the use of gender-neutral pronouns or of using preferred pronouns and so as a church we will generally (where necessary) use pronouns in accord with a person's biological gender. In regards to using a person's given name, we are not against using a person's preferred name (or nickname).

(Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 11:3; Genesis 1:26; Colossians 1:16; Genesis 1:26-27; Matthew 19:4; Genesis 3:21-22; Romans 1:18-32; 8:19-23; Genesis 5:1-2; 9:6; James 3:9; Romans 3:23; Deuteronomy 22:5; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 11:4-5; 13-15; Ephesians 5:29-31).

About the End Times

We believe that Jesus Christ will return, visibly and personally to establish his kingdom. When he returns we do not know. His return will mark the last day and a final judgement of all people. A new heaven and the new earth will be consummated. God will preserve and keep all who truly belong to Christ for this last and great day.

This means that the age we live in now, suffering under the consequences of sin, is marked by death, mourning, pain and suffering. This age will end and be replaced by a new age where God will wipe every tear away and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. This will only happen when God sends Jesus Christ back to earth. There will be bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost: a solemn separation will take place, the lost to everlasting punishment and the saved to eternal life with Christ. This day cannot be predicted, yet all people need to be ready for that time.

(Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 1:10-11; Roman 8:18-25; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–5:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10; Revelation 21-22)