

This I Believe

This I Believe is designed to give your bishop, the Commission on Ministry and Doctrine, and the local congregation a basic sense of your theological understandings and your compatibility with Brethren in Christ doctrine.

Please choose under each title one or two statements which most nearly characterize your current position. Feel free to add brief clarifying comments in the space provided.

Biblical Inspiration

- I believe the Bible is a collection of inspired writings that include many literary genres including myths or embellishments appropriate to its historical setting.
- I believe the Bible to be divinely inspired writings and the authoritative Word of God and though it may contain small human errors these do not diminish its authority for the believer.
- I believe the Bible is the inerrant word of God in its original autographs.
- I believe the Bible is a collection of human authored writings that introduce us to God (as Trinity) but is not necessarily inspired by God.
- I am not sure what I believe about the Bible.
- I believe it best to describe the Bible this way:

Biblical Interpretation

- I believe the Scriptures are best interpreted as a meta-narrative of our faith tradition.
- I believe Jesus Christ is the fullest revelation of God and central to the interpretation of Scripture.
- I believe the Old Testament while instructive has little relevance to our time.
- I believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible.
- I believe it is important to determine the writer's primary purpose, the cultural setting, and the literary genre when interpreting the Bible.
- I am not sure what I believe about biblical interpretation.
- I believe it best to describe biblical interpretation in this way:

God

- I believe God is only one God and although not understood equally by all faiths is ultimately worshipped by all those who believe in one true God.
- I believe God is one true God revealed in three persons as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and uniquely understood and worshipped by Christians.
- I believe God is a mystery that cannot be understood by humans.
- I believe God is revealed to all people in a way they can understand through all of the religions, world views and spiritual perspectives shared across the world.
- I am not sure what I believe about God.
- I believe it is best to describe God this way:

Creation

- I do not believe we can know for certainty about the specifics of creation.
- I believe God created everything in a longer term process, as indicated in Genesis but not seven literal days.
- I believe God created everything in six days as described in Genesis.
- I believe God used evolution to create all that we see, including humans.
- I believe the creation stories are spiritual stories about the state of humanity but do not represent actual events.
- I am not sure what I believe about creation.
- I believe it is best to describe creation this way:

Jesus

- I believe Jesus is fully human and fully God as the “Word of God made flesh”, lived a completely perfect life and uniquely reveals God.
- I believe Jesus is a child of God like all people and revealed God in a significant way like many other great spiritual leaders.
- I believe Jesus is divine (or “God with us”) and yet also lived as a human being, made mistakes and had human struggles like all people have.

- I believe Jesus is a man with a powerful message but never imagined that he was somehow God.
- I am not sure what I believe about Jesus.
- I believe it is best to describe Jesus this way:

Miracles of Jesus

- I believe Jesus used techniques of other magicians of his time to capture audiences' attention and help communicate his message.
- I believe Jesus did not perform miracles but those stories communicate spiritual truths.
- I believe Jesus performed some miracles but some of the stories were the disciples' perception (like Jesus walking on water).
- I believe Jesus performed all of the miracles recorded in the Gospels.
- I am not sure what I believe about his miracles.
- I believe it is best to describe miracles this way:

Death of Jesus

- I believe the primary way to view the meaning of Jesus' death was to appease the wrath of God as a propitiation for humanity's sin.
- I believe Jesus' death was a symbol of truth but was not necessary for God to forgive humanity.
- I believe there are several ways to describe the meaning of Jesus' death including that it reveals the depth of God's love and was an expression of God's grace and forgiveness.
- I believe the cross accomplished God's victory over Satan and the powers of evil.
- I believe Jesus' death was a political action that has taken on religious meaning.
- I am not sure what I believe about Jesus' death on the cross.
- I believe it is best to describe Jesus death this way:

Resurrection of Jesus

- I believe Jesus was resurrected in a physical body after being dead three days.
- I believe Jesus' resurrection is a story of hope but that he did not actually rise from the dead.
- I believe Jesus' resurrection fits in with many myths and stories shared in that historical context.
- I believe Jesus was resurrected in a spiritual body after being dead three days.
- I am not sure what I believe about Jesus' resurrection.
- I believe it is best to describe the resurrection this way:

Personal Salvation

- I believe a person must confess Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior to be saved and all those who do not do this are under God's eternal judgment.
- I believe God will save all those who commit to Jesus and those who would have committed to Jesus if they were given a chance (e.g. infants who die, those who never had a chance to hear the message but would have responded, those with disabilities, etc.)
- I believe God will save those he wants to save but the only way to be certain is to commit to Jesus.
- I believe God will surprise many people and we can only know for ourselves if we are right with God.
- I believe all people of faith from all religions will be saved by God.
- I believe all people will be saved in the end.
- I am not sure what I believe about salvation.
- I believe it is best to describe salvation this way:

Choice

- I believe God must draw a person by his Spirit before they can respond with a free will.
- I believe God has elected some to salvation and some to damnation for his glory
- I believe that God's sovereign election and human free will co-exist together and is a mystery that cannot be ultimately explained.

I believe that humans have free will and they must choose to respond to God’s invitation of salvation

I am not sure what I believe about choice.

I believe it is best to describe choice this way:

Baptism

I believe baptism is a historic ritual of the Christian church that an individual can choose to do as they feel is appropriate to their own spiritual journey.

I believe baptism is a sign of a believer’s personal faith and is something a person must choose to do personally.

I believe baptism is an archaic practice that no longer has significance or meaning for those who follow Jesus.

I believe that baptism is a sign of God’s covenant that applies equally to infants or adults who are baptized within a household of faith.

I am not sure what I believe about baptism.

I believe it is best to describe baptism this way:

Life-change

I believe that Christians are sinners saved by grace and will always struggle with a life of sin and failure.

I believe Christians can reach the point of living essentially a sinless life of entire sanctification and holiness.

I believe Christians can and should grow to spiritual maturity so that over time the tendency to sin is replaced with a pattern of God-honoring choices.

I believe Christians can reach a point of total commitment to Christ which provides empowerment to live a godly life.

I don’t know what to believe about life-change for those who follow Jesus.

I believe it is best to describe life change this way:

Ministry of the Holy Spirit

- I believe the Holy Spirit through time has been revealing a fuller revelation of divine truth.
- I believe the Holy Spirit’s power and presence are demonstrated in the transformation of human hearts and minds.
- I believe the Holy Spirit sanctifies believers in a second definite work of grace.
- I believe the Holy Spirit is the still, small voice in our conscience and the primary means by which God reveals his will to us.
- I believe the Holy Spirit provides a sense of adoption into God’s family, but we are responsible to work out our salvation by obedience to the Word of God.
- I believe the Holy Spirit is the evidence that the eschatological age has dawned and the guarantee of its consummation.
- I am not sure what I believe about the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- I believe it is best to describe the ministry of the Holy Spirit this way:

Gifts of the Spirit

- I believe that the gift of tongues is the initial evidence of the infilling of the Holy Spirit and all believers should speak in tongues at some point in their life.
- I believe the Holy Spirit is an expression of God’s living presence in the world that flows through all people and living beings in the world.
- I believe the Holy Spirit gives gifts to all believers including gifts of tongues, healing, and prophecy and may be a part of a Christian community.
- I believe the primary evidence of the Holy Spirit is various expressions of love and the fruit of the Spirit.
- I believe the Holy Spirit empowers believers to serve God but God no longer gives the gift of tongues, healing or prophecy.
- I am not sure what I believe about the Holy Spirit.

I believe it is best to describe Holy Spirit this way:

Kingdom of God

- The kingdom of God was established by Jesus and is now embodied in the church.
- The kingdom of God is fully present in all those who live by its ideals.
- Jesus inaugurated the kingdom of God on earth to be fully revealed at the end of this present age. It is both present and future.
- The kingdom of God will be established at the time of the Millennium.
- The kingdom of God is transnational, distinct from any earthly kingdom or state, and calls for our prior loyalty.
- I am not sure what I believe about the kingdom of God.
- I believe it is best to describe the kingdom in this way.

Church

- I believe the church includes those who are truly committed to Jesus, follow Biblical truth and are members only of those traditions/churches that are within the Evangelical fellowship.
- I believe the church is every gathering of believers who live and share the message of Jesus.
- I believe the church includes all Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians worldwide.
- I believe the church is those who are truly committed to Jesus and follow Biblical truth regardless of which Christian tradition/church they are members.
- I believe the church is all those people who follow Jesus and cannot be defined by any institution, creed or theology.
- I am not sure what I believe about the church.
- I believe it is best to describe the church this way:

End Times

- I believe Jesus will return but we do not know when.
- I believe the book of Revelation refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and that Jesus will return at some point in the future but we do not know when he will return.
- I believe that Jesus lives with the church and as the church changes the entire world at some point in the future all of humanity will follow Jesus and this will represent Jesus' return.
- I believe there will be a rapture of believers to heaven, a time of tribulation across the world, and a 1000 year reign of Christ to follow.
- I do not know what I believe about end times.
- I believe it is best to describe the end times this way:

Judgment

- I believe at God's final judgment God will save who he wills including those who follow Jesus as well as those who did not have a chance to know about Jesus but would have if they had a chance.
- I believe at God's judgment everyone will ultimately be saved and live forever with God because it is not God's heart to see anyone lost.
- I believe at God's final judgment people who reject Jesus will be sent to hell but those who believe in Jesus will live with God forever.
- I do not know how God will judge at the end of time but he will get it right.
- I am not sure what I believe about God's final judgment.
- I believe it is best to describe judgment this way:

Hell

- I believe hell is where sinners will be tormented for eternity.
- I believe hell is where people die and stop existing.
- I believe hell was a symbolic image used and so should not be interpreted literally.
- I believe hell is a place of purification after death where people can have a change of heart and be restored to God.

- I do not know what I believe about hell.
- I believe it is best to describe hell this way:

Eternity

- I believe the idea of heaven or a new earth are symbolic images and do not explain exactly what eternity will be like.
- I believe people will live with God in heaven forever.
- I believe God will make a new heaven and a new earth and that people will live on this new earth.
- I am not sure what I believe about eternity.
- I believe it is best to describe eternity this way:

Enemies

- I believe Jesus' teaching about peace does not apply to dealing with family, community or national threats and Christians are free to defend their loved ones or their nation as necessary.
- I believe that Jesus teaching about loving enemies not only applies on the personal/interpersonal level for the follower of Christ, but also to their role/responsibilities within family, community and nation.
- I believe Jesus' teaching about loving enemies was intended on an inter-personal or personal level and should not be taken to apply to one's role/responsibilities within family, community or nation.
- I believe Jesus' teaching about loving enemies means Christians should not use destructive force or kill their enemies even if it means dying.
- I believe Christians working for the government can use force, even lethal force, but should not do so personally, outside their official role.
- I am not sure what I believe about violence as a follower of Jesus.
- I believe it is best to describe this teaching of Jesus this way:

Peace

- I believe peace and peacemaking requires advocacy and compassionate engagement but must stop short of pressuring governments to align with kingdom values
- I believe peace and peacemaking requires active engagement of government through advocacy, protests and if necessary civil disobedience for those most marginalized or impacted by injustice
- I believe peace and peacemaking most often requires withdrawal from conflict and living a separate life
- I believe peace and peacemaking is an ideal to pursue but must be balanced by the reality that war, fighting and broken relationships are a part of a fallen world and Christians must at times participate in these
- I am not sure what I believe about peace and peacemaking.
- I believe it is best to describe peace/peacemaking in this way:

Wealth

- I believe all Christians should be wealthy if they obey God because God promises to bless everyone who obeys his word.
- I believe Christians can be wealthy and should practice generosity.
- I believe Christians of all levels of wealth should practice radical simplicity and generosity.
- I believe Christians should abandon all forms of wealth and simply live simple lives among the poor.
- I believe Christians should not judge each other about money but simply follow their own convictions.
- I am not sure what to believe about Christians and their use of money.
- I believe it is best to describe wealth this way:

Gender

- I believe both complementary and egalitarian approaches to gender roles can be used by God but it is defined by cultural context and what best advances the Gospel

- I believe God created men and women to be egalitarian in their roles, where men and women serve in leadership equally according to their gifts and abilities
- I believe both complementary and egalitarian approaches to gender roles are legitimate approaches and should be decided upon by each person or couple based on their own convictions
- I believe God created men and women to complement each other through serving in different roles within the church and family, particularly as men give spiritual leadership in both church and family and as women play supportive roles to that leadership
- I am not sure what I believe about gender roles.
- I believe it is best to describe gender roles this way:

Marriage

- I believe marriage is a covenant that should only be maintained as long as there is genuine love between the people.
- I believe marriage is a covenant between two committed people for life regardless of their genders.
- I believe marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman for life.
- I believe marriage is a historic cultural practice that can be defined differently depending on the culture or context.
- I do not know what I believe about marriage.
- I believe it is best to describe marriage this way:

Divorce

- I believe divorce is only acceptable to God if there is adultery, abuse or abandonment.
- I believe divorce is acceptable to God if the marriage has failed and there is no hope of true reconciliation.
- I believe divorce can be a healthy choice when it serves the best interests of everyone.
- I believe divorce is never acceptable to God.
- I believe divorce is only acceptable to God if there is adultery.

I believe divorce is not God’s best but it does happen a lot and we need to show people grace regardless of their reasons.

I do not know what I believe about divorce.

I believe it is best to describe divorce this way:

Singleness

I believe this is not an issue for the church to address but rather to leave it to personal convictions

I believe marriage and singleness have equal value within community

I believe singleness is God’s highest ideal for people based on Jesus’ example and New Testament teaching

I believe all marriage is God’s highest ideal for people based on the creation account of Adam and Eve

I am not sure what I believe about singleness.

I believe it is best to describe singleness this way:

Sexuality

I believe that people are born male or female and are designed by God for sex within heterosexual marriage and that anything other than this is sin and falls short of God’s design for people.

I believe that all people are broken sexually and this may influence how they experience their own sexual identity or their sexual desires.

I believe that genetics significantly influence our sexuality and so we need to embrace all sexuality regardless of their sexual identity or sexual orientation as an extension of how God created them.

I believe sexuality is a very personal matter and can only be discussed on a case by case basis.

I do not know what I believe about sexuality.

I believe it is best to describe sexuality this way:

Abortion & Euthanasia

- I believe this is a personal matter and needs to be assessed on a case by case basis using wisdom and grace.
- I believe life begins at conception and carries through to when the body dies of natural causes.
- I believe each person has a basic right to decide about their own body, whether that is a woman who is pregnant or someone who has a terminal illness and wants to bring their own life to an end.
- I believe these are complicated issues and that there are no clear answers in the Bible.
- I do not know what I believe.
- I believe it is best to describe abortion and/or euthanasia this way:
