

Pastor Steve Scrivener: Theological Commitments & Priorities in Ministry

Theological commitments

My doctrinal commitment and church practice would be substantially in line with the [1689 \(Reformed\) Baptist Confession of Faith](#). Specifically:

- a) *All the historic truths of Christianity*, for instance as laid out in the [FIEC Statement of Faith](#).
- b) *Evangelical* (proclaiming Jesus as the one and only Saviour and Lord and following the Word of the Lord, the Bible – all of which is God’s word of truth that clearly teaches us all we need to about faith in Christ and Christian living).
- c) *Doctrines of grace* (evangelistic “five point Calvinist” – God saves and keeps his chosen people for his glory, and Christ the Saviour is to be proclaimed to all people, as the means by which God calls his elect to be saved).
- d) *Baptist* (baptism is for believers as soon as possible after conversion, and is usually by immersion) and *open communion* (the Lord’s Supper is open to all believers).
- e) *Church independency* (not being under a denomination structure as each church is directly led by the Lord through his word by the Spirit, with gospel based churches interdependence and co-operation).
- f) *Church government by elders / overseers / leaders, supported by deacons / servants / assistant leaders* who are servants of the Word and the church. Important matters that affect the church life are brought to church meetings, where decisions and prayerfully and wisely made by seeking a majority consensus.
- g) *The ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit* and the continuing gifts of the Spirit to build up the church are essential. Specifically:
 - there is one Spirit baptism into union with the risen Lord at conversion, and then we have an ongoing need of the filling/enabling of the Holy Spirit;
 - apostles and prophecy (in its usual meaning of giving God’s inspired message) were for the foundation of the New Covenant church, with miracles confirming this (though the Spirit of the Lord can give fresh application of Scripture and may prompt us in line with Scripture, and we can pray expectantly for our sovereign God to work in power – his ancient touch has lost none of its power);
 - tongues are praise of God in a foreign language and are always to be translated in public worship.
 - and people are use their God given spiritual gifts to build up the church.

- h) *Post-tribulation and optimistic amillennialism* (Christ comes visibly at the end of the gospel age, that is the millennium, after he wins his many people from all the nations; and when many Gentiles are converted, many will be converted from Israel and then there is the final great tribulation / persecution. After Christ returns he will judge the world and bring a new heavens and earth for his people. NB the Biblical truth to stress is to be ready for the Lord's return, and there is room for differences amongst Christians around this.)
- i) *Hell* is where unbelievers experience God's wrath, in eternal conscious torment – God takes no pleasure in this and wants us to lovingly warn people about the judgment to come.
- j) *Complementarian* (men and women are equally made in the image of God and equally saved so they have equal value and dignity, but Church leadership and preaching [Elders / Pastors] are God-ordained male roles, whilst women with their distinctive God-given helper and caring nature can be actively involved in all other areas of church life).
- k) There are *Biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage* that need to be carefully applied, on a case by case basis.
- l) *Homosexual practice is a sin*, which can be forgiven and resisted in Christ. Those who battle with same-sex temptations, like all of us who battle with other temptations, are to be welcomed and supported in living a life of purity with Christ's help.
- m) *Genesis is true history* including seven day (24 hour) creation and the creation of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman (though this is not a belief that *must* be accepted to be a Christian).
- n) *The Lord's Day* (Sunday) is now the God-ordained day for rest from work, worship and deeds of mercy and practical love and witness.

Priorities in ministry

Working together with a leadership team, who encourage every member ministry, I see my core roles as 4 P's and 4 E's (which overlap in practice):

- *Praying, Preaching, Pastoring and Presiding (leading);*
- *Evangelising, Equipping, Entrusting (passing on the gospel baton), and Exemplifying (being an example – a man of God).*

These are spelt out in more detail below.

- a) *Working at my own walk with the Lord*, including having daily times of prayer, and seeking to be Christ-like as I fight against my own sinful nature, the devil and the world's ungodly values, in the strength Christ provides.
- b) *Reaching out to today's lost people* with the good news of Christ, by any suitable way, wherever we can, in words that can be understood, including:
 - in church ministry both bringing people in and going out to people including social care with sharing of the Lord;
 - regularly giving specific gospel messages (with all the variety of the Bible and answering unbeliever's questions);
 - using the New International Version of the Bible (NIV, 1984 edition – before the "inclusive" editions), whilst comparing with other versions (and usually following the Greek text that underlies the NKJV).
 - running enquirers courses (such as *Christianity Explored & Identity*);
 - seeking to ensure church publicity, web sites, church services and activities, buildings, etc, connect with today's people; and
 - through conversations with individuals, prayer, singing preaching and training, encourage believers: that they are witnesses and missionaries wherever they are; that the Lord is with them, and will help them to boldly use what they know of the Lord, with the people the Lord places them with, to move unbelievers onto the next step in their journey to becoming Christians.
- c) *Encouraging that we are to practically do good to all people*, especially the family of God – without love we are nothing; by our love one for another the world will know we are the disciples of the Lord of love; keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; and be forbearing and forgiving.
- d) *Ongoing discipleship* – radically following the Lord, in the whole of life being under the Lordship of Christ; being grounded in Christ and His Word; growing together in being transformed more into the likeness of Christ; and developing our personal walk with the Lord through prayer and worship, feeding on the Bible and serving the Lord.
- e) *Teaching and applying God's Word in a variety of settings* – Sunday preaching (especially by preaching through Bible books); teaching with interaction; having small groups and one-to-ones; using DVDs; in personal conversations; in pastoral care, etc.. Not being afraid to speak, when needed, about false

teachings, errors and sins, within the context of a positive teaching ministry that builds up people in the faith and godliness.

- f) *The focus of pastoral counselling is pointing people to the Lord and his Word*, not necessarily solving all of people's problems. And I am a sinner too who needs the same grace of Christ to change, as I seek to help others to change more into his likeness. As a pastor I see my pastoral care role, in conjunction with any other elders/pastoral staff, as: getting to know people and caring spiritually and practically for them, especially by responding to their emergencies (such as someone being in hospital or a death), responding to their struggles (such as depression or relationship difficulties) and praying for all the flock.
- g) *Having a pastoral care team* who can help in providing practical care, encouragement and in visiting people (including those needing ongoing care, such as the elderly) when they can share the Lord's Word, pray and take communion together.
- h) *Encouraging that pastoral care is done in a variety of ways by the whole church* – pastoral care is not just *visiting* people but involves: talking when we naturally meet each other (especially at church activities and groups and in our different levels of friendship); practically caring for one another; talking on the phone; writing / cards / Emailing / texting; and praying with and for one another – all the church are to be involved in this kind of pastoral care.
- i) *Team ministry* – leading a leadership team who work together in overseeing, leading and caring for the church and who care and pray for one another.
- j) *Every member ministry* – *preparing* all of God's people for their own works of service, including encouraging using their God-given abilities to build up the body of Christ in love.
- k) *Growing gospel-workers and church leaders* including pastor-teachers, evangelists and elders, and *therefore* having and mentoring apprentices and assistant/trainee pastors and funding their part-time and full-time training.
- l) *Prayer matters* – we are to regularly come together in dependence on our mighty Lord.
- m) *Contemporary worship* – mixing the best of the old and the new psalms, hymns and songs in an informal and reverent style including: led-freedom (such as open prayer); using a variety of instruments to assist our heartfelt singing to the Lord; and an appropriate use of technology such as projectors to help, not distract us.
- n) *Appropriate Church discipline* – seeking to restore someone back to the Lord by mutual admonition, loving challenge and if the person is divisive, or denies a key Bible doctrine, or is clearly disobedient to the Lord, and refuses to repent and change, by no longer involving them in serving in church life and communion (though they are welcome to come to church services and there maybe ongoing pastoral contact).
- o) *Helping smaller churches and working together with other gospel-based churches*, for instance in special events, training and missions and joint prayer meetings.
- p) *Supporting world-mission*, especially to *unreached* peoples, and including supporting and sending missionaries.