

Christian Safeguarding Services

Doctrinal basis

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to outline the doctrinal position from which CSS operates. This doctrinal basis is not intended to be a fully developed Evangelical Statement of Faith or a creedal statement. Rather, it articulates those beliefs that we as Evangelicals hold that shape our approach to safeguarding.

We approach safeguarding as a practical outworking of these Biblically based values and beliefs. Trustees must be in full agreement with this statement.

We ask those who access the services of CSS to confirm that they understand that this is the basis from which we work and that they are happy to accept that we will work from this framework. Organisations who do not wish or not able to do so will be signposted to other organisations whose approach to safeguarding and worldview are more closely aligned.

Limitations of this document

In seeking to articulate an entire worldview in a single simple document, it is not possible to capture either the full detail or the subtle nuance of the biblical position. For convenience, it is subdivided into key themes, but it must be acknowledged that this is an attempt to describe a united whole. None of these sections are intended to stand in their own right, and each interacts with and is dependent upon the others. Individual clauses must be seen in the context of the section in which they exist and must take account of the interrelationships between the sections.

An expanded explanation of the biblical framework is available on our website.

God

- We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
 - He is the only true and living God and is infinitely perfect in his wisdom, knowledge, love, holiness and justice and goodness unchanging in his character
 - God is all powerful and the Creator of all things, both visible and invisible, establishing them with order and purpose

Revelation

- We believe that God has graciously revealed his existence and power in the created order and has supremely revealed himself in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ.
- He is a speaking God who, by his Spirit, has graciously disclosed himself in human words and that he has preserved his word for us in the Scriptures; the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments
 - These alone constitute the inspired written Word of God.

- These scriptures are to be believed, as God's instruction in all that it teaches, obeyed as God's command in all that it requires, and trusted, as God's pledge in all that it promises

Creation of Humanity

- We believe that God created humans, male and female, in his own image and for relationship with him
 - We find our true purpose and identity only in relation to him
- The first humans were part of the created order that God himself declared to be very good
- We believe that the first humans, though made in the image of God, and capable of love, courage and creativity and generosity distorted that image.
- Humans were appointed by God to serve as his agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy, obedient, and lovingly devoted relationship with their Maker.
- Human beings were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes God's pattern of sexual relations for men and women
 - Biblical marriage: This union of one man and one woman in lifelong covenant relationship, ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church.
 - Their distinctive roles reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, displaying the caring, sacrificial love of Christ for his church and modelling the love of the church for her Lord
- In the ministry of the church, both men and women are called to serve Christ, using the gifts dispensed to each individual by the Holy Spirit and are to be developed to their full potential.
- Human beings, though mortal in their physical bodies have immortal souls. They are morally and spiritually accountable to God as their creator and will ultimately stand before him as their judge

The Fall of mankind into sin and rebellion against our creator

- We believe that the first humans, though made in the image of God, fell into sin through temptation.
 - As a result, all human beings are separated from God, and faced death without God's gracious intervention
 - By nature, we are all rebels against our creator, and our own sinful attitudes, thoughts and actions fall short of God's standards
- We believe that our greatest need as human beings is to be forgiven for the sins we have committed and be transformed in our very nature; being reconciled to God, under whose justice we stand, and that this need that can be met only by the undeserved love, mercy and grace of this same God, who alone can restore us to himself.

The Judgement of God

- We believe that human beings live once, and then die, and then face the judgement of God
 - Following this judgement, human beings will enter eternity, where they will either enjoy perfect blessing in God's presence, or eternal judgement for the sins committed in this life

- God who sees all and knows all will judge all with perfect righteousness and justice.

The Plan of God

- We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude from every tribe, nation and language to be to be his own people
 - We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by faith receive the gift of forgiveness and adoption and that he will one day glorify them - all to the praise of his glorious grace.
- God desires all people to repent and to receive Jesus Christ as their Redeemer and Lord

The Gospel

- We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ
 - Rejected by many as foolishness, the gospel is the power of God to those who are being saved by the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- God commands his people to preach this gospel throughout the world, holding out the offer of forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to God.
 - The Gospel spreads by the transformation of individual hearts.
 - Cultural transformation occurs through an individual's transformation. The gospel cannot be advanced by force.

Jesus Christ

- We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the Eternal Son became human: The Word became flesh, fully God and fully human.
 - The man Jesus, who was the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary
 - He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, rose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven.
- As the glorified King, he is now seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty, and is our High Priest, Righteous Advocate and the only mediator between God and man
- By his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute
 - He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God
 - Through the cross, he propitiated God, and by bearing the full penalty of our sins in his own body he reconciled to God all who believe.
 - By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and brought everlasting life to all his people
 - By his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him.
- We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved

The Justification of Sinners

- We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully settled the debt of all those who are justified
 - By his sacrifice, he bore the punishment due to us for our sins, making full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf
 - By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God in our place, and by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God
- Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and by his grace alone and not for anything in us:
 - this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.
- We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit.
 - We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

The work and power of the Holy Spirit

- **In regeneration**
 - Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the trinity, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and is present with and in believers
 - He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, to repentance and faith
 - In him they are baptised into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone
 - By the Spirit, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts
 - The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service
- **In sanctification**
 - We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God and received the new birth enter the kingdom of God
 - By the new birth, the believer participates and delights in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the promise of the future glory, peace and rest
 - Spiritual fruit and good works evidence saving grace
 - Living as salt and light in this world, believers should neither withdraw from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it
 - Recognising whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbours as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God.

- We are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us
- The new birth does not produce complete transformation immediately, but rather gives life that produces the fruit of growth in godliness and grace
 - The believer experiences the battle between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the spirit and commences a lifelong process of transformation that will not be complete in this world
 - Believers strive for greater holiness, and long for the day when they will be finally and completely transformed.

The Kingdom of God

- The kingdom of God, already present, but not yet fully realised, is the exercise of his sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation
 - This kingdom exists both individually in the hearts of those who own Christ as Lord and King and corporately in the gathered church of Jesus Christ establishing a new community of human life together under God
- The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbours. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world

The gathered church

- As the local church gathers for worship and mutual support, love, encouragement, teaching, challenge, correction and rebuke, believers are encouraged in their faith and growth in godliness and grace
- Christ is the head of the church and rules over her by his word and his Spirit
- The spirit distributes varying gifts to members of the church body so that each member has a vital role to play in the body of Christ
 - Although those roles differ, each is an expression of love and blessing by God to his people and the gifts are given for the benefit of the whole body of believers
- The Spirit gifts and calls some as teachers and "undershepherds of the flock of God" in a local congregation, calling them to protect, love, nurture, lead and teach the members
 - Leaders are to be mature in faith, walking in the Spirit and grace and are to live lives that are above reproach
 - Leaders will be judged by God with greater severity because of their position of authority
 - Those called to leadership roles are to be humble, gentle, patient, self-controlled and of proven character and ability
 - They are a gift to the church, blessing members through the exercise of their gifts and calling as those who will give an account to God for their leadership
 - Leaders are not to "lord it over" members or to be harsh with them
 - Leaders are to be honoured and respected and their example followed insofar as they themselves are following the example of Christ
- The church is a community of grace
 - It is not a gathering of perfected souls, but a gathering of forgiven sinners where forgiveness and grace are extended to all and where gospel transformation takes place

- While through faith in Christ any sin can be forgiven and any sinner saved and transformed, this salvation does not eliminate either the effects or the consequences of sin which must be faced.
- The church is to be a place of refuge and safety for all where the love and justice of God are upheld, and believers are nurtured, and faith can grow
 - Sin within the church membership and especially amongst leaders must not be tolerated, far less concealed or colluded with, but rather faced, challenged, repented of, rooted out so as to maintain the holiness and purity of the community of God's people

Secular authorities

- We believe that national leaders are appointed by God and are to be obeyed as such
 - Such leaders are to act with justice and will be judged by God for the way they have led
- The church should "render to Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God, that which is God's"
- Believers should seek to live peaceable and quiet lives, respectful to all and displaying their integrity in their conduct and with a good conscience before God
- Believers are to speak the truth in love, without fear or favour. We should not fear those who can kill the body but then have no power over the soul, but rather, we fear the one who can destroy both body and soul
 - Where injustice, oppression or exploitation occur, the Church should stand as a voice for the vulnerable and powerless, calling for justice and acting as peacemakers
 - Those within the church are equally entitled to the same protection from the state as any other member of society

The return of Jesus Christ

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be complete

- We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of God in the new heaven and the new earth
- On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin removed, and its effects forever banished.
- God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.