

**Core,  
Confession,  
and Convictions**



**What We DO NOT Want**

- Making CORE elements of the Christian faith unnecessary – “anything goes”
- Making CORE elements of the Christian faith unclear or unattractive
- Treating CONFSSIONAL elements as unimportant; downplaying the truths of our reformed heritage
- Making our CONFSSIONAL distinctive a condition of membership or fellowship – “doctrinal police” on patrol
- Moving CONVICTIONS into the first or second circle
- Treating CONVICTIONS as unimportant; being afraid to discuss or re-think convictions on the basis of what the Bible teaches

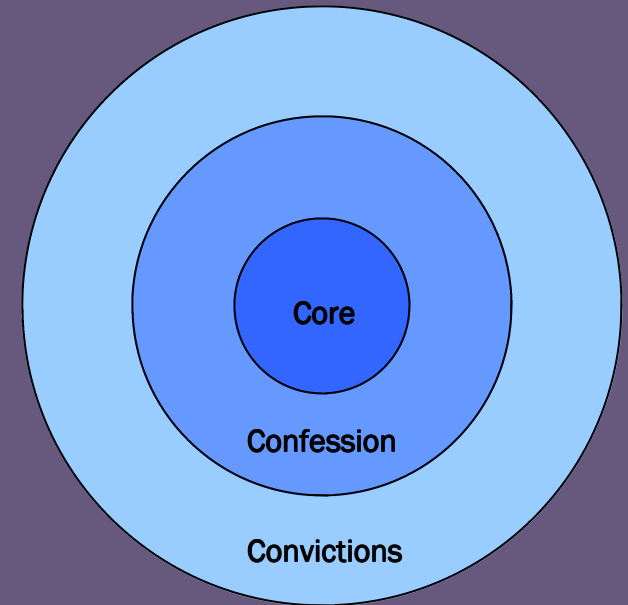
**What We DO Want**

- Carefully guarded unity on the gospel of Jesus Christ
- Clear teaching of Scripture consistent with our commitment to our confessional standards
- Gracious, patient, acceptance of those who differ on matters of personal convictions

**Zion Church**

5511 South 27th Street  
Lincoln Nebraska 68512  
402-476-2524  
office@zionpca.com  
www.zionpca.com

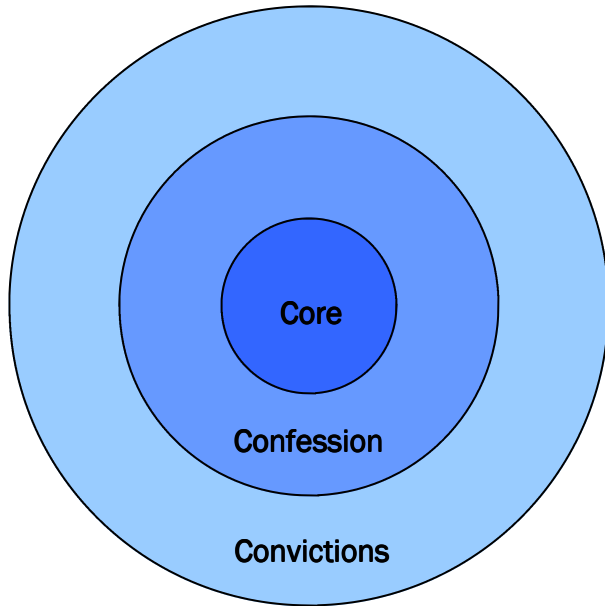
Sunday Morning Worship: 8:30, 11:00  
Christian Education for all ages: 9:45  
Infant and toddler nursery provided.



**The Target of Convictions**

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. Psalm 133*

# Core, Confession, and Convictions



## The Target of Convictions

A Zion Church, we understand that God has brought us together from many different backgrounds. We include both members who have been Christians for many years, and new believers who are just beginning a life of discipleship.

We understand that God has given us a foundational unity in the Gospel of Christ: *There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* (Eph. 4:5-6)

We also know that we are called to guard that unity against things that often divide Christians. *“One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.”* (Rom. 14:5)

We use the Target of Convictions to help us both guard the essentials of unity, and grant one another liberty.

## CORE

At the center of the target are our Core beliefs. These are key issues of basic Christian orthodoxy that are central to the faith and cannot be compromised lest the gospel itself be compromised. A member of Zion must agree with these core issues of the faith.

**Examples:** salvation by faith in Christ, the truth and authority of the Bible, the Deity of Jesus Christ.

We must be willing to DIE for the core of the faith.

## CONFESSION

The second circle of the target contains our confessional beliefs. These are Zion’s understanding of what the Bible teaches about important, but less central issues of faith, which we hold in common with many reformed and Presbyterian churches through centuries of church history. These are confessional commitments of Zion Church and the Presbyterian Church in America.

We are glad to enjoy Christian brotherhood with many who share the first-circle core of our faith, even though they might not share the details of our confessional documents. While all members of Zion are committed to the first-circle core beliefs, all Zion’s officers (elders and deacons) are also committed to the confessional elements of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. (Free copies are available in the church office.)

While these matters are not required for membership or Christian fellowship, second-circle confessional matters are not unimportant, and the teaching and preaching ministries at Zion will urge all who hear to accept and believe them as we encounter them in the Bible.

**Examples:** Calvinism, infant baptism, Covenant Theology.

We must be willing to DEBATE confessional issues.

## CONVICTIONS

The third circle of the target contains personal interpretations of scripture that we at Zion will certainly differ about. We must graciously allow others to hold convictions that are different from our own, as long as they do not go against God’s word.

Third-circle matters can easily cause problems in a church that does not guard against this danger. So when someone begins to advocate a third-circle conviction as though it were a core belief (necessary for all Christians, without which there can be no fellowship), then the leadership of Zion will remind that someone that this is a third-circle matter and admonish them not to make it a test of fellowship or orthodoxy. We must allow one another the liberty to disagree about third-circle matters.

**Examples:** schooling, entertainment, use of alcohol.

We must be willing to DIALOG with those who hold opposing convictions.

**Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**

Ephes. 4:1-6

A church that does not guard the **core** is in danger of apostasy. But we must also guard against the tendency to move everything into the core.

- A church that moves second-circle matters into the core becomes sectarian.
- A church that moves third-circle matters into the core becomes schismatic.

There should be no schism in the body; but the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. 1 Cor. 12:25-26