

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Staff and Elders

Rockland is a Christ-ruled, elder-led, staff-run, deacon-served, congregation-affirmed local manifestation of the global Church of Jesus Christ.

OUR MISSION

Connecting all generations to Jesus, as we stand for the Truth of the Gospel, show God's grace to all people, and raise up the next generation to do the same.

The members of Rockland have a reasonable expectation of theological and practical unity among those in leadership. So, to minister most effectively, we require all elders and staff to affirm the beliefs in this document or discuss any questions before serving at Rockland with one of our elders/pastors. This is ultimately for the purpose of maintaining unity and cohesion as we pursue the mission that Rockland has been called to by God.

OUR BELIEFS

God: We believe in the only true God, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, existing eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14, Col 2:9, Is 44:6, John 10:30, 1 Cor 8:5-6, Matt 3:16-17, 28:19,).

The Bible: This church recognizes the Bible as sufficient for faith and practice and holds that living in accordance with its teachings and bearing fruit is the evidence of genuine faith (John 15:8, Gal. 5:19-26, James 1:22, Ps. 119:9, Is. 40:6-8). We affirm without reservation the divine inspiration, entire trustworthiness, and authority of the Bible in faith and practice (Ps. 119:9, 105, Is. 40:6-8, Heb. 4:12-13, 2 Tim. 3:16-17), revealing His truth and will for all people. Therefore, we submit to its teachings in all matters of faith and life, trusting it as our final standard for truth.

Jesus: We affirm the full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, who lived as a perfect example, who atoned for the sins of the world at the cross, who was bodily raised from the dead and ascended as both Lord and Savior, and who will return in power and glory in the fullness of time to judge the living and the dead, to consummate history and the eternal plan of God (Col. 1:15-23, 2:9, John 1:1-18).

The Holy Spirit: We believe in the ministry of the Holy Spirit whose indwelling and transforming power enables us to live out our new life and new calling to evangelism and discipleship within the fellowship of the Church. (Jn. 3:5-6, Titus 3:2-7)

The Church: We believe in the true Church, which is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible, yet imperfect, expression where the Word of God is preached in its purity, and baptism and communion are administered in their integrity, where

scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained (Eph. 2:11-22, 1 Peter 3:18-22, Acts 2:42-47, John 3:16, Matt 18:15-20).

Mankind and Sin: We believe in the value and dignity of all mankind, originally created in God's image to live in love and holiness (Ps 139:13-16, Gen 1:27), but who became alienated from God and each other because of sin and guilt, and who are justly subject to the judgment of God (Rom. 3:21-26).

Salvation: We believe in the justification by God's grace alone of all who repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation (Rom. 5:6-11). We affirm God's offer of redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11).

Sacraments/Ordinances: *Christian Baptism:* Baptism is an act of initiation into the Christian fellowship of one who, by public declaration of faith and repentance, shall affirm belief in what God's love has done in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We also baptize children who have not yet reached the age of accountability as an act of dedication on the part of the parents to rear such children according to the teaching of Christ within a church community, and trust that when such children reach the age of accountability they will confirm this act of dedication for themselves (Acts 22:12-16, Col 2:11-15, Acts 16:25-33).

The Lord's Supper: The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of the incarnation and ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. This sacrifice of Jesus is represented by the bread and wine/grape juice as Jesus' body and blood given for all so that some will enter into covenant with God through the intercession of Jesus. This covenant is the New Covenant which Christians proclaim when they take the Lord's Supper. This universal act of fellowship for the body of believers displays not only the unity we have with Christ but also with one another. The Lord's Supper points us to hopeful expectation that we have with the return of Christ when every believer from every age in history will unite as one multitude to observe the wedding supper of the Lamb, our King Jesus. (Matt. 26:20-30, Mark 14:18-26, Luke 22:14-23, 1 Cor. 11:18-34)

Marriage: We believe the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen. 2:18-25). We believe that marriage between one man and one woman, for life, uniquely reflects Christ's relationship with His Church (Eph. 5:21-33). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman, and only between a man and woman who are married to each other (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11).

Gender: We believe that God created humanity in His image and created only two genders, male and female (Genesis 1:27). We believe that gender is a gift from God, assigned at birth

and intrinsically linked to His divine design. There are two genders/sexes, and they are unchangeable.

Abortion: We teach that God is the author of life, and every life is sacred from the moment they are conceived in the womb (Ps 139:13) to death. A child in the womb is a distinct, developing, whole human being. Each time a mother decides—or a father pressures—to end such a life, it is a profound tragedy. Abortion, though sinful, is completely forgiven by all who repent and seek the grace of Jesus Christ.

Church Membership: Though Scripture does not contain an explicit command to formally join a local church, the biblical foundation for church membership permeates the New Testament. This biblical basis can be seen most clearly in (1) the example of the early church (Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 16:5), (2) the existence of church government (1 Thess 5:12, 1 Tim 5:17, Heb 13:17), (3) the exercise of church discipline (Matt 18:15-17), and (4) the exhortation to mutual edification (Heb 10:24-25, Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-7; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). We expect that staff members will meet the same expectations that we ask of our members: to join Rockland and to regularly worship, connect, serve, and give. Each staff member will be in a worship service and encourage all volunteers and members to do the same.

Authority: We affirm that God has established an order of headship and authority for His glory and our good. Christ is the supreme authority over all creation and the head of the Church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). Elders are called to lead the Church, husbands to lovingly lead their wives, parents to instruct their children, and governing authorities to uphold justice for the good of the citizens. In turn, the Church submits to the care of its leaders, wives to their husbands, children to their parents, and citizens to their rulers—so long as they do not contradict God’s commands (Eph. 5:22-25; 6:1-4; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). Authority is to be exercised with humility, love, and a servant’s heart, following Christ’s example (Mark 10:42-45).

Living “Above Reproach”: Leaders in ministry (staff and elders) are called to a higher standard than those who attend a church, so all of our elders and staff must, by God’s grace, maintain lives that are above reproach. Being above reproach means being blameless in the eyes of the ones we serve to every extent possible. We do not expect leaders to be sinless people but rather repentant followers of God who recognize what is sinful or unwise behavior and commit to not engaging in it. Although the laws of the land and the culture may allow for certain activities, if they would call into question the ministry of Rockland, we will forgo them for the sake of the larger ministry. Our witness is 24x7.

We also expect our staff and elders not to stir up controversy over tertiary issues in or apart from the Christian faith or engage recklessly in political debates. How a Christian leader conducts himself or herself in the public sphere (e.g., social media platforms) is part of their Christian witness and affects the witness of the church. This comes out in many forms, but as representatives of the local church, we do not smoke pot or use any other recreational drugs, whether or not they have been legalized. We have a Christian commitment to use our tongues

for the good of others and the glory of God, so creating division, gossip, and profanity is unacceptable for the followers of Jesus and representatives of the Rockland family.

We commit to this as a team and ultimately the reason for this is that we are striving to win as many as possible to Christ and want to give no one cause to call the ministry of Rockland into question.