
Book of Faith and Order Presentation

Titus 1:1-5; 10-2:2¹

Russ Kennedy, for the Elders of Clearcreek Chapel

Titus 1:1-5

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; to Titus, my true child in a common faith.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—

Titus 1:10-2:2

For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. [2] But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

The Importance of Truth and Order

All through the New Testament we hear the importance of truth, of sound doctrine, of **the** faith. There is a body of truth, derived from the Scriptures, which are not the Scripture, but are to be believed, taught and passed on. This body of truth, the faith, is derived from and is subservient to the Scripture. It must never rule over the Scripture.

However, the Apostles still affirmed the necessity and importance of the statements of truth. Titus, who was being sent to minister in Crete was sent with the Word and this Sound Doctrine. Crete was a corrupt, carnal, lascivious culture. The churches needed to be fortified against error in belief and in practice. So Paul sent Titus to preach the Word and

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the teach sound doctrine. If and when necessary, error in belief and behavior was to be confronted, corrected and rebuked, publicly and sharply if necessary. They were challenged that disobedience effectively was a denial of the truth from and about God. Their conduct denied their confession. Doctrine, truth, the faith was to be taught because it brings together belief and behavior. God's people meeting together in churches must believe and bow to the truth.

God's people meeting together must also work out many things as practical wisdom. The Bible does not set forth a manual for doing church. It establishes principles and precepts. But the regular gathered life a body of believers requires many wisdom decisions. Paul speaks of this under the term, "to set in order." The gathering of believers was to be brought into order by appointing elders, preaching the Word and carrying out all the Lord had commanded. But that would need to be worked out by the believers in Crete. Some things had to be a part of the Order. They could not change the qualifications for an elder, for example. But when, how and where they met are not addressed as in the same way. The process of qualifying, selecting, appointing elders is not lined out. The public installation ("ordination") was. So as Titus was going around throughout Crete, he was preaching sound doctrine, correcting wrong belief and behavior, even strongly, and was setting the churches in order.

This all guides us as we are a gathered body in our day, in our world in our culture. Throughout history, churches have sought to have a body of truth, the *Faith* and accepted guidelines for the practice of the church, the *Order*. In the west, these were often called a *Constitution*. With the easy confusion with political and legal spheres, we have chosen not to call ours that. We have used the older (and frankly, British) title, *The Chapel Book of Faith and Order*. It is often referred to by the Elders as, you guessed it, the BoFO.

The Chapel *Book of Faith and Order*

This morning it is my privilege, on behalf of the Elders, to present to you the Revised *Chapel Book of Faith and Order*. While it may seem strange to do this in a Sunday morning gathering, we thought it was important enough to present the revisions to as many as possible. If you are a guest this morning, this is not our normal way. We have just completed a series on *Union with Christ* and next Sunday will begin in Genesis.

What it is...

The *Chapel Book of Faith and Order* is that which governs us. It summarizes our core truths which are expanded on in the *Truths We Teach*. It establishes our distinctives through our Mission, Vision and Purpose Statements. It binds us together in a Covenant we make with one another. And it gives policies and procedures, some simply and expression of the commands of the Scripture and the rest drawn from the Scriptures and applied through wisdom. The Elders have been responsible to write and present the *Book of Faith and Order* to the congregation.

Why it is important...

This document is important because it gives a fixed reference for our practice. This document governs us practically. It is our understanding of how to be together as church in our place, world, culture. It organizes our governance into written form. It

forms the principle and pattern for how we govern as Elders and how we run ministries.

How we treat it...

This document is under the authority of the Scriptures. While we have tried to be as careful as possible to be sure it does not contradict the Scriptures, if at any point we as Elders find that to be true, we will obey the Scriptures first and foremost. We will bring the needed Revision to the church for affirmation. So, this is a part of the faith and it is our order; but, it is subservient to the clear teaching of the Scripture.

Its history...

This is the third version of the Chapel's document. It was written at our founding. In 1999-2000, it was heavily revised into the version you are familiar with. This past year, the Elders authorized a review and revision of the *Truths We Teach* and the *Book of Faith and Order*. I was tasked with the TWT and Pastor Dale Evans with the BoFO. We completed and have authorized the new *Truths We Teach*. In April, at our annual Elder's Retreat, we reviewed, edited and approved the revised *Book of Faith and Order*.

Revision Purpose Statement

The Elders regularly consult the Chapel *Book of Faith and Order* in our governance of the Chapel. Over the years we have noted some deficiencies and some desired changes to our *Book of Faith and Order*. At our April Elders Retreat, we completed that work.

Our purposes in revising the *Book of Faith and Order* were as follows:

- To combine some sections that were redundant.
- To simplify some sections to make them clearer.
- To simplify the Chapel Membership Covenant.
- To make the Mission and Vision statements more balanced in their language.
- To revise some sections to bring them in line with our current desired practice.

Process for Adoption

First, we are to make a presentation of the Revised *Book of Faith and Order* which is taking place this morning.

Then, you as the congregation have the opportunity to review it from August 25th until September 29th.

One copy per family and single has been placed in your mailbox and should be in your hands now.

Time will be devoted in each flock meeting for the next 4 weeks for your questions.

The Elders will review in September Elder's Meetings, make any revisions deemed necessary and publish them via church-wide email.

The Revised *Book of Faith and Order* will be presented at the Annual Congregational meeting on September 29 in the evening gathering. The rules for its adoption are in the current *Book of Faith and Order*. Only current, active, resident members in good standing may vote. The vote will be by signed ballot. If adopted, it will immediately be in effect.

Revisions Overview

The revisions review will be in reference to the Revised *Book of Faith and Order*. The page and paragraph numbers are keyed to the new document.

Structure Changes

There are some changes in the structure of the document. The most important are in the first section beginning on page 7.

Section 1, page 7, now is our Foundations and Purposes.

The Foundations highlights that the Scriptures alone are the final authority. They also highlight that we believe in confessing truth as members and as ministry leaders.

Section 2, page 9, now is our Faith: the Truths We Treasure.

No structure changes were made here.

Section 3, page 13, now is our Order: the Principles that Govern Us.

The Articles in this section were substantially restructured so as to be more consistent, reduce duplication and to have a better logical order. It is difficult to compare and contrast the articles in the this section with the current *Book of Faith and Order*. Articles and their sub-units are not ordered or numbered the same. Therefore, it is important to work through this Section on its own merit.

The Ordinances were placed together and are Article 2.

Membership is now Article 3. The paragraphs have reordered hopefully to be easier to understand and build on one another. The sections on Elders and Deacons now contains all the principles in regards to their respective offices.

Content Changes

There are some substantial changes in the content of the document. Let us review those.

Section 1 - Our Foundations (p. 7)

In section 1, the paragraph on the Constitution that Governs us was removed.

The purpose statements were simplified and hopefully, are a little clearer. There was no substantial change in the meaning or in what is to be affirmed.

Section 2 - Our Faith (p. 9)

There were no changes in the Truths We Treasure

Section 3 - Our Functioning (p. 13)

Order: Our Governing Principles.

Articles 1 and 2 - no substantial changes in the content.

Article 3 on Membership had some changes. (p. 14)

- 1 Definition and Function now has the language requiring affirmation of/submission to the *Book of Faith and Order* for membership.

- 4 Church Covenant (p. 15) was substantially changed. IT now reads as follows.

Humbly depending on the Holy Spirit's enabling and aiding us, and affirming The Truths We Treasure, WE COVENANT TO GLORIFY GOD by striving:

- *To live in obedience to the Scriptures by loving the Lord God with all our heart, all our souls, and all our minds; being consistent in our own study and under the ministry of the Word to extend the Lordship of Christ into all areas of our life; being faithful in our witnessing, upholding our testimony, defending the doctrines of the Word of God, and expanding the Kingdom of God.*
- *To gather regularly with one another, being faithful in exercising our spiritual gifts in loving, edifying, exhorting, rebuking, discipling, encouraging, serving, praying for, and meeting the needs of the Body of Christ; loving our wives as Christ loved the church or to submitting to our husbands; teaching and training our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; abstaining from practices harmful to our physical bodies and injurious to our testimony.*
- *To regularly attend the services of the church; being submissive to the God-ordained elders as to those who give an account for our souls; attending the ordinances of the church faithfully, approaching them in a serious, spiritual, and holy attitude; honoring the Lord in our finances in all things including regular, proportionate giving to the church; purposing that if we relocate we will, as soon as possible, unite with another church of like faith, where we can carry out the spirit of this Covenant and the principles of God's Word.*

- 5 Categories of Membership (p. 15) now has headings to clarify the resident and associate (non-resident) membership.

- 8 Corrective Discipline (p. 16-17)

Some of the sections have been revised for clarification.

Paragraph B. Personal Private Engagement is now written to allow for and encourage multiple interactions hoping and aiming for repentance and restoration. This is still a step in corrective discipline but is written to give more time and opportunity for God to work.

Paragraph E. Restoration of the Erring Member is now a single, simpler process of restoration.

Article 4 – Offices (p. 17)

1. Elders (p. 18)

The content to this section did not change. However, some paragraphs were moved to better organize the headings:

- A The Body of Elders
- B The Work of Elders
- C The Appointment of Elders

- D The Removal of Elders
- E The Roles among the Elders
- F The Meetings of the Elders
- G Financial Support of Vocational Elders

2. Deacons/Deaconesses (p. 22)

There were no organizational nor content changes made.

Articles 5 through 8 - No changes were made. (p. 23-25)

Conclusion

Just a reminder:

1. We would like to have all members present on September 29th to vote on adopting the Revised *Book of Faith and Order*.
2. You will be given time at each Flock until then to ask questions and to discuss the revisions.
3. Please take any strong concerns to your elder and discuss them with him.

We hope and pray that God will continue to give us a harmony as we seek to serve Him together.