

In a day and age in which churches are discarding their distinctive label, we are reluctant to do so. Just as one would go to the store and desire to know what they are purchasing, we see the importance of letting people of our community know what they are getting when they come through our doors. We are thankful for our Baptist heritage represented by men and women who have stood for the truth of God's Word over the centuries. Yes, there are Baptist churches that have caused us to hang our heads in shame, but the overarching belief and practice of Baptists is where we stand. We are not a part of any Baptist denomination; we do not believe we are a part of any trail of Baptist ancestry; nor do we believe that we are the only ones who are truly going to heaven due to our Baptist heritage.

We are simply “**Baptist**” by conviction for the following reasons:

### **B – Biblical Authority**

We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, holding them up as the sole authority for our faith and practice, and the literal interpretation of such. This fundamental belief necessitates personal separation from “the world” as well as ecclesiastical (church) separation from those who do not adhere to the Scriptures in verbal belief or practice.

### **A – Autonomy of the local church**

Each local congregation is a complete entity within itself; there should be no denominational organization which has authority over the local congregation; each congregation is to determine and govern its own affairs. This distinguishes us as independent.

### **P – Priesthood of believers**

Through the sacrifice of Christ, each believer has direct access into the presence of God without a human priest. Christ has bridged the gap between man and God.

### **T – Two ordinances**

- Baptism by immersion for individuals who have personally repented of their sin and put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (infants cannot make this decision).

- The Lord's Table with the cup and bread symbolizing the shed blood and broken body of our Lord on the behalf of our sins.

### **I – Individual soul liberty**

It means religious freedom. No person should be forced to believe something. Baptists have never insisted that others believe as they do.

### **S – Saved church membership**

Church membership is an affirmation to the beliefs and practices of the local church for the sake of ministry and accountability. Those presenting themselves for church membership should have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, having been saved from their sin, and having become a part of the body of Christ.

### **T – Two Officers**

- Pastor – also termed in scripture as a “bishop” or an “elder” - the terms describing the work and responsibility of the Pastor.

- Deacon – for those who are to “serve” and assist in the spiritual leadership of the church. (Other church officers may be designated, but the above are the only two which are listed in the New Testament).

### **S – Separation of Church and State**

The Church should be free from State interference into the spiritual work and conduct of the Church; the church should not desire to control the State in the conduct of its affairs; the individual Christian should be a loyal and productive citizen, exercising the freedoms and responsibilities granted by the State. (Note: in the colonial days of America, Baptists had a major influence on the adoption of the principle of what is now known as the Separation of Church and State.)