

## **The Foundation**

In the beginning, God set creation in motion, blessed it, and made it good. Humanity is made with the mark of this goodness, capable of incredible beauty, creativity, and kindness. However, as sometimes reflected in our choices, and as can be seen in looking around our world, violence, greed, abuse, selfishness, and brokenness are real. Things are not as they should be.

We believe in a full story of redemption. That God is gracious, loving, and good; that he loves humanity and creation; and that in and through his Son, and by the power of the Spirit, there is an unstoppable trajectory of love and redemption.

We profess the historic Nicene Creed (381 AD) of the Church. We believe God extends to us relationship and intimacy, and that in our unique way at Ancaster Village Church, the following Guiding Values help us discover this within our ongoing journey of faith. These values flow in and out of each other; they do not stand alone. They help us evaluate what we're doing and they point us towards an ideal that we believe God has given our church for our time and place.

## **Jesus is Our Pastor**

**Value:** Jesus showed us how to live a life to the fullest. We think the world would be a better place if everyone imitated his life. But he's more than a model. We believe he's alive and that he wants us to live our lives with him, in him, and through him.

**Practice:** We know Jesus hears and sees us and that he speaks, so we intentionally listen. When we hurt, we ask him to heal. When we have questions, we ask him for guidance. We ask him to show us how to live and to live through us. We believe he's in the room with us and capable of

amazing things. We have a desire to see and experience the mystery of him doing signs and wonders in our midst. Among other activities, we intentionally gather once a week to participate in these things together, to worship, give thanks, discuss the Scriptures, and partake in the Communion Table.

### **We Practise Faith Together**

**Value:** We believe that intellectual integrity, honesty, open conversation, vulnerability, doubt, and discussion are invaluable and helpful in our faith formation. We celebrate that at AVC you do not have to put on a facade; you can be yourself. We want to be a space for people to belong as they reflect on their faith and the church. AVC is a place for those who are tired, have been wounded, and looking for something fresh.

**Practice:** We create space for discussion and asking questions. We talk about current issues in our world that matter. Our approach to the authoritative, inspired, and sacred Bible is that it offers us stories and insights into this great project called life. We share our lives with each other, submitting our circumstances to ask each other for help, to listen, and to walk with us in faith. We're not afraid of admitting that we may not always have the answer.

### **Following Spirit's Voice**

**Value:** We believe that consensus is possible as we discern the voice of the Spirit together in community. We believe that the Spirit speaks, guides, and is always interested in seeing her church work for the goodness of God's plan of redemption.

**Practice:** Our decision-making structure and governance model is completely based on Spirit-led processes of discernment. We take the

necessary time to practice listening prayer together as a community. We teach the practice of listening prayer. We encourage everyone at AVC to participate in this humbling and exciting experience.

### **A Safe Place**

Value: Those who feel marginalized, pushed aside, or unheard should feel safe at AVC. In God's love there is justice, compassion, equity, equality, intrinsic worth, and dignity for all. The ground before the Communion Table is level for all, and all are welcome there.

Practice: We do our best to meet all people with love and inclusion, wanting to hear their story, share in their journey, and learn from them. People are given space to share and join in service together as they are comfortable.

### **Our Faith Shapes Our Practices and Priorities**

Value: We believe words need action. Our faith shapes daily practices in ourselves, at home, in the church, in our community, and around the world.

Practice: We attempt to connect our faith, discussions, teaching, and spiritual practices with how we live. We intentionally create experiences and places to practice our beliefs, take risks, show mercy, fight for justice, and to pursue reconciliation. In this way we believe our practices in church should empower us to be a people living as reflections of Jesus in our community. To that end, we strive for balance between our time in church and in the community and purposeful reflection in how we spend our time.

### **We're Here to Serve Our Community**

Value: We want to generously serve and care for our community, encouraging and helping it to be a great place to live, work, and play.

Practice: We choose to purposefully invest our time, talents, and resources in projects, events, and organizations that serve our community before creating our own versions of those things.

### **We Like to Eat**

Value: Everybody eats, and food brings people together. Our relationships go deeper, laughter and stories are shared, and we become better listeners when we meet around a table to eat and drink together.

Practice: From our first days meeting in Ancaster's Coach & Lantern Pub, food has been a part of our gatherings. We eat together. Once a month we potluck. We encourage the practice of hospitality in our homes. When life overwhelms someone, we take them food.

### **We Know Your Name**

Value: We know your name. You have something that makes us better. Being a church means that everyone plays a part. Our small size creates the environment for our values to thrive, to be quick to adapt, and to be responsive to our community's needs.

Practice: Everyone gets involved in something; everyone lends a hand. Our weekly gathering, work in the community, and care for each other happens because everyone participates. As we do things purposefully and to the best of our ability, we laugh at mistakes and move on. In this sometimes messy environment we find beauty, freedom, and grace. We are on the lookout for ways to support and begin more communities of faith.

## **It Takes a Village**

Value: We believe we need to pray for, bless, and delight in our children. To help children grow up in faith they need to be involved, heard, and considered.

Practice: Our kids run around and they're loud. Sometimes kids interrupt things. Sometimes in the middle of a serious moment, kids make noises of all sorts. We intentionally create times for kids to be kids, to learn with other kids, to learn alongside adults, and to teach adults.