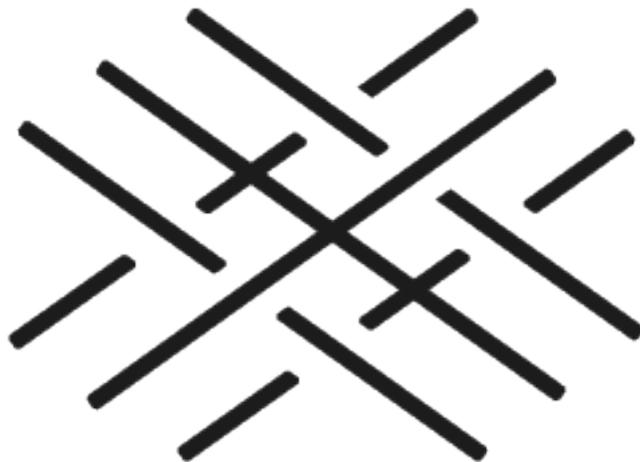


# The Theology of Union Church



(Adapted from Soma Family of Churches)

## **GOSPEL CENTRALITY**

We believe the gospel is the good news of what God has graciously accomplished for sinners through the sinless life, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection of His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, namely our forgiveness from sin and complete justification before God; this gospel is also the foundation for our confidence in the ultimate triumph of God's Kingdom and the consummation of His purpose for all creation in the new heavens and new earth.

This gospel is centered in Christ, is the foundation for the life of the Church, and is our only hope for eternal life; this gospel is not proclaimed if Christ's penal substitutionary death and bodily resurrection are not central to our message.

This gospel is not only the means by which people are saved, but also the truth and power by which people are sanctified; it is the truth of the gospel that enables us to genuinely and joyfully do what is pleasing to God and to grow in progressive conformity to the image of Christ. The salvation offered in this gospel message is received by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone; no ordinance, ritual, work, or any other activity on the part of man is required in order to be saved.

(Mark 1:1; Luke 24:46-47; John 3:16-18; Romans 1:16-17; Romans 1:18-25; 1 Corinthians

1:18-25; 2:2; 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; 9:13; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 1: 7-10; Colossians 1: 19-20; 2 Timothy 1:8-14; 2 Peter 3: 11-13; Jude 3-4; Revelation 21-22)

## **GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN SALVATION**

We affirm that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, not on the basis of foreseen faith but unconditionally, according to His sovereign good pleasure and will.

We believe that through the work of the Holy Spirit, God will draw the elect to faith in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, graciously and effectually overcoming their stubborn resistance to the gospel so that they will most assuredly and willingly believe.

We also believe that these, the elect of God whom he gave to the Son, will persevere in belief and godly behavior and be kept secure in their salvation by grace through faith.

We believe that God's sovereignty in this salvation neither diminishes the responsibility of people to believe in Christ nor marginalizes the necessity and power of prayer and evangelism, but rather reinforces and establishes them as the ordained means by which God accomplishes His ordained ends.

(John 1:12-13; 6:37-44; 10:25-30; Acts 13:48; 16:30-31; Romans 3-4; 8:1-17,31-39; 9:1-23; 10:8-10; Ephesians 1:4-5;2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Titus 3:3-7; 1 John 1:7,9)

## **HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERED MINISTRY**

The Holy Spirit is fully God, equal with the Father and Son, whose primary ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. He also convicts unbelievers of their need for Christ and imparts spiritual life through regeneration (the new birth).

The Spirit permanently indwells, graciously sanctifies, lovingly leads, and empowers all who are brought to faith in Christ so that they might live in obedience to the inerrant Scriptures. The model for our reliance upon the Spirit and our experience of His indwelling and empowering presence is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who was filled with the Spirit and entirely dependent upon His power for the performance of miracles, the preaching of the Kingdom of God, and all other dimensions of His earthly ministry.

The Holy Spirit who indwelt and empowered Christ in like manner indwells and empowers us with spiritual gifts he has bestowed for the work of ministry and the building up

of the body of Christ. All of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are still available today, but not one of them in particular is required to give evidence of the baptism or filling of the Spirit. The gifts are divine provisions central to spiritual growth and effective ministry and are to be eagerly desired, faithfully developed, and lovingly exercised according to biblical guidelines.

(Matthew 3:11; 12:28; Luke 4:1, 14; 5:17; 10:21; John 1:12-13; 3:1-15, 34; 14:12; 15:26-27; 16:7-15; Acts 2:14-21; 4:29-30; 10:38; Romans 8:9; 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-13; 12:28-31; 14:1-33; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 3:1-5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 5:18)

## **INAUGURATED ESCHATOLOGY**

The Kingdom of God is any place or person where the rule and reign of Jesus Christ is expressed and experienced. We believe Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom of God in His bodily ministry on the earth and continues to establish it by His Spirit through His body, the church today.

We live in between the inauguration and consummation of Jesus' Kingdom. Presently, the Church serves as a fore taste of the future reality when all will come under Christ as Head. As the Church submits to and serves Christ

today, the world gets to see and experience a preview of the future under the full rule and reign of Jesus Christ. The consummation of the Kingdom will be fulfilled when Jesus returns.

(Mark 1:15; Luke 17:20-21; Ephesians 1:10; 22-23; Revelation 20-21)

## **MISSIONAL CHURCH**

The church has a clear biblical mandate to look beyond its own community to the neighborhood, the nation, and the world as a whole; thus mission is not a program in the church but an essential identity of the Church. The Church is the missionary people of God sent into all of life to accomplish His purposes.

We are called to make Christ known through the gospel and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring His lordship to bear on every dimension of life. The primary way we fulfill this mission is by making disciples who make disciples leading to the starting and establishing of Gospel-Centered churches on mission. Our aim is that Jesus Christ would be more fully formed in each person through the ministry of those churches God enables us to plant around the world.

We also believe we are responsible neither to retreat from our culture nor to conform to it, but with humility, through

the Spirit and the truth of the gospel, to engage it boldly as we seek its transformation and submission to the lordship of Christ.

(Isaiah 52:7; Matthew 10:5-25; 28:18-20; Luke 4:18-19; 24:46-47; Acts 28:31; Romans 10:14-15; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Galatians 2:10; Ephesians 3:10; 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Hebrews 10:23-25; 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10)

## **TRINITARIAN IDENTITY**

The Church is not a building, an event or an institution. The Church is the people of God saved by the power of God for the purposes of God in this world. Jesus commanded us to make disciples who make disciples. Part of that work is baptizing His followers into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This means we are to establish them in their new identity. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation – they have a new identity. Our new identity as Disciples of Jesus are fleshed out as Gospel Learners, Family Members and Kingdom Ambassadors.

Soma churches agree to establish Disciples of Jesus in their new Trinitarian Identity. Our doing comes out of our being. Therefore, we love others like brothers and sisters, we serve the least of these as Jesus served us

and we are sent by the Spirit to be witnesses to Jesus in word and deed.

(Matthew 20: 25-28; 25:31-46; 28:16-20; John 1:12-14; 13:1-17; 20:21-22; Acts 1:8; Romans 8:14-17; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Ephesians 1:3-10; 2:10; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Peter 2:9-12; 1 John 3:1; 4:7-12)

## **MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES (HOUSE CHURCHES)**

We believe a Gospel Community on Mission (House Church) is the primary structure for making disciples. Disciples of Jesus increasingly submit to Him in all of life (worship), are being changed by Him (new identity), obey Him and teach others to do the same (multiplication). Discipleship is the process of bringing all of life under the lordship and empowering presence of Jesus Christ.

In order to accomplish the mission of making disciples we must create environments where life on life, life in community and life on mission can occur. Life on life allows for visibility and accessibility. We see each other's lives in the everyday stuff so that people know what it looks like to follow Jesus in all of life and we can assess whether people are growing in discipleship. Life in community ensures that a disciple looks more like Jesus. One on one discipleship will lead to a disciple

looking like the one who disciplined them. Community discipleship will lead to disciples looking more like Jesus as he works through His body. And Life on Mission both reveals areas of life that need gospel-led repentance and faith as well equip people how to make disciples who make disciples.

Soma churches agree that a Missional Community (House Church) is the best structure and environment for disciple-making.

(Matthew 4:19; 28:16-20; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:11-16; Colossians 1:28; Acts 2:42-47)

## **EVERYDAY RHYTHMS**

In order to lead people to see all of life as mission we must equip them to engage in everyday rhythms with gospel intentionality – doing what they would normally do differently in light of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

Everyday rhythms are activities that humans engaged in prior to their rebellion and now are engaged in by all people everywhere on a regular basis in all parts of the world. These rhythms of life are not the result of sinful rebellion (like relational discord, suffering and death), but they have been affected by sin. We show the world what it looks like to worship God in all of life by living out these same rhythms in submission to Jesus Christ.

These everyday rhythms are

Eat, Listen, Story, Bless, Celebrate, and Recreate  
(Work, Play, and Rest).

## **FAMILIAR LANGUAGE**

Soma consists of many different churches with different leadership, representing the redemption of a unique people and culture – but all part of one family of churches. Together, we believe God has called us to catalyze, equip and support the ongoing work of gospel saturation through church planting. We believe we are called to be part of a gospel movement.

Any good study of movements will reveal that effective movements require transferable and reproducible concepts. Part of what makes for ease of transferability is common language. In light of this, Soma churches agree to some basic concepts that will allow us to transition easily from one city to another both in our equipping as well as our sending. We have chosen language and concepts that capture the heart of what it means to be God's people on mission in any place. This includes our Gospel Foundations, Identity Statements of Family, Servants and Missionaries and Everyday Rhythms of Eat, Listen, Story, Bless, Celebrate & Recreate. In some cases, leaders may decide to use different words to carry the same concepts where it is culturally necessary.

## **ORDERED EQUALITY IN SHARED MINISTRY**

Both men and women are together created in the divine image and are therefore equal before God as persons, possessing the same moral dignity and value, and have equal access to God through faith in Christ.

Men and women are together the recipients of spiritual gifts designed to empower them for ministry in the local church and beyond. God's intent for the church is for both men and women to be encouraged and equipped to minister and serve in accordance with the gifts He has given them.

In the home, both husbands and wives are responsible to God for spiritual nurture and vitality, but God has given to the man primary responsibility to lead his wife and family in accordance with the servant leadership and sacrificial love modeled by Jesus Christ.

The Elders (plural) of each local church have been granted authority under the headship of Jesus Christ to provide oversight, set an example of what is normative for the church and serve the church through prayer and equipping. The office of Elder is restricted to men who are an example of what a godly man looks like leading a household.

(Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18; Acts 18:24-26; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 3:1-7; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7)

## **DIVERSITY OF EXPRESSIONS**

Every team of leaders and cultural context is different. God will grant each group a unique combination of capacity, calling and gifting that suits the context he sends them to for the work he calls them to do there. Just like every family member has things in common while expressing their commonalities in unique ways, Soma expects to see our common convictions and language expressed with great diversity. Some will look like a house church movement while others may have a very strong Sunday gathering to supplement the work of mission through missional communities (house churches).