

## Our Vision

City Church is a radically welcoming community on a journey towards Jesus, joining him in the renewal of all things.

## Our Mission

We hear and respond to Jesus's call towards wholeness.

This is how we live out our vision:

- **Radically Welcoming Community:** Jesus invites people of every race, gender, orientation, ability, class, religious background, and moral history to his communion table. As we come to that table each week, we seek to build a diverse community, centered around the person of Jesus. All are welcome and valued here.
- **Journey Towards Jesus:** Jesus stands at the center of our community, and we are all on a journey towards him. We work to create safe spaces for people to move toward Jesus at their own pace and with their own questions.
- **Renewal of all Things:** The work of Jesus on earth was to heal and restore that which was distorted and damaged. As a church we are called to join with him in continuing that work in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities. Our response to his call is to serve our communities in thoughtful and practical ways.

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## Some Practical Theology

### Part One - How does a radically diverse community hold together?

One of the big challenges to holding our diverse community together comes from how we each understand the bible, so we've had to do a lot of thinking about the place the scriptures hold in our church.

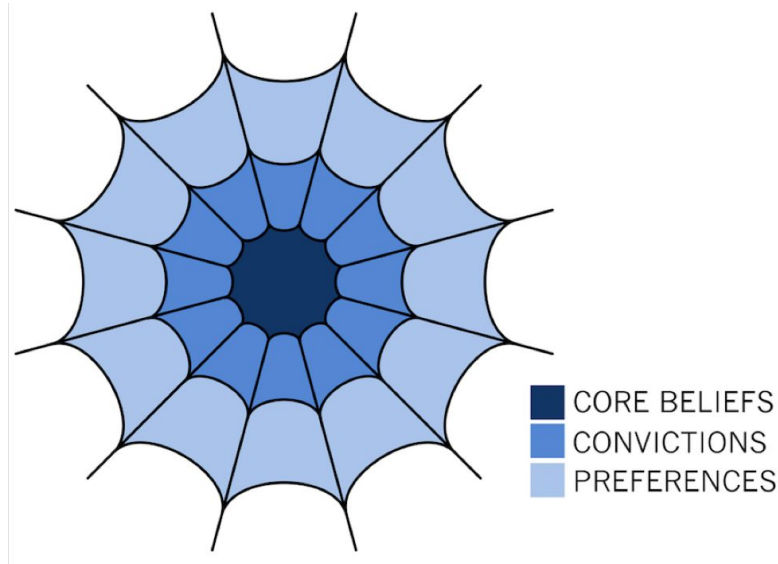
We love the scriptures and hold them to be the inspired, true, authoritative word of God. As we read, study, teach, and try to follow the bible, we realize that we must take care and thought in sorting through the wide range of material it contains.

In particular, we take note of variations in the bible's clarity, frequency, and perspective.

- Some things in the scriptures are clearer than others. For example, scripture clearly demonstrates that Jesus is amazing while also being cryptic about what exactly 'baptism of the dead' means.
- Some themes are mentioned far more frequently than others. For example, God's love comes up again and again while descriptions of the end times only appear a handful of times.
- Sometimes in scripture we see multiple perspectives on a single event, teaching, or story. For example, the four Gospels recounting the ministry of Jesus, Genesis 1 & 2 telling the creation story, or the numerous passages addressing different approaches to eating food sacrificed to idols.

We value scripture deeply and at the same time recognize its complexity. Scripture exists to illuminate Jesus. As we gather around the Jesus revealed in Scripture, we find ourselves as a community holding to a few core beliefs. We hold these core beliefs in common while also embracing diversity around less central beliefs.

We picture this approach as a kind of web:



Core beliefs, in the center, are the distilled essence of the Christian faith. Preferences sit at the outside of the web and frequently manifest as cultural preferences with regard to religious practice. For example, does your church use an organ or a guitar and drum set for worship? Does the pastor wear robes or jeans?

But the web illustrates it's not just preferences that sit outside of our non-negotiable core beliefs. There is also a middle layer of important beliefs that are what the Apostle Paul called 'disputable matters' (see [Romans 14](#)). These:

1. don't involve a matter of essential Christian teaching such as we find in the historical creeds like the Apostles' Creed or Nicene Creed;
2. bring two or more biblical truths into dynamic tension, like mercy-judgment, law-grace, or free will-predestination, so that people who disagree can make reasonable appeals to Scripture;
3. cause faithful Christians to take different views on the issue.

### **The way we discuss and even disagree about convictions matters.\***

Christians continue to differ on a number of key ideas. One of the distinctives of City Church of Long Beach is that we live in and embrace that tension. Our diversity is not merely socioeconomic, ethnic, or generational; it is also theological. We value diverse theological perspectives and the way they challenge us to follow Jesus well, to learn intentional listening, to practice authentic love, and to develop deep thought.

\*City Church developed this approach through a Study Team that spent 18 months working through a curriculum including these pieces from [Brene Brown](#), [John Calvin](#), [Ken Wilson](#), and [Susan Scott](#). If you'd like to learn more about it, one of our pastors, Bill White, wrote [a blog about](#)

[the Study Team experience](#) (that team was originally tasked with discerning our approach to LGBTQ people in the church, but the scope expanded far beyond that question).

## Part Two - What are our Core Beliefs?

The Jesus-centered nature of our faith is captured in Christianity's oldest creed - the Apostle's Creed. The Apostles' Creed is the earliest summary of what the ancient church believed, and it has been tested by the church worldwide through long conversations across the centuries. In its very structure, we see the centrality of Jesus - nine of its seventeen lines, nestled right in the heart of the creed, articulate our understanding of him. This is a statement of what we believe, hold most dear, and practice. Beyond this creed, we recognize that we have more questions than answers.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
on the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic\* Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

\*that is, the church across all times and places

## Part Three: How do we live this out?

Every church has to live into its convictions, not just its core beliefs. So, like all churches, we have practices that express our convictions. While recognizing the diversity of perspectives within the church and always being open to conversation, we still have common practices when it comes to how we do church.

In light of our vision to be *a radically welcoming community on a journey towards Jesus, joining him in the renewal of all things*, here are some of the practical ways we live out our convictions towards that end:

- We express our convictions about being a covenantal community by baptizing both children and adults.
- We serve communion weekly, and all are invited to the table whose hearts have turned towards

Jesus and who want to take a step closer to him - regardless of where they are starting from, their spiritual background or moral failures.

- We intentionally meet in homes, coffee shops, and breweries, and we gather on Sundays in a local school auditorium, reminding us that the church is not a building but a relational community.
- We support both global and local mission, with an emphasis on the Wrigley neighborhood and particularly Lafayette Elementary School, where we worship on Sundays.
- We cultivate our church's leadership to reflect the diversity of our neighborhood and Long Beach in general.
- We select our leaders according to their character, competence, calling, capacity, and fit, gladly welcoming people regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation into all aspects of church life and leadership.
- We practice regular reading and reflection on the bible in our Sunday teachings, our group life, and the [daily devotions](#) we create and distribute.

If this sounds like the kind of community you have been seeking, we would love to go on this journey with you!