

## ***Distinctives of Emmanuel Community Church***

*Delighting ourselves in the Master; devoting ourselves to His ministry.*

At the heart of who we are and what we teach are the so-called “doctrines of grace.” Synonymously, we might use the word “Reformed” to say this: we affirm that the Bible teaches that man is spiritually dead—not just dreadfully sick—and requires not just assistance from the Lord, but the gift of spiritual life itself. We believe that being saved from the divine wrath to come is purely and only an act of God’s grace such that He receives all glory from all things, in all circumstances. (1 Pet. 1:3) *That* is the gospel, the “good news” for which we live and gather together as a local church.

We have sought to pattern our fellowship from the principles of Scripture. As it has been for many Christians, so we seek to follow the example of the early church: *“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. . . . Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”* (Acts 2:42, 46-47)

1. *We are a congregation committed to learn & obey God’s Word.*

- We seek to master the doctrines of God not the devices of man.
- We give much more than lip-service to the importance of the Bible; it is the rule of our life.

*(See also Hos. 4:6; 1 Pet. 2:2)*

Without question, the preaching and teaching of the Bible as the inspired and inerrant revelation of God holds a most prominent part of our church life together. We do not buy in to the modern notion that we need deeper experiences with God; we need a deeper understanding of God which we discover in His Word, subsequently to be lived out in our experiences.

We’re committed to an expository approach to preaching the Bible. That means that the message—as well as its constituent parts—comes directly from the Biblical text. Though most of our preaching is in the form of a book study—from both Old and New Testaments—at times we will develop a thematic, theological, or character study.

In all forms and venues, we want to affirm that the Scriptures are alive and active (Heb. 4:12). We want to meet the Living Lord. We want the truths and ideas and stories of Scripture emblazoned on our hearts and minds, and as easily accessible as our back pockets. Further, we strive to be biblically literate and theologically astute that we might discern the sometimes subtle difference between truth and error.

However, we do not seek to replace or usurp the spiritual instruction that takes place in individual homes. We urge parents—particularly fathers as

Scripture mandates—to teach the Scriptures to their children. As a church, we seek to support and augment what's to be happening at home.

2. *We are a congregation committed to share life together.*

- Based on “koinonia,” from the Greek word for “common,” fellowship is an aspect of church life that we purpose to see developed well beyond Sunday mornings.  
(See also 1 Jn. 1:3)

One of our elders often refers to Emmanuel as “a family of families.” Families live and work together. So it is that children worship with adults. They work and serve alongside adults. We value the cross-generational interaction and relationships with “adopted” aunts, uncles, and grandparents that characterize our fellowship.

We do not have meetings or studies or services as ends in themselves; they serve as means to growing in our relationship with the Lord, and serving the needs of one another. That's what we are here for: to delight ourselves in the Master and devote ourselves to His ministry. Families have to work together. We work together to possess a growing, thriving faith in the Lord Jesus.

Like any other family, as a church we have our traditions, values, and distinctives that make us who we are. Many of our parents say that they appreciate the fact that we don't remove children from worship, but are patient to help them learn to worship with their parents and the rest of their “extended” family. We also value the freedom to begin new ministries.

3. *Committed to worship*

- “Breaking of bread” (communion of the saints)
- Devoted also to prayer  
(See also Lk. 18:1; Eph. 6:18; Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2)

We believe the Lord has left His church with two sacraments: believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper. We observe the memorial of communion no less than once a month.

As to a ‘style’ of worship, we value the blending of classic hymns of the faith, as well as some of the best from contemporary Christian music. We certainly strive to give our best to the Lord in our worship of Him, but we also value new musicians participating in worship as well. Emmanuel has been a safe place for children to learn to use their gifts and talents to help others worship. One may find a better ‘quality’ of music elsewhere, but worship is more than music: it's a heart presented to the Lord in reverent focus upon His glory.

4. *Committed to evangelism*

- The Lord added...
- By the preaching of the gospel  
(See also Rom. 10:14)

We endeavor to equip our people to be better witnesses of the truth of Christ by means of example, testimony, and teaching. We seek to augment that personal response by our global focus.

As a conscious choice, the percentage of our offerings devoted to missions has grown 10-fold in recent years. We do not support a large number of missionaries or missions agencies. We support only a few...but to a significant amount. We do so (in part) to make it easier for a missionary family to get some deep-needed rest on a furlough rather than running all over the map to visit all the churches supporting them at twenty five dollars a month. Also, when they are state-side, we want them to feel like they are "home" when they are with us. We want them to affect us with their burning passion for the Savior that took them to the mission field in the first place and encourage them with our love and care for them as a family.

### *Conclusion*

We believe God's purpose for Emmanuel Community Church is to bring glory to Himself, molding us individually and corporately toward Christ-likeness that we might think and act like Christ at all times, in order that others come to know God and similarly bring glory to Him. We glorify God and are conformed into His likeness to the degree that we live an authentic, holy life-style in obedient response to Christ through His Word before others in the midst of life's circumstances, largely through the disciplines of prayer, Bible study, worship, fellowship, and reaching out.