

**NOT
TO
US**



*Not to us, O LORD, not to us,
but to your name give glory...*

- Psalm 115:1 (ESV)

Partnership at EPIC Community Church

*“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your **partnership in the gospel** from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Philippians 1:4-6*

The Heartbeat of EPIC

Mission Statement: *We exist to glorify God by declaring and demonstrating the power of the Gospel for the sake of a broken world.*

Three Core Values from our Mission Statement:

1. We exist for the glory of God: Our main mantra at EPIC is “not to us.” It comes from Psalm 115:1 which says, “not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name give glory.” We are convinced that there is nothing and no one like God. The main purpose of our lives and our church is to enjoy God and make much of Him. We are not here for ourselves but for Him. We are not wrapped up in our story but in His story.
2. We exist to declare and demonstrate the power of the Gospel: The Gospel is the good news regarding what God has done in Jesus to rescue His creation from sin. Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth as a man, lived a sinless life, died to pay for our sins, rose three days later, ascended into heaven and is coming back one day. He offers new life to all who repent of sin and believe in Him. In Him, God is making all things new. The Gospel certainly has the power to save sinners but it also has the power to transform our lives. If we embrace the Gospel, it changes everything. It changes who we are and how we live. The Gospel is not just the ABC’s of Christian conversion; it is the A to Z of the Christian life. It not only justifies but also sanctifies. Therefore, we constantly seek to declare the Gospel to the world and ourselves. We also demonstrate the Gospel by applying it to every area of our lives.
3. We exist for the sake of a broken world: We live in a tremendously broken world. There is disease, hunger, injustice, broken relationships, wars, and death. It does not take long to recognize various spaces in our own lives that are broken. And if we are honest, we are part of that mess. The brokenness in our world is a result of our rebellion against God; it’s a result of us seeking independence from God. This rebellion has fractured our world. Our hearts mourn over the brokenness on this planet and we long for God in Christ to make all things new. So, we declare and demonstrate the power of the Gospel for the sake of a world that God loves desperately. We serve our community, love our neighbors, give to the poor, support missionaries, send mission teams, fight injustice, plant churches, and share the Gospel. We join God in what He is doing to make all things new.

Doctrinal Distinctives at EPIC

The best way to describe EPIC's theological foundation is using three words/phrases: Biblical, Consistent with Historical Christianity, and Reformed. Let's flesh out what we mean by both of those.

Biblical: The Bible is the Word of God; therefore, it is completely true and forms the foundation for all belief and practice. The Bible reveals all that we must know in order to be saved and all that we must do in order to glorify God. Therefore, we are committed to the study and application of the Bible to all of life. A constant question we ask is "what does the Bible say?"

Consistent with Historical Christianity: We recognize our indebtedness to those who have gone before us. Many wise, godly men and women have studied the Scriptures, counseled with one another and sought the Holy Spirit's guidance in forming doctrinal statements which help the church distinguish between truth and heresy. So, we fall in line with Christians throughout the ages in affirming one of the earliest Christian creeds, the Nicene Creed.

The Nicene Creed states the following:

*We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.*

*For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.*

We believe in one holy catholic (catholic here does not mean Roman Catholic but means the “universal” church) and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

*We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

Reformed: EPIC’s theological foundation also finds its roots in the Protestant Reformation which was sparked in 1517 by a German monk named Martin Luther. He was deeply disturbed by the practice of indulgences in the church where people paid money to have their sins forgiven by a priest. He was heartbroken that the church had elevated tradition and papal authority above the Word of God. He was undone by the reality that the church of Jesus Christ was no longer faithfully proclaiming the Gospel. So, on October 31, 1517, Luther nailed his famous 95 theses to the door at the Castle Church in Wittenburg. These words were intended to spark debate; instead, they sparked a reformation. At the heart of the Reformation (and our doctrine) were 5 “Solos.” The 5 Solas identified the distinctive theological positions held by the reformers and continue to serve as distinguishing characteristics of Reformed Theology. Below is a brief description of each.

Sola Gratia (Grace Alone)

Reformed Theology maintains that salvation cannot be obtained through human effort (Ephesians 1:7). It is only by the unmerited grace of God that we have a means of forgiveness and justification to restore our relationship with Him. Martin Luther said, “Truly, then, we are saved by grace alone, without works or other merit.”

Sola Fide (Faith Alone)

Coupled with the previous sola, we hold that justification is an act of God’s grace which can only be received through faith. No good work or deed on our part will allow us to earn this gift, but instead we put our faith in Christ as our only means of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). The main Reformed distinctive seen in Sola Fide is that the instrument of receiving God’s grace is faith, not faith and works. Faith alone is, of course, in reference to our justification, or being made right with God. The believer’s sanctification is a process of becoming more Christ like, where our good works spring forth from our faith.

Solus Christus (Christ Alone)

God is gracious, but He is also holy and just. In order for sinners to be justified, these sins must be accounted for. This was accomplished through the sinless life, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. The atoning death of Christ is the only means by which we can obtain the forgiveness of our sins (John 14:6; Acts 4:11-12).

Soli Deo Gloria (Glory of God Alone)

All things, including the justification of sinners and the lives of believers, are created for the purpose of bringing glory to God (Revelation 4:11). As stated in the Westminster Catechism, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever” (WSC 1).

Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone)

The Bible is our ultimate authority for understanding God, salvation, and how we are to live our lives. All matters of theology and doctrine are to find their source in Scripture, as it is God’s inerrant Word and is all-sufficient for teaching and correction (2 Timothy 3:16–17). John MacArthur says, “Scripture is therefore the perfect and only standard of spiritual truth, revealing infallibly all that we must believe in order to be saved and all that we must do in order to glorify God. That—no more, no less—is what sola Scriptura means.” Reformed Theology maintains that all theological stances must find their footing in Scripture.

In summary, Reformed Theology teaches that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, to the glory of God alone. Furthermore, the Bible is our authoritative source for understanding this and all other aspects of our faith. These biblical truths are succinctly captured in the 5 Solas.

Partnership at EPIC

The church is called the Body of Christ and when one part does not participate, the whole body suffers (1 Corinthians 12). Jesus said that the world will know that we are his disciples if we love one another (John 13:35). One of our greatest witnesses to a lost world is our devotion to one another. The New Testament is filled with “one another” exhortations further highlighting that following Jesus is not a journey to be taken alone. We are called as Christians to: submit to godly leaders (Hebrews 13:17-18, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13), support the work of the church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Matthew 6:19-21), confront others in sin (Galatians 6:1), not forsake assembling together (Hebrews 10:24-25), and spur one another on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25). All of these things are impossible to do without a commitment to a local body of believers. The New Testament makes it clear that it is impossible to follow Jesus well without deep connection with other Christians and deep commitment to Jesus’ bride, the church. Paul thanked the Philippians for their “partnership in the Gospel.” Based on the commands of Scripture, the need for community in order to grow, and our testimony to the world, we covenant together at EPIC to be Gospel Partners. We are partners *because of the Gospel, in the Gospel, and for the Gospel.*

First, we are *partners because of the Gospel.* We are united because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross. Therefore, we affirm the following:

1. I have personally trusted in Jesus Christ’ death and resurrection to save me, I have been baptized by immersion and am committed to following Jesus and His commands.
2. I believe that the Bible is the Word of God and is foundational for my knowledge of God, walk with Him, decision-making and the life of the church.
3. I affirm the Nicene Creed as an expression of the foundational elements of my faith.

Second, we are *partners in the Gospel.* The Gospel is not the ABC’s of Christian conversion but the A to Z of the Christian life. In other words, the Gospel is both what justifies us and sanctifies us. So, we seek to grow in the Gospel and help one another grow.

1. I covenant to attend services faithfully as a way of growing personally, supporting the growth of others, and weekly setting aside a day to worship God with others. I will not forsake assembling with this body that I am committing myself to.
2. I covenant to regularly seek opportunities to connect with a smaller group of believers for greater accountability, prayer, mutual edification, more focused Bible Study, and to spur one another on to follow Christ.
3. I covenant that the Gospel will be the lens through which I look at my life.
4. I covenant to confront others if they are living in a way that is “out-of-step” with the Gospel. I will lovingly and graciously confront sin always aware of my need to repent of my own sin. I ask my fellow partners at EPIC to confront me and discipline me if my life is not in line with the Gospel and is hurting the testimony of Christ and His Church.

Third, we are *partners for the Gospel.* As Christians, we are commissioned by Jesus to make disciples of all nations. God has a mission to rescue people from every tribe, tongue and nation; therefore, He created the church to be His hands and feet in order to accomplish that mission. So, we are partners in the spread of the Gospel and discipleship of the nations.

1. I covenant to serve the needs of the Body by getting involved in an area of ministry.
2. I covenant to give generously to the work of the ministry.
3. I covenant to consider ways that I can share the Gospel with others, go on mission trips and/or support teams that go, and support efforts by the church to love the community and share the Gospel.

If you agree with these statements and commit to partnering with us at EPIC – as we would commit to partnering with you – visit the Welcome Desk on a Sunday morning to sign the Partnership Agreement. Once signed you can turn it in at the Welcome Desk and in return we would like to give you a special gift to remember our partnership together! We thank you in advance for considering to partner with us, as “we exist to glorify God by declaring and demonstrating the power of the gospel for the sake of a broken world.”

EPIC Community Church meets at Ripken Stadium in Aberdeen, Maryland.

For more information about EPIC – or if you would like to Partner with us - visit our website and let us know!

www.epiccommunitychurch.org