



church membership

WELCOME

Dear Friend

Welcome to Let's Get Going, our Considering Membership Class! Thank you so much for making the effort to be here.

We are thrilled that you are thinking of joining our church. We hope that this course will help you understand the way that we are trying to do things on our 'boat'.

We would love you to join our church if you feel that is what God is saying. If you don't end up joining our family, then we hope you will soon join another church. But remember that you are very welcome to visit our church at any time!

Please ensure that you read all the appendices and additional learning material given.

If you have any questions that arise at any given stage of the process please note these down and be sure to raise them in the question answer period, if they have not been addressed by then.

Enjoy the course!

Paul Nyamuda

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Introduction

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3 thousand were added to their number that day.

(Acts 2 :41)

It has been said that the modern church is like a basketball game. Ten exhausted, overworked, sweaty players participating on court being observed, worshipped, or booed by 10,000 out-of-shape, know-it-all, fickle fans. Unfortunately, church has become the most popular spectator sport of this century. The New Testament church had no place for spectators, only participants. The original apostles built the church on the belief that each person had a supernatural gift, a divine call, and a special function. The pastor's job was to equip each member to do the work of the ministry. Every member was a minister. Every pastor was an equipper. This is the way it should be today.

From the very beginning of the church, those who accepted this message were baptized, and about 3 thousand were added to their number. It should be the same today. Those who are saved should be added. Church membership is not optional.

As new disciples are being added to the church, it is important that they understand spiritual foundations, membership requirements, and membership commitments.

1. Spiritual Foundations

Everyone who joins Go Christian Church, whether they have been saved for ten years or ten minutes, must have proper foundations. The most basic spiritual foundations are found in Acts 2:38,

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

- ◆ Repentance
- ◆ Water Baptism
- ◆ Holy Spirit

2. Membership Requirements

These are three simple requirements to join Go Christian Church:

- ◆ Pre or post reading.
- ◆ Attend "Let's Get Going".
- ◆ Commitment to get baptised if you have not yet.

3. Membership Commitments

What is expected of members? We have some basic expectations of all church members. These need to be first understood and then declared. In this course we outline what these commitments are.

Who are we and Where are we going?

1. We are a movement of God-honouring believers progressively discipling nations by communicating and demonstrating the Kingdom of God.

2. Our strategy is to transform the thinking of generations by:

- ◆ Making Disciples
- ◆ Building Families
- ◆ Raising Leaders
- ◆ Transforming Society
- ◆ Establishing Churches

3. We are an Apostolic House or Base Church.

There are many outstanding churches in the New Testament, but one of the churches that particularly arrests our attention is the church at Antioch. I believe this is because it has the distinguishing characteristics of being a base church. This Antioch church seems to have affected the history of the world beyond any of the other churches of its time. What are the ingredients of a base church?

What a Base Church is not:

- ◆ It is not a headquarters for other churches
- ◆ It is not a mother Church that smothers other congregations working in the area
- ◆ It is not necessarily a mega Church: - Being a large church does not in and of itself qualify it to be a base church. There are many large churches today that are not base churches.

◆ A base church in my opinion must have a high percentage of the following characteristics:

- ◆ It is a Church that has built into its psyche, "We are here to go beyond ourselves." Not that it neglects its own needs, but as someone has said "The church is the only society that exists primarily for its non-members". It sees itself as being strategic to facilitate the success of others. The vision for the nations is a passion that pulsates and permeates every part of the church. It is reflected in its prayer and praise. It joyfully gives large percentages of its income (20%, 30%, 40% and more) to resource church planting and ministry beyond itself. It is willing to give of its key leaders and people for church planting.

- ◆ It develops a radical New Breed of Christian. A people who have not come into the kingdom just for personal life enhancement, but out of a deep gratitude to Christ for saving them from certain judgment. Thus they are willing to be inconvenienced to fulfil His purpose with joy.
- ◆ It is a church that is not built around having regular high profile "guest speakers". It avoids the danger of developing an addiction or appetite in its people to hear the latest "in vogue" speakers. Not only that, it develops the ability to remain faithful and endures extended periods when its own key leaders are away travelling, because it is not built around entertaining speakers but around a shared passion to see the nations impacted. It is an unselfish church filled with unselfish people.
- ◆ It is a church that requires great maturity among its people. Maturity is not measured in age or how many years you've been a Christian but is an attitude that refuses to allow any offence or betrayal or hardship to stop your honouring of Jesus as Lord and being generous with all. You are to see "the bigger picture." Its people are loving, forgiving and gracious.
- ◆ It not only equips people for ministry, it releases people into the activity of ministry for both local and trans-local work.
- ◆ It is filled with an atmosphere of vibrant faith and vision.
- ◆ It attracts the Ephesians 4 ministry offices to it. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and pastors of high profile gravitate towards base churches for a period of refreshing, recovery or restoration. It needs a calibre of local elders who have enough security and stature not to be threatened by these gifted ministries, but to serve them graciously while remaining clear and confident of their local governmental responsibility and authority. A base church will also activate the emergence of Ephesians 4 ministries from within its ranks very quickly. (ie Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers).
- ◆ Not only is it outward looking in terms of the nations, but reaching the lost in its own city is also a high priority.
- ◆ It is a church that is rugged, militant, aggressive, violent and forceful in the spirit dimension. It will not tolerate passivity, apathy or wimpy defeatist attitudes in itself.
- ◆ It needs to be a model that substantiates the message of this movement. When people see a base church they should be able to catch what the vision and ethos of the apostolic team is all about.
- ◆ A base church does not just have academic presentations about God's reality. It needs to regularly experience the substance of God's manifested presence in supernatural signs that bring wonder, awe and amazement!

◆ It lives, progresses and delights in the Grace of God. It protects its people from the bondage and fear of legalism. Just as Paul rebuked Peter to his face in Antioch for his hypocrisy so that others would not be led astray, its leaders are not afraid to address any issue that has the potential to steal genuine freedom and liberty. It is connected and open to apostolic correction and input.

Adapted from Rob Rufus

How do we build?

Outlined below is our ministry ethos. This is aligned with our strategy and purpose.

STRATEGY = WHAT?

PURPOSE = WHY?

TEAM ETHOS = HOW?

1. We are a God-honouring, Christ-centred people.

We aim to honour God in all that we do.

Col. 3:23

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men;

Ps 115:1

Not to us, O Jehovah, not to us, but to Your name give glory, for Your mercy and for Your truth's sake.

Acts 24:16

And in this I exercise myself, always to have a blameless conscience toward God and men.

Isaiah 55:4-5, 13b

Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a Leader and Commander of peoples. Behold, You shall call a nation that You do not know; a nation that did not know You shall run to You because of Jehovah Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You.and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off.

B. We aim to keep Christ the central focus of all our endeavours.

Gal. 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ, and I live; yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me. And that life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith toward the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself on my behalf.

Phil. 1:21

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

2. We are passionate about His presence.

Exodus 33: 7-20

Now it was Moses' way to put up the Tent of meeting outside the tent-circle, at some distance away; giving it the name of The Tent of meeting. And everyone desiring to make his prayer to the Lord went to the Tent of meeting outside the tent-circle. And whenever Moses went out to the Tent of meeting, all the people got up and everyone went to the door of his tent, looking after Moses till he went inside the Tent. And whenever Moses went into the Tent, the pillar of cloud came down, and took its place by the door of the Tent, as long as the Lord was talking with Moses. And all the people saw the cloud at the door of the Tent, and they went down on their faces, everyone at the door of his tent. And the Lord had talk with Moses face to face, as a man may have talk with his friend. And when Moses came back to the tents, his servant, the young man Joshua, the son of Nun, did not come away from the Tent. And Moses said to the Lord, See, you say to me, Be this people's guide on their journey, but you have not made clear to me whom you will send with me. But you have said, I have knowledge of you by name, and you have grace in my eyes. If then I have grace in your eyes, let me see your ways, so that I may have knowledge of you and be certain of your grace; and my prayer is that you will keep in mind that this nation is your people. And he said, I myself will go with you and give you rest. **And Moses said, If you yourself are not going with us, do not send us on from here.** For is not the fact of your going with us the sign that I and this people have grace in your eyes, so that we, that is, I and your people, are separate from all other people on the face of the earth? And the Lord said to Moses, I will do as you say: for you have grace in my eyes, and I have knowledge of you by your name. And Moses said, O Lord, let me see your glory. And he said, I will make all the light of my being come before you, and will make clear to you what I am; I will be kind to those to whom I will be kind, and have mercy on those on whom I will have mercy. But it is not possible for you to see my face, for no man may see me and still go on living.

Ps. 41:12

And I, in my integrity You uphold me; and You set me before Your face forever.

Ps 51:11

Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.

3. We embrace God's kingdom in ALL aspects of our lives.

We encourage a balanced life-style. (1 Tim. 3:4-5; 1 Tim 6: 6-10, 17-19)

“ruling his own house well, having children in subjection with all honor.

(For if a man does not know to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) “

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”

“For we brought nothing into the world, and it is clear that we can carry nothing out. But having food and clothing, we will be content. But they who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which plunge men into destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all evils, of which some having lusted after, they were seduced from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Charge the rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, He offering to us richly all things to enjoy, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to share, to be generous, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

We are engaged with social issues. (Gal. 2:10)

Only it was their desire that we would give thought to the poor; which very thing I had much in mind to do.

4. We are people of BOTH the Word and the Spirit.

1 Thess. 1: 4-5

Being conscious, my brothers, dear to God, that you have been marked out by God's purpose; Because our good news came to you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, so that you were completely certain of it; even as you saw what our behaviour to you was like from our love to you.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and full of power, and is sharper than any two-edged sword, cutting through and making a division even of the soul and the spirit, the bones and the muscles, and quick to see the thoughts and purposes of the heart.

Acts 6:3, 10

Take then from among you seven men of good name, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, to whom we may give control of this business. ...But they were not able to get the better of him, for his words were full of wisdom and of the Spirit.

John 4:23-24 But the time is coming, and is even now here, when the true worshippers will give worship to the Father in the true way of the spirit, for these are the worshippers desired by the Father. God is Spirit: then let his worshippers give him worship in the true way of the spirit.

5. We are dedicated to making disciples who make disciples.

Titus 2:1-9

But let your words be in agreement with true and right teaching:

That old men are to be simple in their tastes, serious, wise, true in faith, in love, and of a quiet mind. That old women are to be self-respecting in behaviour, not saying evil of others, not given to taking much wine, teachers of that which is good, Training the younger women to have love for their husbands and children, To be wise in mind, clean in heart, kind; working in their houses, living under the authority of their husbands; so that no evil may be said of the word of God. To the young men give orders to be wise and serious-minded: In all

things see that you are an example of good works; holy in your teaching, serious in behaviour, Saying true and right words, against which no protest may be made, so that he who is not on our side may be put to shame, unable to say any evil of us. Servants are to be under the authority of their masters, pleasing them in all things, without argument;

Gal. 4:19

My children, of whom I am again in birth-pains till Christ is formed in you,

6. We love learning.

Heb. 5:11-14; 6:1

Of whom we have much to say which it is hard to make clear, because you are slow of hearing. For this reason let us go on from the first things about Christ to full growth; And though by this time it would be right for you to be teachers, you still have need of someone to give you teaching about the first simple rules of God's revelation; you have become like babies who have need of milk, and not of solid food. For everyone who takes milk is without experience of the word of righteousness: he is a child. But solid food is for men of full growth, even for those whose senses are trained by use to see what is good and what is evil.

Eph. 4:14-15

So that we may be no longer children, sent this way and that, turned about by every wind of teaching, by the twisting and tricks of men, by the deceits of error; But saying true words in love, may come to full growth in him, who is the head, even Christ;

Acts 2:42

And they kept their attention fixed on the Apostles' teaching and were united together in the taking of broken bread and in prayer.

7. We depend on prayer.

Col. 4: 2-4

Give yourselves to prayer at all times, keeping watch with praise; And making prayer for us, that God may give us an open door for the preaching of the word, the secret of Christ, for which I am now in chains; So that I may make it clear, as it is right for me to do.

Jer. 17:5

This is what the Lord has said: Cursed is the man who puts his faith in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart is turned away from the Lord.

8. We have a team-oriented approach to ministry.

(2 Cor. 2:12-13).

Now when I came to Troas for the good news of Christ, and there was an open door for me in the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit because Titus my brother was not there: so I went away from them, and came into Macedonia.

This means we celebrate God-given diversity of ethnicity (Acts 13:1-).

Now there were at Antioch, in the church there, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon who was named Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, a relation of Herod the king, and Saul. And while they were doing the Lord's work, and going without food, the Holy Spirit said, Let Barnabas and Saul be given to me for the special work for which they have been marked out by me. Then, after prayer and going without food they put their hands on them, and sent them away.

This means we celebrate God-given diversity of ministry gifts (Eph. 4:11-13).

And truly He gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. And this until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

This means we celebrate God-given diversity of function (Eph. 4:16).

Through whom all the body, being rightly formed and united together, by the full working of every part, is increased to the building up of itself in love.

We encourage healthy team dynamics. A team dynamic is a PATTERN of behaviour that is REPEATED according to a script. Team dynamics generate energy that may be positive or negative.

9. Our approach to leadership is characterized by

◆ Christ-likeness (Phil. 2: 5)

Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus,

◆ Brokenness (Phil. 2: 6-8)

To whom, though himself in the form of God, it did not seem that to take for oneself was to be like God; But he made himself as nothing, taking the form of a servant, being made like men; And being seen in form as a man, he took the lowest place, and let himself be put to death, even the death of the cross.

◆ Authenticity (Eph. 4:15; John 1:14b)

But that you, speaking the truth in love, may in all things grow up to Him who is the Head, even Christ;...

...And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth.

◆ Servant-heartedness (Matthew 20:20-28)

Then the mother of Zebedee's children came to Him with her sons, worshiping and desiring a certain thing from Him. And He said to her, What do you desire? She said to Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit in Your kingdom, the one on Your right hand and the other on the left. But Jesus answered and said, You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They said to Him, We are able. And He said to them, You shall indeed drink of My cup

and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but to those for whom it has been prepared by My Father. And when the ten heard it, they were indignant concerning the two brothers. But Jesus called them and said, You know that the rulers of the nations exercise dominion over them, and they who are great exercise authority over them. However, it shall not be so among you. But whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

◆ **The Fear of the Lord** (1 Tim. 5:21; Jer. 17:9-10)

“I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you guard these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality.”

“The heart is a twisted thing, not to be searched out by man: who is able to have knowledge of it? I the Lord am the searcher of the heart, the tester of the thoughts, so that I may give to every man the reward of his ways, in keeping with the fruit of his doings.

◆ **Role-modeling** (1 Pet 5:1-6)

I exhort the elders who are among you, I being also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God among you, taking the oversight, not by compulsion, but willingly; nor for base gain, but readily; nor as lording it over those allotted to you by God, but becoming examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory. Likewise, younger ones, be subject to older ones, and all being subject to one another. Put on humility. For God resists proud ones, but He gives grace to the humble. Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you in due time,

◆ **Releasing** (John 17:18)

“As You have sent Me into the world, even so I have sent them into the world.”

◆ **Mission-minded excellence** (John 17:4)

I have glorified You upon the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

10. We are harvest-orientated movement, embedded in a seamless organism.

Eph 4:16

“Through whom all the body, being rightly formed and united together, by the full working of every part, is increased to the building up of itself in love. “

Eph 2:21-22

In whom all the building, rightly joined together, comes to be a holy house of God in the Lord; In whom you, with the rest, are united together as a living-place of God in the Spirit.

Eph. 1:22-23

And he has put all things under his feet, and has made him to be head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the full measure of him in whom all things are made complete.

Hence we are characterized by the following:

- ◆ Word of mouth viral marketing agents.
- ◆ Co-operation is rewarded as opposed to competition.
- ◆ Loyalty to the solution as opposed to our silos.
- ◆ We have a connected approach to delivery.
- ◆ We make ourselves available as a valued resource.
- ◆ There is alignment between personal goals and team goals.

What is the role of elders/overseers?

1. To Watch

The pastor's job is like a watchman or a guard. As such, he must sound a warning when he sees danger approaching. He must first keep watch over his own life. Because there are some things that only the watchman will see and discern, all Christians need to be under the covering of a watchman/pastor who is gifted to see and warn against spiritual danger.

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!" (Acts 20:28-31)

But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them, that man will be taken away because of his sin. But I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood. (Ezekiel 33:6).

2. To Pray

Faced with more needs that they could possibly meet, the apostles had to prioritise. They couldn't do everything. They decided that prayer was non-negotiable. They could delegate other activities, but they had to personally give themselves to prayer. Thus, prayer is a vital part of the job description of a pastor and elder.

So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said. "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables... we will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:2,4)

3. To Feed

One of the primary responsibilities of a pastor is to feed the flock by teaching and preaching God's word. The church was birthed when the Holy Spirit was poured out and the word was preached. The Spirit and the word always work together. In a generation addicted to preaching that tickles the ear, God is anointing preaching that pierces the heart.

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "feed my sheep"(John 21:17)

So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables...and we will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word. (Acts 6:2,4)

4. To Lead

At the very heart of the pastors job is leadership. Biblical leadership is always by example, not by domination or manipulation. It has been said that there are three types of sheep: rams that lead, ewes that follow, and wandering sheep that get lost. Every Christian should either be a ram and lead or find a ram and follow. The "ram" in the local church is the senior pastor supported by his team of elders. His job is to direct the affairs of the church. This means he is responsible to set the direction of the church.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve: not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. (1 Pet 5:2,3)

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.(1 Timothy 5:17)

5. To Equip

Jesus ministered to the multitudes, but he invested most of his time training and preparing a small group of disciples for future ministry. Pastors and elders must follow his example and invest their lives into making disciples who will be able to minister.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up... (Eph 4:11,12)

What is the responsibility of the congregation to their pastors and elders?

1. To Submit

Submission requires that we acknowledge the spiritual authority God has placed in our lives, Submission means we can no longer be independent and unconnected. Church membership requires an attitude of submissiveness toward your pastors, elders and spiritual leaders.

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Heb13:17)

2. To Respect

Respect for spiritual leaders has nothing to do with their educational achievements, social status, or any other natural accomplishment. We are told to respect them because of their work, which is really God's work.

Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.(1 Thessalonians 5:12,13).

3. To Imitate

Biblical leadership is first and foremost by example. As church members, we are to observe the life of our spiritual leader and imitate their faith.

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. (Hebrews 13:7)

4. To Honour

Paul made it crystal clear that those who invest their lives planting and establishing the church should receive honour. They should also be paid well by the church for their hard work. On the other hand, pastors must be willing to work to provide for their needs when necessary. This is usually the case in the start up stage of a new church. However, as soon as the church is financially able, the pastor deserves to receive a salary.

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the scripture says "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." (1 Timothy 5:17,18)

5. To Trust

Every church member should demonstrate trust in their leaders by refusing to entertain accusations against them. The Apostle John referred to Satan as the accuser of the brothers. Knowing Satan is the source of accusation, we must resist all negative accusations and choose to trust.

Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. (1 Timothy 5:19)

6. To Pray

Paul constantly requested prayer from the churches he established. Why? Because he was well aware of how much spiritual leaders need prayer covering. It is essential that church members consistently pray for their pastor and his family.

Brothers, pray for us. (1 Thessalonians 5:25)

How is a Local Church Governed?

The Church in its local expression (and it must be remembered that the local expression should be a true representation of the universal expression) is to be autonomous in the sense that it is **self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.**

Self Governing

In relationship to the Church the bible speaks of “those that rule” or “he that rules” To be a ruler in the House of the Lord one must meet certain qualifications, but the important thing to see is that God has made provision for government in every local church even as He made provision for government in every family.

One-man Rule – The problem with one-man rule is that when the one man fails or falls, the whole family, church or nation suffers the consequences.

Democracy – If we function in the Church on the basis of democracy, it is going to be immature and those who have not yet developed in areas of spiritual sensitivity and divine vision who will control the church.

External Control – Gods government for the family and the church is not external control. We rebel this concept in the family as has been practiced in communistic countries where the state or central authority monitors and controls the individual family relationships. Yet we have taken a different attitude toward this form of government in the Church. In the case of external control, the decision making body is totally removed from the scene and has no criterion on which to base effective judgment.

Deacon Board or Council – Most often those who serve on this type of board or council are elected by popular vote and may or may not qualify under the scriptural qualifications of an elder or a deacon (1 Tim.3). The main danger of a deacon board is that if these leaders do not meet the qualifications of an elder, they can tie the hands of the spiritual leadership appointed by God. The Church can easily be directed by individual with knowledge and skill in the world of business but not necessarily having the same skills with relation to Word of God and listening to the voice of the Spirit It follows that much decision making will be made on the basis of the wisdom of the world and not the higher wisdom of God that is often at odds with the world’s ways.

Biblical Eldership – God’s form of government in His house is plurality of elders. Every local church that has had time to come to stability should be lead by a leadership team. Those who have been given the responsibility of ruling and government in the house of the Lord are referred to biblically as the elders (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17, 24). Elders are mature ministries that God has raised up in the various churches who meet strict spiritual, domestic and moral qualifications. These are ministries who have demonstrated their maturity and who have a fathers burden for the local church to which they belong. These are ministries who have had time to know the ways of the Lord and are called by God to shepherd His people. These are ministries who are sensitive to the voice of God and have demonstrated Spirit-ruled and Spirit-led lives that that the qualifications for this office demand.

Equality with Headship – God’s form of plural leadership involves both equality and headship. This principle is first demonstrated in the Godhead. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all equal. Yet there is an order of headship. The father sent the Son, the Son sent the Spirit. The Spirit bears witness to the Son, the Son bears witness to the Father. The ultimate figure in the Godhead is the Father (1Cor. 11:3)

Under God’s form of government the New Testament Local Church can be said to be self-governing. It looks to no outside authority, no special group functioning outside or above the local church to effect decisions. The Local Church is the final court of appeal for disputes between believers (Matt. 18:15-17), for questions of doctrine (Acts 15) and for the discipline of moral conduct (1 Cor. 5: 1-5).

Self Supporting

Gods Financial System: -

- ◆ Tithes and offerings

How Do We Support the Vision?

“But just as you excel in everything in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving.
(2 Corinthians 8:7)

From the Friar Tetzal selling indulgences to modern televangelists selling prayer cloths, the church has often been scandalized by the way it raises and manages money. If we follow biblical financial principles for raising and managing money, we will not only avoid scandals of the past, but we will find that God’s ways bring God’s blessing. As we study scripture, we find three primary biblical means of financing the work of God’s kingdom:

1. Tithe
2. Offering
3. Sacrificial giving

The Right Attitude

Paul held up the Macedonian church as an example for other churches to follow in the area of giving. While we may not experience their circumstances, we can imitate their attitude toward money.

1. They gave generously

The Macedonian believers responded to their difficult economic circumstances with rich generosity.

Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. (2 Corinthians 8:2).

2. They gave sacrificially

Some people give the minimum, while others give way beyond their tithe to the point of sacrifice. The Macedonian church set an example of sacrificial giving.

For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own... (2 Corinthians 8:3)

3. They gave expectantly

We should expect the blessing of God when we give. We never give to get, but receiving is a natural result of giving.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. (2 Corinthians 9:6)

4. They gave cheerfully

The Macedonians not only gave sacrificially, but they did so with a smile on their faces. We should follow their example and be cheerful givers.

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Self Propagating

- ◆ God's first command to man to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28)
- ◆ Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mk.16:15)

The Covering and Protection of the Family

God tells us that upon every dwelling place (natural family and upon every assembly (spiritual family) the glory shall be for a defence as “a covering” God has promise protection and covering to His people. He has promised to be a wall of fire around about them. He has promised to give His angels charge over them in time of danger and pressure. God wants to separate or put a difference between His people even as He put ‘a division between Israel in the days of plagues’ (Ex. 8:22-23), But if God’s people are going to be protected and covered in these days they are going to have to be in the place where God says they are to be; they must be rightly related to the family of God, the church.

What does Commitment to a Local Church look like?

A person’s involvement in a church should not just be a natural decision, it should be a decision led and directed by the Holy Spirit. When a person is committed to a body of believers, to a local assembly, it means he is:

- ◆ Committed to a specific place (family).
- ◆ Committed to the vision of the leadership in that family
- ◆ Committed in terms of time and energy to that family.
- ◆ Committed in terms of financial support of that family
- ◆ Committed in a special way to the membership of that family
- ◆ Committed to bearing the burdens of that family.

Every general commitment to Christ and His Church must manifest itself in a specific commitment to a place or it is a false commitment. To say you are committed to what God is doing in a general way and not identify with a local church in a specific way is to dwell carelessly and it could lead to deception.

God has not established the local Church family because he wants us to see His three-fold purpose in establishing His Church into families.

1. God wants us to identify with a specific local church because He desires to develop character in us. To do this, God plants us in context with other believers or family members.

2. God wants us to identify with a specific local church because He desires to develop ministry in us. The local church is the proving ground for all other ministry we may have in and beyond the body of Christ (Acts 16:1-2). If we are not under authority in a local setting and of good report among the brethren, God cannot use us mightily nor develop us fully. One qualification that God places on church leadership is that they are not to be novices (1 Tim. 3:6). The word “novice” in the Greek means newly planted”. If we are only newly planted a body we cannot expect God to use us in a great way. In addition, God tells us that we are to know those that labour among us (1Thess. 5:12). If we never stay in one place long enough to be known or to be truly planted, God will never sanction and bring forth our ministry, as we would like. There are many people who think that they are called to “go” into the fields who are not willing to “be” witnesses and examples where they are. That is

not God's way.

3. God wants us to identify with a specific local church because He desires to edify or build up the Body of Christ. We lose our effectiveness to build others up when we are unknown in congregation. A stranger who exhorts does not have the same effect as a brother who exhorts. God wants every member to be able to contribute effectively to the edification of the whole body (Eph. 4:16)

Commitment in My Local Church

Commitment means that I will work through difficulties when they arise instead of running away from them.

Commitment means that I will blend my personal giftings and ministry goals with the vision of that local assembly.

Commitment means that I will give myself faithfully to the members of that church in fellowship and service.

Commitment means that I will invest my time, talents and financial resources to see the vision of my local church become a reality.

Commitment means that I will faithfully gather with my brothers and sisters at the corporate assembling times.

Commitment means that I will take the preached word seriously and make every effort to put it into practice in my life.

Commitment means that I will only do those things that will edify and build up the saints to whom I am joined.

Commitment means that I will honour and respond to those who have oversight in my life as they speak into my life.

Commitment means that I will still support church leadership when policies don't keep to my opinions.

Commitment means that I will utilize personal resources to minister to the needs in the local church that God puts in front of me.

Bill Scheidler

Invitation

“Now Moses said to Hobab, ‘We are setting out for the place about which the Lord said he will give to us. Come with us and we will treat you well, for the Lord has promised good things to Israel. Hobab answered, ‘No, I will not go; I am going back to my own land and my own people.’ But Moses said, ‘Please do not leave us. You know where we should camp in the desert, and you can be our eyes. If you come with us we will share with you whatever good things the Lord gives to us.’” (Numbers 10v29-33).

Like Moses, we are:

- ◆ Confident in our calling and journey in God.
- ◆ Therefore bold in asking you to join us.
- ◆ Serious to covenant to treat you well. From our side, we are not in it to use you, but to serve you, treat you well, draw you to Jesus, and help you fulfill your great destiny in him... and along the way you will help build the church.

Like Hobab you might be resistant to change, and longing for a comfort-zone rather than a new thing.

If so, like Moses, we are not giving up on you so easily! We say this to you: “please join us. We believe that we can serve each other.”

Appendix I

Answers to commonly asked questions

But can't anyone be a member?

Yes and no. Yes in that the church, like Jesus, should be outrageously inclusive! Jesus treated everyone as if they belonged, whilst never compromising on beliefs and behaviour. We desperately want people who may not yet believe or behave to feel a sense of belonging.

However, the biblical concept of membership is one of serious commitment and active involvement in God's own holy people (1 Pet 2). Therefore, when we speak of membership, we refer to those who have moved from merely feeling accepted and blessed by the body, to becoming those who are actually part of the body, and involved in the building up of the body.

"From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work". (Eph 4v16)

What do you mean by 'member'?

We refer to the member of a body, such as a hand. A hand is part of the body because it receives blood and gives blood. In a car-crash, a person may be 'dismembered' and lose a hand. At this point, the hand ceases to be a member because it is no longer giving and receiving ministry. So it is with our church: membership is active and functional two-way traffic.

What am I joining?

You are not joining a club, an institution or a building. You are joining people. To be more specific, you are joining the elders (leadership). Think about it, the elders of a church actually define the church, i.e. Go Christian Church is that group of people who have voluntarily chosen to follow the elders of the church. Those who gathered to David at the Cave of Adullam were not joining a cave...but a man! The 3000 in Acts 2 were added to the 12 apostles and the initial core of 120, not to a place or a logo. We are a People not an institution.

What are the benefits of membership at GO?

Those who become members of Go Christian Church benefit in the following ways:

1. A greater sense of spiritual alignment and ownership of the vision of the church.
2. A greater voice in many of the major decisions of the local church.
3. An opportunity to contribute to the development and implementation of vision.
4. A securing and formalizing of spiritual covering and accountability.
5. A greater opportunity to be trained and released into ministry and calling.
6. An opportunity to become a leader and a care-giver in the church.

Is it OK to be in two churches?

Common sense says 'no'. You will have split vision and all the tensions of trying to chase two rabbits at the same time! Possible exceptions might include:

- ◆ Attending church with your family in the morning and coming to us in the evening.
- ◆ If you are a student living away from your hometown, then be a member with us in term time, and your hometown church during the holidays.

My church doesn't have Small Groups

Can I be in one of your Small Groups but go to my church on Sunday? Not for long! You would probably start to feel torn and uncomfortable.

do I have to do the Let's Get Going course to be a member?

Yes, along with a few other things. It is important that everyone hears the "full story" before making such an important step.

How will I know if God is calling me to join this church?

You will have an inner 'witness' that you should. You will want to. You will feel excited by the vision and people of the church. You will sense the presence of God in the church. You will feel challenged and stretched. You will understand that it is not a perfect church!

What if I join the church but after a few weeks realise that I have made a mistake?

No problem. We will willingly release you from membership.

Do I have to be perfect to be a member?

No, there is a difference between being perfect and being yielded to God's growth process. We expect you to remain yielded to God's growth process:

◆ Spiritual Growth

We expect all church members to constantly grow in their relationship with God through daily prayer and Bible study.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. (Mark 1 :35)

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)

◆ Discipleship

We expect all church members to be disciples and to make disciples through church-based outreach and discipleship groups.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19,20)

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. (2 Timothy 2:2)

◆ **Generosity**

We expect all church members to live a lifestyle of generosity by cheerfully giving their tithes and offerings to God through the church.

But just as you excel in everything- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us- see that you also excel in this grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7)

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7).

◆ **Baptism**

We believe that water baptism is the external sign of the internal work of salvation. We believe that in accordance with the command and example of Christ, water baptism should follow repentance and conversion. While recognising the right of other churches to practice infant baptism, the eldership and congregation of Go Christian Church understands believers' baptism to be what the scriptures teach. It is a requirement of church membership to be baptised (if you have not already been) as a believer.

What if my parents are not happy about me getting baptised?

Then it is usually best to leave the matter until you have the freedom to make these decisions for yourself. Let's chat about it.

What if I was baptised as a baby?

According to the Bible, water baptism should follow repentance (Acts 2 :38 & Mark 16:16). This is why we are uncomfortable with infant baptism. Furthermore, infant baptism is unhelpful because people assume that if they have been baptised as a child, then they are automatically saved! Therefore, if you were baptised or sprinkled as a child, we would suggest that you get baptised as a believing adult.

Must I get baptised again if I join you church?

No. Baptism was never intended as a sign of joining a local church.

What if my previous baptism was not meaningful for me?

Lets talk about it.

Why is it important for a member to attend Sunday services?

Although the church is a family not a meeting, meetings are very important. As the following verses show, a church should prioritise both big meetings and small meetings that function to spur us on in our lives for Jesus:

Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. (Acts 2:46)

Let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Heb 10v24-25).

Big meetings: Sunday 9am

Sunday meetings are our big meetings at Go. They are a focal point for our life together. We approach Sundays with a real sense of purpose, expectant of God's presence and power with us as we gather to him. The purpose of Sunday meetings is:

1. Vibrant worship

Worshipping alone and in small groups is wonderful but there is a different experience of power and dynamism in worship when the whole congregation gathers together.

2. Powerful preaching

We believe in the power and effectiveness of preaching from the word. Christ himself – the one who is the living and enduring word (1 Peter 1:23) – walks through the congregation when the word is preached.

3. Vision-casting

Sundays provide the opportunity for church vision to be cast and pace to be set. Our Sunday meetings are vital for us in maintaining momentum and a sense of purpose and direction together.

4. Value modeling

Many of our values can be powerfully modeled in Sunday meetings such as our life in the Spirit, team leadership, cross-cultural expression, down-to-earthness and so on.

5. Visibility & Profile

Because we are people on a mission, we don't want to be hidden away in a corner. Jesus wants to show off his Bride like a city set on a hill (Mt 5 v 14-16), and Sundays are when we are at our most visible. When we come together in love as a church family from different backgrounds, race and social status, it is a witness to the world. No one believer can be the Body of Christ on his own. We need others in order to fully express what God has given us. It is when we are together, not when we're separated, that we are his Body. Our meetings are not just meeting! They are a prophetic statement of our being part of the Body of Christ.

6. Serving

We encourage serving because it is an essential characteristic of the Christian life. Jesus himself did not come to be served but to serve (Matthew 20:28). There are countless different ways in which we can serve God at church, many of which happen at other times and places than the Sunday meeting. But because the Sunday meeting is so important to us we encourage all church members to serve in a practical way at least once a month on a Sunday.

7. Training

Like every other activity in church life, Sunday meetings are a forum to help develop other leaders, especially worship leaders, musicians, sound people, preachers and meeting leaders. Therefore, we will not always put our 'A' Team players on the field, and the church must catch the vision for this and support the up and coming leaders. In this manner, the church becomes an exciting place to be with pew-warmers beginning to feel "if they can do it maybe I can too!" We are on a mission not on a meeting! Meetings serve the mission, which is to disciple, and rise up more leaders!

Why are you guys so passionate about planting more and more churches?

The New Testament Pattern: The first church in Jerusalem planted out many times. Paul spent 11 years travelling around establishing and strengthening new churches. Church planting is not just for some churches, it is an indispensable biblical value of a church. Not every one will leave our church to start another church, but all of us are involved in this mission of church planting.

But aren't there enough churches already? No of course not. In Joburg alone, there are probably about 4 million people who are not yet born again. Furthermore, many churches are riddled with legalism and dullness, and have ceased to be effective. There is a great need for new churches to model genuine New Testament church life.

Why do you emphasize giving to the poor and marginalized?

We believe right at the heart of the gospel is "remembering the poor" (Gal 2:10). The warnings and promises of Isaiah 58 are fully embraced in our church. To this end, we not only give money and means to the needy, but are determined to be pro-active in setting up initiatives that will benefit the poor.

Is family life important to this church?

"The promise of the Holy Spirit is for you and your children..." (Acts 2:39)

"All the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray" (Acts 21:5)

How open is Go Christian Church to stay relevant and change as time goes by?

"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money'. Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow...instead you ought to say 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that'. (James 4v13-16).

The book of Acts, and indeed the gospels are a glorious mixture of the planned and the spontaneous. This verse from the book of James reminds us of the uncertainty of life, especially when God is at work! Our church will undergo continuous change. Much of it will be gradual, but there will also be seasons of rapid change. Change happens as we learn more about the purposes of God, as we mature, and as God opens up new opportunities.

"You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Break camp and advance!" (Dt 1v6)

God is a God who moves his people on! We are a pioneering people on the move! In Ezekial 47, the river of God brings great blessing everywhere it goes, except the swamps! A stagnant church is not a healthy thing!

Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not break! However, even amidst periods of change, we will rest in absolute security in God's unswerving commitment to us, and our undying commitment to one another.

Appendix II

Statement of Faith

1. The Scriptures

The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are inspired of God. They are the revelation of God to man and the only infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct

2. The Godhead

Our God is one, eternally existing in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, being co-equal. God the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, is the source of the Word and the begetter. The Son is the Word made flesh, fully God and fully man, the only begotten, and has existed with the Father from the beginning. The Holy Spirit proceeds forth from the Father and is eternal.

3. Man, his Fall and Redemption

Man is a created being made in the likeness and image of God. Through Adam's transgression and fall, sin came into the world. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. He gave His life and shed His blood to redeem man and restore him to relationship with God. Salvation is the gift of God to man, separate from works and the Law and is made operative by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, producing works acceptable to God.

4. The New Birth and Eternal Life

Man's first step towards salvation is godly sorrow that produces repentance. Salvation is received through repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are born again of the Holy Spirit receive eternal life.

5. The Church and its Mission

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the universal Church which is His body. Each believer, having trusted in Him as Saviour and Lord, is an integral part of the universal Church. The purpose of the Church is to proclaim God's truth, to administer the ordinances, to stimulate growth toward maturity and to bring glory to God through worship.

6. Water Baptism

Baptism is by immersion in water and is for believers only. It is a direct commandment of our Lord and is a symbol of the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

7. Communion

Communion is a symbol, memorial and proclamation of the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is to be participated in by believers until Christ's return.

8. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Baptism in the Holy Spirit brings divine power for life and service, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and their use in the ministry of the Body of Christ. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is evidenced by speaking with other tongues as the Spirit enables. This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth.

9. Sanctification

The Bible teaches that without holiness no man can see the Lord. Sanctification is a definite yet progressive work of grace, by which the believer is purified in heart and mind, commencing at the time of regeneration and continuing until the consummation of salvation.

10. Divine Healing

Healing for physical ills of the human body is produced by the power of God through the prayer of faith and laying on of hands. It is provided for in the atonement of Christ and it is the privilege of every member of the Church today.

11. The Return of Our Lord and the Resurrection of the Just

We anticipate the promised return of our Lord as King of kings and Lord of lords, which could occur at any moment. We believe that all who have died in Christ shall rise first then those who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord.

12. Future Reward and Punishment

We believe that at the moment of death, believers pass immediately into the presence of Christ and remain there in joyful fellowship with Him until the resurrection of the body at His second coming, after which they will be forever with the Lord of glory in Heaven. We also believe that at the moment of death, the unsaved descend to Hades where they are kept under punishment until their bodies are raised at the final judgment, after which they will suffer everlasting conscious punishment in Hell, separated from the presence of the Lord.

13. Marriage and Family

Marriage was ordained by God as the union of one man and one woman. All sexual relations must therefore be reserved for that union. We believe that children are a blessing from the Lord. Thus all human life is sacred and worthy of protection from the moment of conception to the time of natural death.

Appendix III

Local Church Membership and Commitment

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22

In what ways do Christians demonstrate commitment to each other?

The Bible lists many responsibilities that Christians have one to another. Every believer must measure their local church relationships according to these guidelines.

1. There are many things Christians do toward one another because of this commitment.

◆ They love one another (I Pet.1:22).

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart...

◆ They comfort one another (I Th.5:11).

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

◆ They exhort one another (Heb. 10:24-25).

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

◆ They build up one another (Rom. 14:19).

Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

◆ They admonish one another (Col. 3:16).

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

◆ They serve one another (Gal. 5:13).

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

◆ They forgive one another (Eph. 4:32)..

And be you kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

They submit to one another (I Pet. 5:5).

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

In addition, they pray for one another, bear one another's burdens, have compassion one to another and are kindly affectionate one to another.

2. There are many things Christians do not do to each other because of this commitment.

- ◆ They do not condemn or criticize each other (Rom. 14:13).
Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

- ◆ They do not go to law with each other (I Cor. 6:1-8).

- ◆ They do not speak evil of one another (Jam. 4:11).

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

- ◆ They do not envy one another (Gal. 5:26).

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

They do not hurt or do anything that would harm another (Gal. 5:14-15).

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

How is our commitment expressed in a local church?

God not only wants us to relate these truths to our relationship to the worldwide Body of Christ, but He wants us to demonstrate this same kind of commitment in the local church or body of believers. When a person is committed to a local assembly it means several things.

- ◆ It means that he is committing himself to a specific church family (Ps. 68:6).
- ◆ It means that he is willing to support the vision and direction of that family.
- ◆ It means that he is willing to come under the authority in that family (Heb.13:17).
- ◆ It means that he is willing to give his time and energy to that family.
- ◆ It means that he is committed to the gathering times of that family.
- ◆ It means that he is committed to the financial support of that family.
- ◆ It means that he is committed in a special way to the members of that family.

- ◆ It means that he is willing to bear the burdens of that family.

How does one become a member of Christ's church?

There are two aspects to Church membership in the Book of Acts.

1. Spiritual membership.

You do not become a member by signing up, taking a pledge or subscribing to a particular set of doctrines. In the Early Church, you had to be added to the Lord, which involved a spiritual experience of coming into right relationship with and under the lordship of Jesus Christ as personal Savior (Acts 5:14; 11:24). This spiritual membership is the foundations for all other experiences with God.

2. Practical membership

There must also be a visible and practical expression of Church membership as seen in the Book of Acts. This is seen in belonging to "the church local." Believers that were added to the Lord were also added to the local church (Acts 2:41, 47).

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.
Acts 2:46-47

In the New Testament, all members of the universal church were also members of the local church. Any idea of enjoying salvation or being a Christian in isolation is foreign to the New Testament. Fellowship with Christ includes fellowship with His Body as it is expressed in the local congregation of believers (I John 1:3; I Cor. 1:9).

...that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (I John 1:3)

What are some of the advantages of practical church membership?

Fellowship (Col. 2:2). Deeper levels of fellowship and family relationship are able to be developed.

Fulfillment (I Cor. 12:12-27). A greater sense of belonging and worth can develop among members.

Fruitfulness (Eph. 4:16). We have a greater productivity and impact in the lives of other members.

Accountability (Gal. 6:1-2). There is a greater sense of accountability and responsibility among members.

Growth (I Th. 5:12). There is greater opportunity to receive consistent pastoral care and oversight.

Power (Deut. 32:30). There is a greater release of power as believers bind themselves together for a common goal.

Presence of God (Mt. 18:19-20). God promises a greater release of His presence in the corporate assembly.

What important questions should every believer be able to answer in regard to local church membership?

Anyone who is a Christian and claims to be part of Christ needs to face the following questions realistically:

- ◆ Who is over me in the Lord (Heb.13:17)?
- ◆ When I was added to the Lord, in what way was I added to the Church (Acts 2:41-42)?
- ◆ When I gather together with the disciples, with whom do I gather (Acts 20:7)?
- ◆ With whom am I allowing God to perfectly join me (I Cor. 1:10)?

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Every true believer in Christ must consider the question of church membership. All of the dynamics of the Christian life must be worked out in the context of others of like faith. The local church is God's vehicle through which He would strengthen and equip His people.

Completion Form: Local Church Membership

This is to certify that:

_____ has completed Local Church Membership class.

Your next step is to get started with REBUILD which is the first base of our discipleship series. In REBUILD, you will discover how to build your relationship with God and become an effective Kingdom disciple.

Your diligence in following through and completing the series will result in you becoming firmly fixed and immovable as a believer.

I, _____ commit to:

- ◆ working through difficulties when they arise instead of running away from them.
- ◆ blending my personal giftings and ministry goals with the vision of that of the local assembly.
- ◆ giving myself faithfully to the members of this local church in fellowship and service.
- ◆ investing my time, talents and financial resources to see the vision of my local church become a reality.
- ◆ faithfully gathering with my brothers and sisters at the corporate assembling times.
- ◆ Taking the preached word seriously and making every effort to put it into practice in my life.
- ◆ only doing those things that will edify and build up the saints to whom I am joined.
- ◆ honouring and responding to those who have oversight in my life as they speak into my life.
- ◆ maintaining a good attitude even when policies don't keep to my opinions.
- ◆ utilizing personal resources to minister to the needs in the local church that God puts in front of me.

Date: _____

Signature: _____