

Statement of Vision and Implications for the Theological Distinctives La Crescent Evangelical Free Church (LEFC) Elders, April 2016

Introduction

As we get ready to affirm these theological distinctives, we, as the elder council, feel it is important to take a few moments and reiterate why we think this document is important. It is our desire to communicate why we believe it is good for the church, why we believe it is for your personal good, and the implications of the document for the church: it's leaders, teachers, members, regular attenders, and those who serve faithfully throughout the body. **It should be noted that this is not a change in our theological stances and standards, but is an affirmation of how LEFC's elders have been leading and teaching the church over the past 10 years, and will continue to do so in the future.**

Role of the Elders

We want to make it clear that doctrine and theology are a large part (though not all) of what we are called to think about as elders. Part of faithfully shepherding the flock is also making sure that we have a solid theological foundation that we are building for you and for ourselves as elders. According to the New Testament we do this through the teaching and preaching of the Word (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2), protecting the church from false doctrines and teachers (Acts 20:17, 28-31), exhorting and admonishing the saints in sound doctrine (1 Timothy 4:13; Titus 1:9); and judging theological matters (Acts 15:1-6).

Why have Theological Distinctives?

Here at LEFC we have the privilege and joy of being a part of Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA). The EFCA supports our ability to be a local autonomous church with our own rules, governance, and theological positions. However, because the EFCA has many churches with differing theological positions and governance structures, we as elders felt it was necessary to not only affirm the EFCA statement of faith, but also affirm what makes us reformed as a church and elder council.

Why is this good for LEFC?

This is good for us as a church because it gives us a clear understanding of the theological beliefs that we are going to stand upon and teach from, and it also becomes a framework that unifies the current and future elders of LEFC. As Mark 3:25 reminds us, *"if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand."* Therefore, if the elders are divided on our theology it can and will cause division amongst God's people here at LEFC. Also, because we believe that these distinctives represent the clearest and most robust reading of scripture and the gospel, they will allow us as a church to have a robust gospel witness in our community, region, and to the nations.

Why is this good for you?

We believe that this document has a few important benefits for each individual believer that attends LEFC. It allows believers to make an informed decision about what they believe, if who we are as a church lines up with their beliefs, and if LEFC is what they would desire for their church home. Each person that attends LEFC can also rest in the reality that their elders are unified on these issues, so there is a greater likelihood of being unified in the future direction of the church and its ministries. Finally, the preaching, teaching, and other ministries will continue to flow from these distinctives as they have for the past decade. This will continue to result in the greatest joy of God's people here at LEFC and greatest glory of our triune God.

What are the implications of this document?

We will be using this document as we raise up and affirm future elders within the church. Though we will not require our teachers to affirm this whole document, we will require that they affirm the gospel and the moral issues that are laid out within the distinctives, and will agree to not champion positions that are contrary to this document while operating in their official teaching role. As for members, we will not require that our members fully agree with this document, but will require that they be a believer in Jesus Christ, affirm the EFCA statement of faith, with the "premillennial" stance being the only exception, and the gospel. Most other forms of service within the church do not require the affirmation of this document but generally do require the same affirmations that we would ask of our members.