



CENTENARY
EVANGELICAL
CHURCH

Doctrinal Positions

As a church, we are committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Good News that Jesus died and rose again is our reason for existing. So, we want Jesus to be at the heart of everything we do. However, there are some things that make us distinct from other faithful local churches. In this document, we would like to outline some of the key doctrinal positions of Centenary Evangelical Church.

Whether expressly stated or not, all churches and Christians do not hold all doctrines to be of equal importance or clarity. We find it helpful to divide doctrines into three categories – essentials, distinctives and differences.

Essentials

These mark out true churches and true Christians.

All biblical Christians and churches must hold to a number of **theological essentials** – the doctrines necessary for salvation. These define Christian from non-Christian and are taught by all true churches. These include doctrines such as the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. While our Statement of Faith goes beyond the essentials of salvation, essentials necessary for salvation are contained in our Statement of Faith.

Distinctives

These mark out the kind of church that CEC is and wants to be.

Amidst the vast array of churches and convictions, these **theological distinctives** – while not essential to salvation – are what CEC holds to be of great practical significance to church life, unity and culture. We recognise there are other biblical churches with different distinctives, but these distinctives are what CEC holds to.

All of our elders and pastors hold to these distinctives and to our Statement of Faith. Complete agreement with these distinctives is not required for

membership, but members must be satisfied that we will preach, teach and counsel in accordance with these theological distinctives. If any member holds to a theological distinctive that is different from that held by Centenary Evangelical Church, we ask that members not make this a point of contention.

While not exhaustive, we deem that the key **theological distinctives** of Centenary Evangelical Church are:

- Reformed
- Membership
- Elder Led
- Expository Preaching
- Complementarian
- Dual Baptism

Reformed

The absolute sovereignty of God in salvation.

We affirm the truth that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We hold to the Reformed view that God's glory is exalted when we recognise His sovereignty over all things, such that there is no aspect of heaven or earth outside of His ultimate control. Though God's rule extends to all things, it is particularly His sovereign work in salvation that we note as a theological distinctive.

We believe that it is exceedingly good and glorious news that salvation is dependent on God's initiative, and not on the desires and deeds of men and women. God's eternal decree of election, which adopts us into His family, is ultimately grounded in His love and purposes. God is responsible for drawing to Himself those He would save, overcoming their natural resistance to the gospel so that they can repent and believe. This understanding of God's sovereignty does not negate humanity's responsibility to turn from our sin and trust in the saving work of Christ. However, those holding a different view of God's sovereign work in salvation are welcome in membership.

Supporting verses: Psalm 115:3; 135:6; John 1:13; 6:37, 44; 17:1-3; Romans 8:26-9:23; 11:33-36; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:1-5; Philippians 1:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9.

Membership

The expectation of Christians being formal members of a local church.

Scripture is clear that salvation makes a believer a member of the universal body of Christ. However, we believe there is also a clear Scriptural expectation for

believers to formally associate with and commit themselves to the accountability and fellowship of a local church. This process of formal association is generally called membership.

Membership of a local church is a visible expression of our union with Christ and His people. Elders and Pastors are shepherds who are called to give an account of their flock. Membership helps these shepherds know who their flock is. Committing to formal membership indicates that you will receive the care, teaching, admonition and, if necessary, discipline of the local church.

We strongly encourage those who wish to make CEC their spiritual home to affirm that decision through formal membership. We do understand that some in our church community may not be able to undertake formal membership, but we wish to affirm their part in our community and our love for them.

Supporting verses: Matthew 16:18-19; 18:15-18; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Galatians 6:10; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-5.

Elder Led

God has given elders the responsibility to shepherd the local church.

Scripture gives the governing authority of each local church to men occupying an office known as overseers or elders. This authority is designed to be exercised by a plurality of men, each of whom meet the biblical criteria for the office. The members of the church are called to submit to the godly, loving leadership of these elders who are, in turn, accountable to the Lord, to each other, and also to the members.

Supporting verses: Acts 20:17-28, 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5.

Expository Preaching

Teaching Scripture book by book and doctrine by doctrine.

The entire counsel of God (the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments) is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting and for training in righteousness that the people of God may be complete and equipped for every good work. Since the word of God is given for our spiritual nourishment, it is a central focus of the times our church gathers.

We believe expository preaching involves presenting the meaning, intent and application of the biblical text. Our regular practice is to preach through entire books of the Old and New Testaments, but from time to time we also address doctrines by preaching topically.

Supporting verses: Nehemiah 8:8; Acts 20:27; 1 Timothy 4:13; 5:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 4:1-2.

Complementarian

God's good design includes distinctive roles for men and women in the home and in the church.

Men and women are absolutely equal in dignity, value and worth. As part of God's good, created order, they have different yet complementary roles and responsibilities in the home and church. These differences are particularly evident in the areas of preaching and church eldership. These role distinctions are God's grace to men and women, and are therefore to be protected, preserved and practiced for His glory and our benefit.

Our understanding of complementarianism affirms that there are important roles for women serving in the local church and so we are committed to encouraging and fostering the ministry of women in our church. We also wish to affirm that, in accordance with Scripture, Christlike male leadership is to be loving, sacrificial and serving, and any abusive leadership is unbiblical.

Supporting verses: Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18-24; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Dual Baptism

Affirming and adopting both paedobaptism and credobaptism.

Properly understood, both the practice of paedobaptism and credobaptism are within the bounds of orthodoxy, and are based on scriptural and theological support, grounding and convictions. As such CEC allows for both practices of baptism to be performed based on the conscience and conviction of each congregant (and their family), and in accordance with the church's theological position on both baptism practices.

A dual position acknowledges that the practice of baptism is an important, but secondary, issue – that it is not salvific and not an 'essential' doctrine. It expresses the diversity of practice of our sending churches and the diversity of practice within churches in the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Church that we are part of. It expresses gospel unity and humility. It allows for and welcomes those with different convictions and consciences in this area to be part of CEC.

Differences

CEC members can hold a variety of secondary doctrines in love and unity.

Theological differences are areas that do not shape the local church in the same ways as distinctives. Differences in these areas should not disrupt the unity amongst members of CEC. While these doctrines will be taught on by the leadership of the church, we acknowledge differing personal convictions in these areas.

More significant differences might include teachings such as eschatology, Bible translations, views of the Sabbath, and frequency of the Lord's Supper.

More speculative differences extend to areas in which the Lord has chosen not to give definitive clarity, and it should be noted that no important doctrine or practice rests here. Examples of speculations include such teachings as the timing of the return of the Lord or the author of the book of Hebrews.

We encourage all members to be like the Bereans (Acts 17:11), examining the Scriptures and forming their own opinions in these areas of theological difference. Should their convictions preclude united fellowship – we ask them to consider joining a church more in line with their personal theological convictions.

Understanding theological distinctives and differences is important for maintaining unity in a local church. It is important to reflect on our church's positions before joining.