

Historic Baptist Beliefs

- **Soul Liberty:**

Each person has both the right and responsibility to enter into a direct, saving relationship with God through Christ. This is a personal relationship needing no outside mediation or structure. God created each of us with a free soul, because of this, we have the freedom to find and follow God's will and way.

- *Matthew 16: 13-16*
- **Believer's Baptism:**

Baptism (from the Greek: *to dip under*) of people who have experienced the saving grace of Jesus Christ and have made a conscious decision to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Infants are not baptized as they are not able to understand or make a lifelong decision. Persons baptized as infants are not required to be re-baptized at Cullowhee Baptist Church.

-*Acts 8:26-40*
- **Religious Liberty:**

Decisions about faith and one's relationship with God are up to the individual, not for the state. This is strongly tied to the principle of soul liberty. Because of the Baptists, religious freedom was secured in the Bill of Rights of the United States of America.

-*Acts 5: 17-32*
- **Priesthood of All Believers:**

One of the foundational Baptist principles. It is the conviction that every Christian is a priest before God. Each one of us stands directly before God with no need of intermediaries. No one tells us what we must believe or how we must relate to God. Each person receives blessings and grace directly from God, each person is accountable directly to God for our life and actions. This also means that each person is God's envoy, who is called to a ministry within the world. We are to bring God's love to the world.

-*Revelation 1: 4-6*
- **Congregational Autonomy:**

The local church is free to govern its own affairs. Historian Walter Shurden has written, "Church freedom is the historic Baptist affirmation that local churches are free, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, to determine their membership and leadership, to order their worship and work, to ordain whom they perceive as gifted for ministry, (male *or* female), and to participate in the larger Body of Christ, of whose unity and mission Baptists are proudly a part."

-*Acts 2: 40-47*