

The Core Values of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

In an attempt to clarify and simplify what we are about as a community of faith, the leaders of St. Andrews sat down to deliberately summarize our central operating principles. From that meeting came the three-fold statement that follows; it is not everything we believe or do but, in a sense, everything we believe or do comes out of these core values. Activities or teachings in the church are deemed valuable to the extent that they relate to and support these values. Everything we teach or do ought to be intentionally connected to helping people be:

- Satisfied in God
- Loving One Another
- Doing Good In the World

These three core-values are not only our *mission* as a congregation but also our *method* for pursuing that mission. We hope to see people advance by become increasingly satisfied in God, then, out of that satisfaction, relating differently (in love) to the church and then becoming intentionally beneficial to the world because of the gospel.

Let's look at the three core values and how they relate to one another:

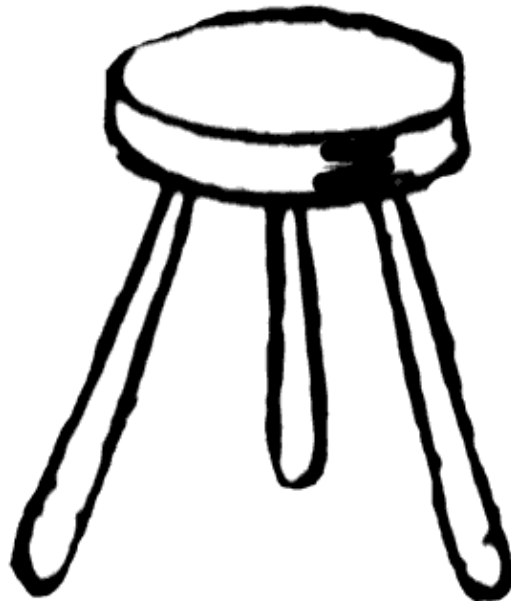
Satisfied in God: We all have things and relationships we turn into ultimate things and in which we seek satisfaction, delight, wholeness, significance, inner-peace and life. Some of these things are manifestly destructive in themselves (e.g. vices, bad habits, addictions). Others are respectable things, which take on inordinate importance in our lives (e.g. jobs, achievements, titles, being left alone by people or being recognized or approved by people, etc.). Whatever we look to provide us with ultimate meaning and satisfaction, that thing we "have to have", becomes our "lord" and it controls or rules us. The Good News of Jesus Christ liberates us from these false hopes and points us to the one Source of inexhaustible satisfaction that is God Himself, the only Lord who can support us, carry us and govern us. Understanding and believing the Gospel is how we begin and how we continue to become satisfied in God.

Loving One Another: The Good News or Gospel of Jesus Christ has immediate implications for relationships. By His life, death and resurrection, Jesus Christ is reconstituting a new humanity. As we realize what God is doing through the work of Jesus, we come to love the new community (church) God is building in the world. We are not content with a theoretical love for a theoretical institution but are drawn into real loving relationships with real flesh and blood people in the local Church congregation. Believing the Good News of Jesus Christ moves us and empowers us to love other believers. The new community (church) becomes the

primary canvas for the painting of the Christian life. The grace of God that saves and gradually transforms us is experienced in relationships and in the corporate life of the local congregation.

Doing Good in the World: Learning the implications of the gospel, we recognize that the work of Jesus Christ will result in a “new creation”. The Church is the “first fruits” of God’s new creation, existing to show signs of God’s reconciling the world to Himself in Christ. Finding our place in the Church, we are also increasingly concerned for those outside the Church and we begin to work **individually** (in our jobs, homes and neighborhoods) and **corporately** in organized efforts to demonstrate God’s reconciliation (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). Repenting and believing the Gospel makes us humble (not superior) and genuinely concerned (not complacent) about bringing help and healing to people in need. Since Jesus Christ’s central message was the announcement of the Kingdom of God, Christians are interested in demonstrating or making visible God’s Reign or Kingdom. This means working for justice, mercy, truth, beauty and goodness in any sphere or calling where God situates us. We are actively promoting what the Old Testament calls “shalom” the condition of God’s reign and human flourishing.

Additionally, all three core-values are always bound together and interrelated. No value can stand on it’s own and the first must lead to the second and the second to the third. These core-values fit the pattern of the three-legged stool. If one or another of the values is neglected an imbalance occurs:



Being satisfied in God leads to a shared life within the Church. Relationships in the church lead inevitably to concern for and involvement in the world. (We could even add

that doing good in the world calls a believer in Jesus Christ back into that place of worship where we are re-satisfied in God and are re-energized for a life of love and future involvement with people.) This life becomes a cycle of receiving grace from God and giving love to people.

There is also a very real necessity to start at the beginning. If a person by-passes satisfaction in God and tries to go directly to loving people, that love will not come from a place of security and satisfaction but from either neediness or self-satisfaction (pride). In that case, the “love” that is offered will come with strings attached: either a needy person who is “loving” in order to get something in return (such as recognition or acceptance) or a “good person” who is condescending to others who are not-so-good. It’s only when a broken and sinful person is accepted by undeserved grace and satisfied in what God has done that love can be offered without strings attached to other undeserving people. Thus, to skip the Gospel and seek satisfaction in something other than God and His grace will not lead to a kind of love that truly benefits others. Love not coming from satisfaction in God can’t hold together and will quickly degenerate into a counterfeit.

The Implementation:

The Core Values we have articulated are also a plan of action. To be beneficial, the plan of action has to be worked out in practical steps. In the following section we will lay out some of the practical out-workings of our values and some of the opportunities we make available to people who are seeking to be *satisfied in God, loving one another and doing good in the world*. There are other opportunities, in addition to these listed but these are introduced as some of the more intentional opportunities made available for people progressing in the Christian life.

Core Classes

Since being satisfied in God is a matter of believing/receiving God’s truth and grace, we have attempted to make room for this *receiving* to happen. Knowing the truth is how to become free (John 8.32) and knowing God is the very essence of eternal life (John 17.3). With this in mind, we have designed a comprehensive curriculum to help people “get the good news” into their thinking and into the way they look at life.

There are eight, ten-session Core Classes and one introductory class that discusses the entire approach we are summarizing in this document. The Classes are:

1. Introduction to the Simple Plan
2. Basic Beliefs 1
3. Basic Beliefs 2
4. Christian Worldview

5. Old Testament Overview
6. New Testament Overview
7. Church History
8. Apologetics and Evangelism
9. Gospel Spirituality

These ten-session Core Classes are usually offered on Sunday mornings from 9:45-10:45am and on Wednesday evenings at 6:45pm. Certificates of completion are issued to those who finish all the courses. The courses are also available online for those forced to miss individual class sessions at www.StAndrewsPCA.com. Additionally, we offer elective classes for adults on Sunday mornings and classes for children, 4 years through High School on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings.

Small Groups and Practical Service to the Body

The bridge between the first and second of the Core Values is Small Groups. In these groups people gather to both receive God's grace in relationship with other believers. The call to community is so loud in the Scriptures that it can hardly be missed. The normal pattern of spiritual life and growth involves open, honest loving relationships with other believers. God has designed us in His image and someone has said that God is the eternal community. He made us in such a way that it is not good for us to be alone. We need each other: "Encourage one another day by day as long as it is called today" (Hebrews 3).

In any body of Christians there will be small groups. Whether by the design of the leadership of unplanned, believers will seek to relate to one another and share their lives together. It is said of the earliest Christians that they devoted themselves to "the Apostles teaching, to fellowship, to breaking bread and to prayer: (Acts 2.42).

We have a wide array of small groups at St Andrews. Some of these are spontaneous and "spring up" from time to time. Some groups are primarily social in nature. Some groups are comprised of people in similar "life-situations" (e.g. women, men, moms, young singles etc.)

Some groups are more intentionally geared to a shared spiritual life. In this latter category are Home Groups. These meet at different times, set by the group itself. Most Home Groups meet for a period of time, maybe eight weeks, and then take a break. The groups study, discuss, pray, share, eat, laugh and sometimes cry together. All the groups are trying to bring the truth and grace of God into the arena of real life and to help all the participants to continue believing God's good news. To learn more about the different groups call the church office (954.989.2655) and ask about Home Groups.

Another essential element of the spiritual growth that comes in community is the opportunity to give to other people. If faith is essentially *receiving*, then love is

essentially *giving*. The healthy spiritual life involves a pattern of respiration: receiving grace through faith (inhaling) and giving by love (exhaling). The Apostle Paul summarized the Christian life in these words: “the only thing that matters is faith expressing itself by love” (Galatians 5.6). There are lots of ways to give at St Andrews and thus express faith by love. These include financial giving, helping others by offering rides to doctor appointments, extending hospitality to others in the body, making a meal for someone who is being discharged from the hospital, greeting people as they arrive for worship, singing in the choir, offering spontaneous practical encouragement, helping make repairs to the church building, helping with children in the nursery etc. To learn more about the vast assortment of ways to love (give), call the church office (954.989.2655) or respond to a particular request for help as printed in the weekly worship bulletin.

Mission and Evangelism

When we talk about “*Doing Good In the World*”, we might have in mind any number of ways to intentionally help others outside the church. Some of these ways happen in our daily “callings” (vocational work). The Christian sees himself as cooperating with Jesus Christ (“the Second Adam”) tending God’s earth and promoting the well-being of humanity and all of creation. This can happen as we drive a delivery truck or paint a house or balance an account or diagnose a disease or play a violin. The Christian is not simply earning a paycheck and “livin’ for the weekend”; he is answering a call to promote “shalom” and work together with God to promote truth , beauty and goodness.

Another way for the church to “do good in the world” is to tell the good news to whoever will listen. We do this spontaneously, “as we go” and interact with others in the normal relationships we enjoy on a daily basis.

We also spread the message of Jesus Christ by deliberate, organized efforts. One very effective way to get out the word is through the multiplication of local congregations sometimes called “church planting” or “mission”. St. Andrews has participated in a number of “church plants” in our local area and in other parts of the world. At present we are assisting a number of young churches in South Florida, the Caribbean, Europe and Latin America.

At least once per year we send a team to assist one or more of our church plants and also to assist in organized efforts to bring practical help, construction, medical and educational to people in need. We encourage our members to participate in these “short-tem mission trips” by going, giving and praying. Many of our present congregation have gone on trips or have joined in by giving and praying.

Worship:

Gathering week by week to sing and celebrate God's grace, to pray and meditate on God's truth does at times seem like a sacrifice. The experience of joining with a congregation of people to center ourselves on truth, beauty and goodness and to give ourselves to God is...well...nice but is it really the best way to spend our time and energies, especially when there are so many pressing needs all around us?

Lutheran scholar Marva Dawn reflected on this "efficiency dilemma", in a book titled, *The Royal Waste of Time*. When we add up all the time and energy that goes into a worship service (e.g. travel expenses, dressing up, lost wages, salaries for those who lead the service, air conditioning and building upkeep, etc.) it all seems sort of extravagant. And this is how God wants it! That book title says it all: it's the worship paradox, *the royal waste of time*! God calls us to "lose our lives" in Him. It's a weekly, vivid reminder that all our frantic "doing" to save the world and manage all the details and contingencies of our lives is just not enough. What we really need is God. So, we stop and give Him our attention and He meets us and sings over us and has joy in us (Zephaniah 3:17). "Wasting" our time, effort, money and attention turns out to be the most truly efficient, beautiful re-orientation of our thinking. The central paradox of the Christian life is reenacted every week, *"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."* (Matthew 16:25)

In worship we make God important. It has to be costly and when it is, then that central paradox becomes activated in our lives. We come away changed and filled to serve others in humility and boldness.

A Final Encouragement:

Someone has said,

"The strength of any organization is largely determined by the degree to which the average member of that organization understands, believes in and supports that organization's basic policies and values".

That's a mouthful but it does point out the need for us all to be "on the same page". We hope you will deeply reflect on our declared values and that you will be able to support them wholeheartedly. We're convinced that the strength and future thriving of God's work here depends on it.