

**NEXT
STEPS**
Class



WHAT IS **NEXT STEPS?**

Welcome to Gospelway's Next Steps Class!

Connecting with a local church can feel challenging, intimidating, and frustrating at times. Our aim is to simplify this process for you by being transparent and providing comprehensive information about who we are, and what we do, and why we do it.

We will cover a lot of material in a relatively quick time frame. If anything isn't clear, please don't hesitate to ask questions.



ABOUT **GOSPELWAY**

OUR HISTORY

Gospelway is a Confessional Baptist Church in China Grove, NC

We began meeting together on April 14th, 2019, and were officially sent and constituted on September 13th, 2019.

WHY THE NAME GOSPELWAY?

The term "*gospel-way*" has historical significance among Puritan and early Baptist writers, who used it to describe the proclamation of the gospel leading to faith (Rom. 10:17).

Thomas Boston stated that one can never find rest from their laboring "*until they come to embrace the **gospel-way** of salvation; taking up its everlasting rest in Christ, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*" [1]

Spreading the rest of Christ found in the gospel is our mission, and our desire was to convey this, even in the name that we chose to identify our assembly.

[1] Thomas Boston, in *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* by Edward Fisher, p. 37

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

In light of the above, we trace our identity today by orienting ourselves within the larger universal church through history.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The New Testament word translated into English as church (*ekklesia*) means assembly, and the New Testament speaks of the church, it is speaking in one of two ways: the universal and local church.

THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

The universal church is the assembly of all believers for all time. All true believers, no matter when or where they lived, make up the universal church.

THE LOCAL CHURCH

The local church is a particular group of believers who visibly gather together. Gospelway is a local church.

It should be noted that Gospelway isn't the only true church in the history of the church. Gospelway isn't even the only true church in Rowan County.

A true local church is distinguished by certain marks:

1. **Faithful Preaching of the Word:** A true church rightly preaches the Word of God so that it can be heard and received.
2. **Proper Administration of Sacraments:** A true church rightly administers the Lord's Supper and the Sacrament of Baptism according to biblical principles. [2]

[2] John Calvin, *Institutes* 4.2.1 - 4.2.12

A BAPTIST CHURCH

Gospelway is a Baptist Church. This means that we are Congregational in our polity, autonomous in our governing, and Credobaptist in our understanding of the sacrament.



WHAT ARE OUR BELIEFS?

Our church is rooted in this Baptist tradition and faith: Scripture Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone, and the Glory of God Alone.

These doctrines & distinctive are not original to us; our Baptist forefathers viewed themselves as the logical outcome of the Reformation principle of sola Scriptura. [3]
(the idea that the Bible alone is the sole authority for faith and practice)

That being said, all of our beliefs and convictions are derived from the Bible, and the Bible is our final and ultimate authority.

[3] R. Stanton Norman, *The Baptist Way: Distinctives of a Baptist Church*, (B&H Publishing Group, 2005) p. 18

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Bible is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible word of God and is the supreme authority in all matters of belief and practice, and is therefore the basis for any Confession of Faith.

We believe it is both prudent and useful to adhere to certain biblical statements and confessions so that the doctrinal beliefs of this church may be clearly known.

- **1689 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith**

Gospelway holds the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith as a reliable summary of scriptural teaching.

We consider this confession to be an excellent expression of what we believe is clearly taught in the Word of God and embrace it as a faithful statement of our beliefs. It serves as a confirmation of faith, a means of edification, an aid in controversy, a guard against divergent teaching, a basis for church unity, and a connection to Baptists of the past.

- **Overview and History**

The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith was first published in 1677 by several churches from London and the surrounding area. It was based on the First London Baptist Confession of 1644, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Savoy Declaration. The authors took great pains to remain as consistent with the earlier confessions as possible in order to demonstrate the similarity of their theology with the other well-regarded reformed confessions.

At the same time, they set out to describe the Baptist theology with precision, aligning themselves with other Protestants, while at the same time, addressing the differences that set them apart.

At the time of its initial authoring, it had no signatures because it was illegal to have a church that was not a part of the Church of England. However, in 1689, the English Parliament passed the Act of Toleration, allowing the existence of Protestant churches that were not a part of the Church of England. Quickly after that, the Baptist churches gathered to formally adopt and sign the confession. Therefore, it bears the year of 1689.



◦ **Full Subscription (for Elders and Teachers)**

The elders of Gospelway, along with anyone who regularly teaches on behalf of the church, must fully subscribe to the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith. Full subscription requires adherence to the entire confession as biblical, while allowing exceptions to specific words or phrases, but not to any doctrines.

At Gospelway, we permit two exceptions to the wording of the confession:

- While we are sabbatarian, we allow an exception to the word "*recreations*" (22.8)
- We allow an exception to the wording that identifies the pope as *the* antichrist. (26.4)

Since the elders and teachers all subscribe to the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession, you can be assured that the leadership is unified in the doctrinal position of the church, and you will receive consistent teaching. This consistency will help to confirm your faith, promote unity within the body, serve as a means of edification, and provide an aid in controversy.

◦ **Subscription to Unity for Members**

At Gospelway, we do not require members to *fully subscribe* to the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession.

We understand that the confession is extensive in its content and do not want to impose undue burdens on those seeking membership. We recognize that it may take significant study and reflection to fully embrace the confession.

However, we do ask members to adhere to a subscription of unity. This means that while members may be unsure of their full agreement with the confession, they must agree not to publicly contradict it.

Additionally, members should be teachable and open to being persuaded by the teachings of the confession.

In other words, we ask members to be willing to submit to the teaching of the confession's doctrines.



WHAT ARE OUR **DISTINCTIVES**?

The way that we operate together as a church can find its roots in these distinctions. They are what would set Gospelway apart from some of the other assemblies within the Baptist Denomination.

WE ARE CONFSSIONAL

When we look back at the confessions of faith produced during the era of the Reformation, we understand that these confessions arose because theological clarity was required.

Many of the reformers and Protestant denominations produced confessions detailing their beliefs. These confessions were significantly more exhaustive than the earlier creeds in expositing the doctrines of Christianity. They set the theological boundaries of specific churches or groups of churches. While there is general agreement among these confessions, each denomination has distinct differences.

Similarly, the early Baptists wrote faith statements to clearly articulate how they differed from or agreed with other traditions. They wanted to be known for what they "*confessed*" about Scripture.

When we say that we are confessional, we mean that we adhere to a specific confession of faith (2LBCF) because we believe it is a reliable collection of biblical doctrine. While we hold the Scriptures as the final authority for all faith and practice, we seek to be concise about what we confess as true.

WE ARE COVENANTAL

The scope of redemptive history is best understood through 3 covenants.

- **The Covenant of Redemption** is the covenant made in eternity past between God the Father and God the Son, in which it was agreed that the Son would redeem a people for himself through his obedience. This covenant is a covenant of works for the Son, and its benefits are mediated to the elect through the Covenant of Grace.
- **The Covenant of Works** is the covenant God made with Adam in the garden, through which he could attain the reward of eternal life—for himself and his posterity—through his obedience, or through which he could bring death upon himself and his posterity through his disobedience.
- **The Covenant of Grace** is the outworking and application of the Covenant of Redemption and it is a post-fall covenant between God and the redeemed. It is a gracious, unconditional covenant in which the merits of Christ are given to sinners by faith.

WE ARE PROTESTANT

Baptists originated as an offshoot of the Church of England. Early Baptists viewed themselves as the outcome of the theology of the Reformation.

To be a Protestant means that we, with other denominations, affirm the Five Solas.

- **The Five Solas**

- **Sola Gratia:**

- *By Grace Alone:* The Reformers understood the importance of the grace of God to the Bible's teaching on salvation. In fact, one of the slogans that came to define Reformation teaching was *sola gratia*, which is Latin for "by grace alone." Christians are saved by the grace of God alone.

- **Sola Fide:**

- *Through Faith Alone:* What is justification? Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

- **Sola Scriptura:**

- *According to Scripture Alone:* God's people have universally affirmed that there is only one thing that can legitimately function as the supreme standard: God's Word. There can be no higher authority than God Himself.

- **Solus Christus:**

- *By Christ Alone:* This affirms that Scripture and its teaching on grace and faith emphasize that salvation is *solus Christus*, "by Christ alone" — that is, Christ is the only Savior (Acts 4:12).

- **Soli Deo Gloria:**

- *To the Glory of God Alone:* We use the phrase glory of God so often that it tends to lose its biblical force. But this glory, like the sun, is no less blazing— and no less beneficial— because people ignore it. Yet, God hates to be ignored. So let's focus again on the glory of God. What is God's glory, and how important is it?

WE HOLD TO A REDEMPITIVE-HISTORICAL HERMENEUTIC

The Bible does not gradually become a Christian document from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The Bible is not two different plans for two different peoples of God (i.e., Jews and Christians).

Redemptive-historical hermeneutics recognizes that the Bible throughout is Christian Scripture. All of Scripture, whether it is in the Old or New Testament, not only points to but also reveals and applies Jesus Christ.

We believe that the scriptures give a historical account of one redemptive story. In our preaching, we do not seek to find application, we seek to show Christ.



WE HOLD TO A LAW/GOSPEL DISTINCTION

Law and Gospel are categories by which we can categorize scripture.

The law is what God commands of us. The gospel is what God has done for us in Christ. The law says “do.” The gospel tells us it is “done.”

To be clear, the art of distinguishing law and gospel does not mean simply dividing every sermon into a “law” section and a “gospel” section. Nor does it eliminate the importance of the third use of law as a guide for the believer.

- **What happens if we don't make this distinction?**

- If we confuse the categories of law and gospel, we end up effectively losing both. An improper understanding of law and gospel leads us to soft-pedal the law. If we think that keeping the law, in any way, to any extent, is a part of our righteousness before God, we are forced to relativize it or lower its standards. This is so that sinners can actually keep it! In doing so, we gut the law of all of its holiness, goodness, and glory.
- An improper understanding of law and gospel also results in our turning the gospel into a covenant of works, where the gospel becomes a covenant in which we earn righteousness before God through our obedience—not totally, of course, but somehow our works factor in. The gospel is made to sound hard. All of this results in the saints being robbed of the peace and rest that is ours in Christ.

WE PREACH EXPOSITIONALLY

The Scriptures are the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of saving knowledge, faith, and obedience. So we exposit the scriptures every week, generally using consecutive exposition and orienting the passage within flow of redemptive history.

We further believe that the point of the text should point us to Christ and His work for us. Jesus promised that His sheep would hear His voice, and if this is true, we must be sure that we are speaking the voice of the Shepherd, and not our own.

At Gospelway, we will take weeks and months at a time exploring one book or section of scripture, and our sermons are typically planned no less than 6 months in advance.

WE STRIVE TO BE GUIDED BY THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE

The essence of worship cannot be rooted in preference but must be in the explicit commands of God. As Michael Horton points out, the first and second commandments explain that “Worshiping the right God is dependent on worshiping God in the right manner.” [4]

The regulative principle of worship states, “We may do that and only that in worship which is required explicitly or implicitly in God's Word.” The question is not, “May we do this?” but rather, “What must we do?”.

[4] Michael Horton, *People and Place* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 60.

WE SEE THE NEED FOR A ROBUST LITURGY

Whether we like to admit it, or not, every church has a liturgy.

While many think of liturgy as a simple order of service, correctly understood, it is much more than that. In concert with the historical church, at Gospelway have a structured liturgy that we use every week and have designed it so that the entire service functions as a proclamation of the Gospel.

A conversation that mirrors the covenant relationship between God and His people. God speaks to us through His Word and sacraments, and we respond in faith, adoration, confession, and thanksgiving. This pattern reflects the gospel itself: God calls, we respond; God saves, we rejoice.

If you would like to see a full explanation of our order of service, just let us know

WE EMPHASIS THE ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE

The ordinary means of grace have been given by God to the church. These means are the ministry of the word, the administration of the sacraments—in the context of the gathered church.

These are the means God ordinarily uses to grow and sustain his people. There is nothing special about the means themselves; rather, God, by his Spirit, uses them as he has promised in his word.

We believe that the most significant things in the Christian life happen when we are assembled together and that the Lord's Day gathering is the most important thing we do each week.

WE CULTIVATE CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

When John views God's throne room in Revelation 5-7, the whole gathered congregation joins their voices together to praise the Lamb. Our goal is for singing to be a participatory response, not an observational experience.

This is the reason, we have plain, rather than overwhelming musical instrumentation, and we avoid performances and extravagant "special music" in our services.

WE PROCLAIM REST IN THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

Christ has accomplished our salvation and given us all we need for life and godliness. In our service, we maintain a clear law/gospel distinction, highlighting all that Christ had done for us and that we should rest in the sufficiency of his gracious work.

The Gospel is not only for unbelievers. The church also needs the regular proclamation of the Gospel. Every week, you will hear proclaimed the grace of God through the finished work of Christ



WHEN DO WE **MEET?**

EVERY LORD'S DAY

We meet every Sunday mornings at 10:30 AM at 701 Highway 29, China Grove NC



GROUPS

We meet throughout the week at various points. If you are familiar with Sunday School, then this format will be familiar to you as well. This groups allow us to learn the scripture from a teaching and open format. Each of these groups are led by an Elder.

- **TUESDAY EVENINGS**

We meet every other Tuesday to discuss the previous sermons. This is a place for questions and discussions about the sermons and the text of scripture.

- **WEDNESDAY EVENINGS**

We meet most Wednesdays to explore tenants of theology and doctrine.

GATHERINGS

There are various times throughout the year that we may get together in different times and in different ways.

FELLOWSHIP

On the last Sunday of every month, the church as a whole meets after the AM service for a meal.

CHURCH APP

This is a space for our entire Gospelway family to connect, fostering community and opportunities to serve one another.

Here's how you can make the most of this group:

- Social Outings: Planning a cookout and want to invite others to join you?
- Assistance: Share your needs here

We also have a prayer request tab to stay connected and support each other in prayer.

WHAT IS OUR LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE?

JESUS IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

- Jesus Christ is the head of the church. (Col. 2:19)
- Jesus Christ grows and builds the church. (Matt. 16:18)

WE ARE ELDER LED, DEACON SERVED, & CONGREGATIONALLY RULED

• How Elders Lead

Elders (also called pastors or overseers) are entrusted by God with the responsibility of shepherding and overseeing the flock and, thus, constitute the governing body of the Church.

In accordance with Hebrews 13:17, they keep watch over the congregation as men who must give an account to God.

• How Deacons Serve

The word “deacon” simply means servant. Deacons are primarily responsible for assisting the elders in those practical aspects of ministry which would otherwise distract them from their priorities of the ministry of the Word, prayer and shepherding.

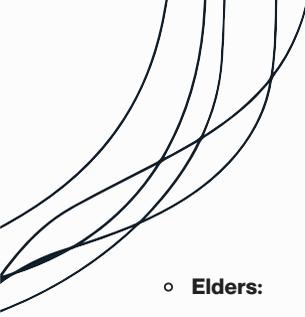
The primary task of a deacon is to help meet the physical & material needs of individual believers and of the congregation as a whole.

• How the Congregation Rules

The duly appointed pastors/elders use patience and wisdom in decision-making for unity's sake. Affirmation from the congregation is sought.

Therefore we are not an elder rule church, rather we are an elder-led church (Matt. 18:15-17, Acts 6:2-5, I Cor. 5:4-5, II Cor. 2:6).

The membership is responsible for the regularly voting on the confirmation of Elders, Deacons, the entrance of the membership, and on all other matters submitted to them (i.e. budget, etc.).



CURRENT LEADERSHIP

- **Elders:**

- **Jeff Perry** - 704-245-3419
pastorjeff@gospelway.church
- **Ricky Beaver** - 704-795-8876
rbeaver1956@yahoo.com
- **Jeffrey Perry** - 980-439-1070
jeffrey.perry09@gmail.com

- **Deacons:**

- **Charles Nagy** - 704-603-7552
nagycatman@aol.com

HOW ARE WE AFFILIATED?

AFFILIATIONS

Grace Reformed Network

www.gracereformednetwork.org

Along with the 17th century and subsequent particular Baptists, we believe it prudent to join with other like-minded Baptist churches in the work gospel and for fellowship and support. To that end, we are a founding member of the Grace Reformed Network. The Grace Reformed Network is an association of confessional churches subscribing to the Second London Confession of 1689 united around the sufficiency of Christ.

HOW DO I JOIN **GOSPELWAY?**

BY THE FOLLOWING:

- **Attend a membership class.**

Classes are held quarterly, but anyone interested should let an elder know of their interest. Once registered, you will be provided with the membership materials to read prior to the class.

These materials include:

- Next Steps Class Booklet
- The Second London Confession of 1689
- The Church Constitution & Bylaws
- The Church Covenant.

Since you are here, you have this step well in hand.

- **Complete a membership application.**

After completing the membership class, anyone interested in becoming a member will complete a membership application. The application collects contact information of the member. On the application, the applicant must indicate their agreement with the church constitution, covenant, and confession.

**Application is available on the final pages of this booklet*

- **Interview with elders.**

Upon receiving a completed membership application, the applicant will be scheduled for a short interview with two elders. (Married couples are interviewed together.)

This interview is an opportunity for the elders to:

- get to know you further
- hear an affirmation of your salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ
- confirm your understanding of and agreement with the church constitution, covenant, and confession,
- personally discuss what is expected of church members
- answer any questions you may have.

- **Applicants are affirmed by the congregation**



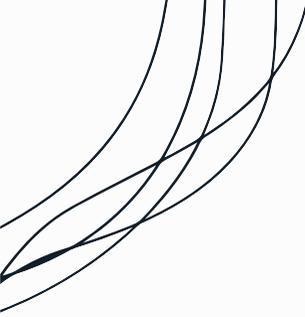
QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

The bulk of the qualifications for membership were covered in the membership process above, but to reiterate concisely, here are the requirements to become a member of Gospelway:

- A member must have a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as their only hope for forgiveness of sins and salvation with God, and have been baptized.
- A member must have affirmed the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 or the Subscription of Unity.
- A member must complete a reading of the constitution and covenant of Gospelway and affirm willingness to submit said constitution and covenant.

QUESTIONS?





MEMBERSHIP FORM

To be filled out by the applicant(s) for membership

Date:

Full Name :

E-Mail :

Spouse's Name (if applicable) :

E-Mail :

Birth Date(s) :

Anniversary :

Address :

Phone Number (optional):

Child's Name (if applicable) :

Birth Date:

Child's Name (if applicable) :

Birth Date:

Child's Name (if applicable) :

Birth Date:

Child's Name (if applicable) :

Birth Date: