
“What is an independent Bible church?”
Article by Pastor Greg Blake

It is not uncommon as we spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to encounter those who seem uncertain or confused about our identity as an independent Bible church. Some have even asked “what is an independent Bible church?” From this response it appears that people have either never known of an independent Bible church or some view this as being foreign to their understanding as to what a church is and how it is to function.

It is not the purpose of this writing to condemn but rather to clarify and articulate the identity of this church, giving to the reader a clear presentation of our distinctives.

So what is an independent Bible church? As Pastor of this church, I believe there are five distinctives of us as an independent Bible church.

1. A Church that is Autonomous

Autonomous is not a word which we commonly use in conversation so it is likely needful for me to explain what it means and how it applies to a local church. One dictionary defines the word autonomous as “self-governing; independent, subject to its own laws only.” I believe part of this definition is correct when applied to us as a local church.

We are self-governed and independent but not “subject to our own laws only.” By stating that we are self-governed we mean that this church is governed from within and not from any organization on the outside of this local assembly. We understand that the Scriptures give to the Pastor and other elders of this church, the authority to govern this church by following the directives given them in the Word of God. We further believe and affirm that it is our understanding of the Scriptures that no example is given in the Scriptures of a conference, association or convention asserting control over a local church. This is our position on church government, we are governed from within, as we follow the directives of the Scriptures.

As we follow the Scriptures as our sole rule of faith and practice we note from these that each local congregation selected their officers (Acts 6), each individual church exercised discipline (1 Corinthians 5:13) and other Scriptures demonstrate that even internal problems were handled by that particular congregation (1 Corinthians 6:1-5) and not an outside organization.

One of the great strengths of the independent Bible church is the responsibility which it places on the leadership of the church to be men of God who are seeking to follow the Lord as revealed in His inspired Word. This freedom unencumbers the church in cases such as the calling of a Pastor and even in the selection of support which will be distributed to missionaries.

What does this independence provide for the local church? It allows gifted leaders, who are called of God, set apart by the membership of this particular fellowship, to depend on and follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit, while not being hindered by the interference of an outside entity to that local congregation.

2. A Church which is Grounded in Biblical doctrine

Here at the Red House Bible Church we understand the Biblical mandate as followers of Jesus Christ to operate under the divinely inspired Scriptures. In the early years of the formation of the church believers are noted as those who “continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine” (Acts 2:42) and then later the Apostle Paul even wrote some strong words stating “it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

In an age where *sound doctrine* is considered to be *divisive* and *unnecessary* we understand the Scriptural mandate to “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13). Further, we understand from the example of young Timothy, he was to select as leaders in the church those who “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).

Therefore we ascribe to the following statements concerning the Word of God, taken by Article II of our Statement of Faith:

- *We believe that the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, is the word of God; that it reveals the only true way of salvation; that every true believer is bound to acknowledge and receive it by the help of the Spirit of God as the only rule and guide in faith and practice. (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21)*
- *We believe the Holy Scriptures to be the verbally inspired Word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible, and God-breathed. (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21)*

*By “**The Holy Scriptures**” we are referring to that collection of sixty-six books from Genesis to Revelation, which, as originally written is the very Word of God. By “**inspiration**” we mean that the books of the Bible were written by holy men of old, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, in such a definite way that their writings were verbally inspired and free from error, as no other writings have ever been or ever will be inspired.*

- *We believe the Scriptures interpreted in their natural, literal sense reveal divinely determined dispensations which define man’s responsibility in successive ages. A dispensation is not a way of salvation, but a divinely ordered stewardship by which God directs man according to His purpose. (John 1:17; 1 Corinthians 9:17; 2 Corinthians 3:9-18; Galatians 3:13-25; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2-10; Colossians 1:24, 25; Hebrews. 7:19; Revelation 20:2-6)*
- *We believe salvation is always by grace through faith alone, regardless of the dispensation in which the believer may have lived. God’s purpose of salvation by grace through faith alone has always been based upon the substitutionary atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross. (Ephesians 2:8-10; Hebrews 11:6; 1 Peter 1:10-12.)*

3. A Church which presents a Bible centered, text driven program

In every area of ministry we strive to present a clear Bible centered and text driven program. This applies to all areas of ministry of the church whether it be children's ministries (Wednesday evening Kids 4 Truth Bible Club, Sunday School and Junior Church); teen ministries (Wednesday evening teen meetings, Sunday School); Adult Bible Studies (ladies group and men's group, Sunday School, Wednesday evening Bible study); Preaching and even in our music ministry of the church which includes our church choir and congregational music.

It is our express desire not to worship the Lord "ignorantly" (Acts 17:23) but as informed believers who are growing "in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory now and forever. Amen" (1 Peter 3:18).

4. A Church which has a clearly defined Statement of Faith.

The following outline provides for you a summation of our Statement of faith which has been adopted by this fellowship.

Articles of Faith

- Preamble
- Article I – Name and Purpose
- Article II – The Holy Scriptures
- Article II – God and the Trinity
- Article IV – Creation
- Article V – The Fall of Man
- Article VI – Salvation
- Article VII – The Church
- Article VIII – The Personality of Satan
- Article IX – The Second Coming of Christ and the Eternal State
- Article X – The Ministry of Spiritual Gifts
- Article XI – Abortion
- Article XII – Human Sexuality

Church Constitution and By-laws

Article I – Membership

- Section 1. Admission of Members
- Section 2. Transfer of Membership
- Section 3. Membership Roll
- Section 4. Membership Formula
- Section 5. Discipline of Church Members

Article II – The Church Board

- Section 1. Directives of the Church Board
- Section 2. Members of the Church Board
- Section 3. Qualifications of the Church Board Members
- Section 4. Duties of the Church Board Members
- Section 5. General Guidelines for election of Church Board Members
- Section 6. Ministry Description of Officers
- Section 7. Dismissal of Church Board Members

Section 8. Non-Church Board Ministry Appointments

Article III – Church Meetings

Section 1. Congregational Meetings

Section 2. Public Worship Services

Article IV – Qualifications and Responsibilities of Teachers

Article IV – Amendments

Article VI – Licensing and Ordination

Section 1. Licensing

Section 2. Ordination

Article VII – Dissolution

Article VIII – Adoption of Statement of Faith and Constitution

This is not a detailed writing of our clearly written Statement of Faith and Bylaws but it should give the reader a clear understanding of our Biblical position and how this church is governed. A complete booklet is available from us by contacting me at the church.

5. A Church which is friendly, warm and welcoming to anyone who attends and worships Jesus Christ with us.

Conclusion

I hope this article has been helpful in explaining to the reader who we are as an independent Bible church. I would also hope that the reader understands that we are *independent* but we are also *dependent* upon the Lord God and His Word as to direct His Church in the fashion He desires for it.

For more information about Red House Bible Church please feel free to contact me at gblake@redhousechurch.com or at the church office 304-586-9181.

God bless you and thanks for reading this article.