

# The Application of the Statement of Faith across the Ministries of Shenandoah Baptist Church

## WHAT IS A STATEMENT OF FAITH?

A Statement of Faith (or Doctrinal Statement) is the central document in the formation of a local church. Churches who do not have a Statement of Faith, or have one that only nebulously affirms some nonspecific devotion to the teachings of the Bible, are usually attempting to rid themselves of “man-made traditions” and (rightly) affirm the authority of Scripture alone. Although this is a commendable motivation, the church is quickly exposed to every individual’s personal interpretations of various doctrines – which actually opens the door for the denial of Biblical authority, rather than safeguarding it. The necessary “first step” becomes the establishment of a document clearly outlining how that specific local church body reads, interprets, teaches, applies, and practices the truths of the Bible.

## WHY IS A STATEMENT OF FAITH IMPORTANT?

Shenandoah operates as an “independent” church. That is, even though we align ourselves with typical Baptist doctrine and practices (especially in the ordinances), we do not adhere to any specific confessions or creeds which are common when Christian communities formally align with a specific denomination. Since we do not submit to the oversight of a denominational board, our polity is defined by pastor and elder leadership. The pastors and elders are then beholden to the Statement of Faith, which represents the established foundational agreements about our identity as a local gathering.

## With this in mind, there are at least five purposes of the Shenandoah Statement of Faith:

1. The Statement of Faith is a foundational building block of our fellowship. (i.e. – “We believe...”)  
Meaning each statement, by beginning, “We believe” serves as a point of agreement that unites.
2. The Statement of Faith identifies who “we” are to non-believers. As non-believers are converted, we use the Statement of Faith to introduce them to basic Christian doctrine and the distinctives of our church.
3. The Statement of Faith establishes a unified approach to key doctrines by defining our doctrinal essentials, identifying organizational distinctives, and creating unified language in teaching.
4. The Statement of Faith provides theological continuity and accountability across time and ministries. This protects the church from doctrinal drift and protects the pastors and elders from the subjective interpretation and application of Scripture by those pursuing a doctrinal shift.
5. The Statement of Faith justifies our practices from a legal standpoint as we stand on the eternal truths of Scripture, rather than passively floating with every current of cultural drift.

## HOW DID WE FORM OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH?

It is important when crafting a Statement of Faith not to make it so narrow that it excludes all but a few within a very small theological position, nor so broad that it does not clearly articulate the clear distinctions which exist within Protestant orthodoxy. (These include, but are not limited to, distinctions in practice, polity, doctrine, and vision implementation.)

**The following outlines the application of our Statement of Faith across the ministries of Shenandoah Baptist Church.**

## Pastors & Elders

**Pastors and Elders must fully agree with the Statement of Faith.**

### Rationale

As those tasked with affirming leadership, defining policies, shepherding the flock, teaching the Word, and defending the doctrinal purity of the church, it is essential that each man agree, without reservation, to the Statement of Faith. This is especially important since the Elders of Shenandoah Baptist Church hold final interpretive authority on biblical meaning and application with regard to faith, doctrine, policy, practice, and discipline and Pastors are entrusted with preaching the Word of God within the context of that interpretive authority.

### Accountability

Pastors and Elders are accountable to one another and to the Statement of Faith.

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## Employees

**Employees of Shenandoah Baptist Church, Roanoke Valley Christian Schools, and Camp Eagle must fully agree with the Statement of Faith.\***

### Rationale

Those who are employed represent the ministry in all respects, and must agree with the Statement of Faith and agree to communicate the teaching positions of the church.

### Accountability

Employees are accountable to their supervisor who will oversee all aspects of their employment, including their adherence to the Statement of Faith.

*\* Some exceptions have been made for "support staff" at RVCS and Camp Eagle who are not in a "leading" or "teaching" role. Employee contracts request full agreement to the Statement of Faith. A breach of contract related to the Statement of Faith would result in termination of the contract.*

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## Deacons

**Deacons must be in general agreement with the Statement of Faith.**

### Rationale

The process of becoming a deacon requires a pastor or elder to thoroughly examine the prospective deacon (utilizing the *Leadership Interview Form*) and discuss any disagreements that might exist. The deacon will, at all times, fully support the Statement of Faith as the "teaching position" of the church and refrain from teaching or leading in any way contrary to it.

### Accountability

Deacons are accountable to the pastors and elders.

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## Committee Members

**Members of the ministry's four committees, (RVCS School Board, Camp Eagle Board, Missions Leadership Team, and Financial Management Group) must be in general agreement with the Statement of Faith.**

### Rationale

All committees work directly with a member of the pastoral staff who will examine all prospective members utilizing the *Leadership Interview Form*. Any disagreements that might exist will be examined at that time. If approved, a committee member in "general agreement" understands the Statement of Faith as the "established teaching position" of the church and should refrain from teaching or leading in any way contrary to it.

### Accountability

Committee members are accountable to their appointed pastor (or business administrator) and elders.

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## Missionaries

*Members of our missions staff fall into two categories, Sent and Partner.*

**Sent missionaries, as members of Shenandoah Baptist Church staff, must be in full agreement with the Statement of Faith.**

**Partner missionaries, serving in a partnership capacity, must be in general agreement with the Statement of Faith.**

### Rationale

While we refer to all our missionaries as members of our staff, Sent Missionaries embody that designation to the fullest capacity. They often will teach while on home assignment and are vetted by the MLT prior to their appointment almost as rigorously as pastors or elders. Therefore, they are viewed in the same light as employees regarding the requirement that they be in full agreement with the Statement of Faith.

Partner Missionaries (including Ex-patriot and National Believers) are not members of Shenandoah Baptist Church. While they assist the church in our missionary efforts, it is not required that they fully subscribe to the Statement of Faith. Any differences Partner Missionaries may have will be fully examined by the Missions Pastor, MLT, and the pastors & elders. If approved for ministry partnership, missionaries in "general agreement" understand the Statement of Faith as the "established teaching position" of the church and should refrain from teaching or leading in any way contrary to it.

### Accountability

Both Sent and Partner Missionaries will be accountable to the Missions Pastor in all areas of doctrine and practice.

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## Church Teachers & Leaders

**All Lay Leaders and Teachers within the church ministry (LifeGroup, small groups, EquipU, etc.) must be in general agreement with the Statement of Faith.**

### Rationale

All those in a leadership position will be examined by their supervising pastor utilizing the *Leadership Interview Form*. Any disagreements that might exist will be examined at that time. If approved, a teacher or leader in “general agreement” understands the Statement of Faith as the “established teaching position” of the church and should refrain from teaching or leading in any way contrary to it.

### Accountability

All teachers and leaders are accountable to the pastors and elders.

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## Church Members

**All members must be in general agreement with the Statement of Faith.**

### Rationale

Since the Statement of Faith is the basis of our fellowship, it is necessary that each member be in general agreement with the Statement of Faith. During the membership interview process, the interviewing pastor will discuss any disagreements a prospective member may have at that time. Members in “general agreement” understand the Statement of Faith as the “established teaching position” of the church and should refrain from teaching or leading in any way contrary to it.

### Accountability

All members are accountable to the pastors and elders.

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## Conclusion

**Are those who disagree with the Statement of Faith considered “outside” the faith?**

Not at all! As our mission statement outlines, our priorities are:

- ✓ The glory of God
- ✓ Making, Sending, and Multiplying  
Gospel-centered disciples of Jesus Christ
- ✓ Taking the Gospel to every person
- ✓ Establishing a church for every people group

We recognize there are *many* orthodox, Protestant believers who share the same Gospel-centered, God-glorifying priorities, but do not share all of our doctrinal or practical distinctives. We would consider all of these brothers and sisters our partners and allies in the faith, while also recognizing Shenandoah’s organizational commitment to Baptist doctrine, independent polity, and the distinct ministry practices necessary for a multi-faceted ministry.



At-A-Glance Overview:

<b>Position</b>	<b>Full Agreement</b>	<b>General Agreement</b>
<b>Pastor/Elder</b>	✓	
<b>*Employee</b>	✓	
<b>Deacon</b>		✓
<b>Committee Member</b>		✓
<b>Sent Missionary</b>	✓	
<b>Partner Missionary</b>		✓
<b>Teacher/Leader</b>		✓
<b>Church Member</b>		✓

\* See note on Page 2