

joining the journey

come with us and we will do you good



*for Christians considering
joining Community Church*

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Published by Community Church,
Jubilee Centre, Market Street, Paddock,
Huddersfield HD1 4SH

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Introduction

Joining the Journey is a booklet for Christians who are considering joining Community Church Huddersfield. You may be considering this because you have recently moved into the area. Alternatively, you may have other reasons for thinking about leaving your present church. If you take your Christian life and God's church seriously, you will want to think about this very carefully. What are your motives for leaving? Is it right to leave one church to join another? Is there a right way and a wrong way to leave?

You will also need to carefully consider why you want to be a part of this particular local church. You should ask yourself what it actually means to belong to it and you should find out about the vision and the teachings of the church. With any church that you join, the people there are already on a journey. They have come from somewhere that has shaped the kind of church they are. They are also going somewhere – they have a vision of the kind of church they want to be. And they are on a particular path – their beliefs and values - that they believe will lead them there. You need to understand these things - and believe that you can share their vision and values - before you decide to join them on their journey.

This is what this booklet is designed to help you to do, in relation to Community Church Huddersfield. It will give you a clear idea of what we believe about God's purpose for his church, of our vision and of our key values and teachings. We trust that by reading it, alongside talking to us and getting to know us, you will be able to decide whether God is joining you to us or not. If not, then we simply pray that God will help you to find the people who you are meant to be with. If he is, then we will gladly encourage you to come and join us on our journey. We say to you, *'come with us and we will do you good'* (Numbers 10:29 NASB).

1

The Church God Wants

When we are thinking about which local church we want to be part of, we should first of all think about what God wants. Local churches are not just clubs that we can hop in and out of. They are part of God's plan and purpose for building his church and transforming his world. We are often helped in knowing the will of God for our particular situation when we first get clear on the more general will of God for his church and the world. In this first chapter, then, we will consider the kind of church that God is building and then think about how that might affect your decision.

There Is Only One Church

There are only two ways in which the Bible talks about the church. Firstly, there is the **universal church** which consists of all truly born again people everywhere - the total of all those who have submitted their lives to Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18). With all Christians, we are part of this church and have a responsibility to maintain what the Bible calls a '*unity of Spirit*' with all born again people (Ephesians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13). If you are a Christian, you can never leave the universal church.

Secondly, there is the expression of that one universal church in the form of congregations in any given locality or region, coming under the oversight of a local team of elders – the **local church** (1 Corinthians 1:2; Matthew 18:17). The local elders will also work with apostles and other wider **ministries** on the basis of relationship, not just in organisational or institutional structures.

We must realise, then, that God has only one church - with lots of various local expressions. God is not building lots of different kinds of churches, according to particular doctrines, nation states, cultural practices or personality cults. God is only building one church. Over the centuries, Christians have departed from this truth, but God still only has one spiritual house. And he is going to build it his way.

God Does Not Want a Divided Church

Unfortunately, the church over time has been splintered into thousands of different branches and denominations. Some have tried to justify this by saying it represents an acceptable diversity in styles of church. There is, of course, diversity between local congregations, affected by local culture and the personalities of those in it. But all too often the body of Christ has been torn apart by historical divisions as Christians have become too defensive about one area of truth, or have refused to abandon unbiblical traditions, or have 'set up camp' where God moved in the past, and then failed to move on with God into other things he wanted them to experience. But despite this present tragic division, the Bible teaches that

one day there will be one mature, united, pure, glorious church (Ephesians 4:11-16). And we can only get to this point when we co-operate with God in building his church his way.

God Will Build His Church His Way!

Jesus said that *he* will build *his* church (Matthew 16:18). God is the architect and builder (Hebrews 3:4; 11:10). If we try to do it our own way, it will be a waste of time. Moses was told to build the '*Tent of Meeting*' exactly as God told him on the mountain (Exodus 25:40). In the same way, we must only build his church according to the principles given in the Bible and the directions given by the Holy Spirit. It can only be built right if it is built according to the Word and the Spirit of God, not by human traditions or personal preferences. A real visible unity in the church that the world can see (John 17:23) will only come about when we build according to a common understanding of the truth that God has revealed. The Bible calls this the '*unity of faith*' (Ephesians 4:13).

How Does All This Affect Your Decision?

Given what we have considered so far, you will hopefully realise that you must be part of a local congregation that is building God's church God's way. You are a living stone in God's spiritual house and you need to make sure that you are being built into the house in the right place (1 Peter 2:4-5). This means that you should be concerned not so much with what style of church you like, but where God wants you to play your part in the building of his church.

Should I Stay Or Should I Go?

We believe that, at some point, the church is going to have to deal with her differences and divisions. But we don't necessarily help in that process by 'sticking with it' in a congregation that we feel hopeless about. Many people stay at a church where they are unhappy. They may be unhappy because they remain unchallenged or they know that tradition and custom are really determining what goes on, rather than the Bible and the Holy Spirit. It may be that they realise that there are some unbiblical practices tolerated, or they are aware that many - even the leaders, sometimes - don't really want to be unsettled too much in order to move on with God. But they often then stay out of a mistaken sense of loyalty and in the hope that things might change.

Others regularly 'church-hop' because they fall out with someone, they don't like the 'style' of worship, they are challenged by the leaders or maybe they are just attracted to something seemingly bigger and better. If you are trying to run away from one local church because you are not facing up to issues or resolving conflicts in another one, then you are just fooling yourself, because God only has one church - and you can't escape him! It is best to resolve the issues where you are, in a godly way.

What Should I Look For?

In order to make sure that you are in a local church that is contributing to the building of God's one, glorious church, you need to be able to say the following things about it with confidence:

1. The church has a clear vision for building God's church and is not sidelined by loyalty to denominations, traditions or personalities.
2. You are challenged and encouraged there to progress in your spiritual life.
3. There is a genuine attempt on the part of the leaders to build the church only according to biblical principles and to avoid practices that are clearly unbiblical.
4. There is total openness for the Holy Spirit to direct the church.
5. You are being faithfully overseen by godly and anointed local church leaders to whom you are able to submit and who are themselves accountable.
6. The local leaders and the church are also related to wider apostolic and prophetic leadership ministries.

If you feel that, on this basis, the church you are meant to be part of is Community Church Huddersfield, then you are going to have to know more about us. So I suggest you read on.

Taking Steps

After you have considered these things, if you realise you need to move from the local church that you presently belong to, then there is a right way to leave. It is important to handle it in a godly manner. You should:

- 1. deal with any unresolved issues to the best of your ability and with lots of grace;***
- 2. express your appreciation for the positive things that you have learned and benefited from in the church;***
- 3. determine not to judge or condemn anyone else in the church;***
- 4. go to the leadership and explain your reasons for leaving and listen respectfully to anything they have to say;***
- 5. determine not to try to defend yourself or retaliate, if you feel criticised or misunderstood for your actions;***
- 6. honour those who have taught you and blessed you.***
- 7. focus on what you are moving towards rather than being negative about what you are leaving behind.***



Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace... until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:3,13)

2

Walking Together

Thankfully, there are an increasing number of local churches around that are seeking to build according to the Bible and to follow the Holy Spirit. Many of them would share a similar vision to the kind of church we are aiming to become. But there may still be some differences - and there are certainly differences about how we get there. Do these differences matter? And should they affect your decision about which local church you join? Once again, before we get to the particular questions, let's look more generally about the journey that all Christians are on.

Pilgrims To The City Of God

Although we are already in the church (Hebrews 12:22-23), we are still looking for the day when that church will have reached maturity, or *perfection*. We all know that the church is still far from perfect, but the Bible does present a picture for us, in various ways, of the mature church (see, for example, Ephesians 4:12-15; 5:25-27; Revelation 21). This is the kind of church we are aiming for, or travelling towards. It is compared, in the Bible, to Jerusalem, or Zion, the city of God. And so we can identify with the pilgrims of the Old Testament who journeyed to the natural city of Jerusalem (Psalm 84:5-7). Even more so, we relate to the people of faith who were spiritual *pilgrims*, looking for a spiritual Jerusalem - a city with foundations whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16; 13:14).

A Common Vision

To join a church, then, is to join some fellow pilgrims on a journey. It is important, therefore, to make sure that you know where they are going, what map they're using and whether you feel you can take the same route and walk with them.

All of us are pilgrims, but we are certainly not meant to journey alone. The decision about who you share the journey with in a local church should be made, firstly, on the basis of a common vision. The prophet Amos asked, '*How can two walk together unless they be agreed?*' (Amos 3:3). Agreed about what? About where they are going! We must see together in order to walk together.

On The Same Path

Imagine two people orienteering. They both want to get to the same place and they both have the same map. But their understanding of what the map tells them about which route to take is totally different. They have two choices. One of them can agree to go against his convictions and follow the other - but they will probably end up quarrelling as they go on; and the one who gave way will probably grumble for the rest of the journey, saying, 'I told

you so' at every little obstacle! Alternatively, they can graciously agree to go their separate ways, according to their different convictions, and meet at the end - or where their paths converge again in the future.

Settling or Moving Forward?

As we look at the church across the world today, Christians are at various points in this journey. Some stopped moving forward long ago – they set up camp and are just happy to maintain their tents or to sit round the campfire arguing about doctrine. Others stopped being pilgrims altogether, moved out of tents and built their own religious institutions instead of building God's church according to God's pattern. Others think they are moving forward but are actually just going round in circles of the latest religious fads. Sadly, some have drifted from the path altogether into heresy or worse.

Thankfully, this is not the whole story. There are many Christians who keep a pilgrim spirit and are moving forward towards their vision of God's perfect church. But there are many on different paths. For some, this is only because they have come from different starting points. For others, it is because they have different ideas about how they get to the destination – the fulfilment of the vision - though some may only be slight differences. Many of these paths that Christians are on are going to have to converge in the future if God is going to have his one church. The important thing for us now is that each of us walk in the path of our own convictions with those who share the same vision and values.

Taking Steps

At the end of this book I have listed some of the key elements of our vision and values as a church. Take a good look at them and think about whether you could share these convictions with us. But these things are often more caught than taught so also talk to people in the church, join us in worship and listen to what we teach and preach, in order to get a sense of what motivates and directs us as a church.

Also, in the last chapter of this booklet, I give a brief introduction to some beliefs that we have that may be different to what you have come across before, depending on what path you have been on. Read about these.

Finally, I have produced a series of booklets, under the heading of clearground teachings, which explain what we believe about some of the more confusing and controversial areas that often, sadly, divide God's people. They may also help you in getting a sense not only of where we are going but what path we are taking.



3

Building Together

We are not only walking together, we are building together. In fact the Bible says that we *are being built* together as ‘living stones’. For this to happen, we need not only a common vision, but a shared life. It is not just revelation but relationship that matters. God never intended for there to be any ‘Lone Ranger’ Christians. We need to be committed to building real relationships with other members of the congregation that God has joined us to. This is the most challenging but also the most rewarding aspect of the Christian life, and one of the main tools God uses to shape our own life.

We Are Being Built Together Into A Temple

One of the many pictures for the church that the Bible uses is that of ‘a holy temple’, God’s household (Ephesians 2:19-20). It is to be God’s dwelling, the place where he lives. As such, it needs to be fit for his royal presence. Now, we are the ‘living stones’ that are being built together to form this ‘spiritual house’ (1 Peter 2:4-6), so how we relate to each other is very important. We will be challenged by being part of a Christian family, as we have to recognise that we cannot always get our own way. We have to put others before ourselves and be willing to play our part, but the reward of being part of God’s temple is certainly worth it!

Building Together Means Being Committed

For the building of God’s house, we cannot just attend meetings and have nodding acquaintances with a few people. We need to be maintaining right relationships with all of God’s people and actively developing real, deep, honest and productive relationships with those who we are joined together with in the local congregation. This doesn’t come easy and you will need to give of your time, effort, gifts, hospitality etc. You will need to actively show love in reaching out to people, opening yourself up and being willing to deal with conflicts in an honest and godly way - and not running away if it gets a little tough.



For biblical examples of the kind of thing that I mean just look at Galatians 6:1-2, 9-10; 1 Peter 4:9; Romans 12:10; Galatians 5:13; James 4:1. And there are many more besides.

Church in the Home

One way to help ensure that we realise church is about real committed relationships and not just about attending meetings is to encourage what we call church in the home. This does not mean just having another mid-week meeting in someone's house. It means recognising that the home is the most basic God-given building block for true community and that the church in the New Testament is centred around the home. Every member of the church then is expected to be part of a home group where we try to build such relationships. The meeting together mid-week is the minimum, but it is important. It is where you will gather to worship, edify one another with the gifts of the Spirit, help each other to practically apply the Word of God and pray together for the growth of the church and the advance of God's kingdom.

See
Acts 2:2
Acts 2:46-47
Acts 5:42
Acts 9:12
Acts 16:15
Acts 18:26
Acts 21:16
Acts 28:7



Building Together Includes Being Knocked Into Shape

When a builder is using different shapes and sizes of stone with which to construct his building, he has to hammer off bits of stone in order to fit them together. He may even knock one stone against another and sparks may fly, as well as bits falling off! Be sure that God will use other Christians who you are being built together with to knock off the bits of your character that need to go. Relationship-building can be testing and challenging, but a glorious temple emerges from this nitty-gritty reality of building. The mortar that holds us together is real, active, committed love - towards God and one another. The Bible calls this committed love covenant. It is covenant that holds us together.

Building Together Means Playing Our Part

Building real relationships with each other is not just about praying together or doing group Bible studies. It is about working and playing together, meeting from home to home, helping each other out, bearing each other's burdens, sharing life etc. One of the best ways to build relationships is to get involved with the ministries of the church. Serving in the context of the local church is crucial for your own and the church's growth. God has a special role for you in building his temple, and being willing to play your part - to serve - is crucial to the building up of his church (see 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 14:26,31)



In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.
(Ephesians 2:21-22)

4

Following the Leader

We have seen that building the church involves being committed to one another as God's family. God also appoints leaders to lead and manage his household, and how we relate to them is vitally important. We have said that we all have a part to play in the church. It is not the leaders who do it all while the rest just sit and watch. But neither does everyone just do as they see fit. That would cause chaos and God's house is to be a place of order. Leaders oversee the church and keep it moving forward in the direction that God is leading it. In joining us on our journey, you will need to have confidence in the men who are taking the lead.

God Appoints Leaders in His House

Although Jesus is the chief cornerstone on which his house is built, the apostles and prophets are part of the foundation (Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:11-13; 1 Corinthians 3:10; 12:28). Jesus is head of the church but he delegates his authority to God-appointed leaders. Some of these are ministries to the wider church, like the apostles and prophets. The ones that you will have most contact with, though, are the local elders (Acts 14:23). Leaders direct the affairs of the church (1 Timothy 5:17), but they also oversee our lives, to help us progress towards maturity - and they must give an account to God for the lives they have had responsibility for (Acts 20:28-30; Hebrews 13:17). Leadership is a key to the church reaching maturity and the unity of faith we mentioned in an earlier chapter. It is important, however, that we remember that they are given to help us to do the job - not to do it all for us!

Maturity: The Aim of Godly Leadership

We have said often that the church is God's household or family and, in the Bible, leadership is likened to raising a family (1 Timothy 3:1-5). The apostle Paul likens his own leadership to that of a parent (1 Thessalonians 2:7-12). A loving father will teach and train his children, correct and warn them when they are going wrong, encourage and inspire them and lead by example. He will sometimes let them learn things for themselves and sometimes teach them directly. But a good father is not concerned just to show that he is boss but, because he loves them, he wants to see them grow into strong, healthy, mature adults who can then bring up children themselves. True godly leadership in God's house will be like that.

How You Respond to Leaders is Very Important

We are not called to follow leaders blindly but the Bible shows us that God places great value on how we respond to leaders. He dealt very severely with those who grumbled and rebelled against Moses, his appointed leader (Exodus 15 & 16). The New Testament makes it clear that, while no leader is infallible, it is right to honour, submit to and obey our leaders

(Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). Being accountable in this way is crucial to our own spiritual growth.

Question: Will leaders tell me what to do?

It depends! Yes, if it involves a clear issue of obedience to the Word of God. And if you are a new Christian you will need clearer guidance on what the Bible teaches. But the expectation is that as we grow to maturity you should be able to know the will of God for yourself. Nothing pleases a true leader more than seeing someone grow up spiritually. But part of this growth is that you will always want to be accountable and not just do your own thing. The key is to always maintain a submissive and teachable spirit.

You Need To Have Confidence In Your Leaders

Don't ever make the mistake of relying on your leaders too much or expecting them to be perfect. They will disappoint you at times. But you must have a clear belief that they have been placed there by God and that they are anointed by him to lead. You must be confident that they are essentially men of integrity, leading the church forward with a God-given vision that you share, and that they hear and obey what the Holy Spirit is saying to the church. If you do not, you should not be a member of their congregation. You should belong to a church where you are confident in the leaders.

Taking Steps

Here are some things to think about and maybe to do in relation to this:

- 1. Examine yourself to see whether you have a teachable and submissive spirit. Are you willing to be accountable to godly leadership?**
- 2. If you are thinking of leaving a church because you have been upset by the leaders or have not liked what they have told you, examine your attitude and motives. You may need to repent and return.**
- 3. If you are not confident in the leadership of the church to which you presently belong, you should leave rather than stay and grumble against them.**
- 4. If you are thinking about joining this church, you will need to consider whether you feel you can have a confidence in the leaders of the church before you decide.**



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. (Hebrews 13:17)

5

Worshipping Together

Perhaps the most obvious thing that people see first when coming along to a new church is the style of the worship in the meetings. Coming together to worship God corporately is central to what we do and we have beliefs that we hold passionately about worship. The temple built of living stones is built for the presence of God, a place for him to be worshipped. Obviously, we believe that church is far more than what we do in meetings but our corporate worship is vitally important.

Worship is the First Priority in God's House

When God instructed his people to build a tabernacle (or Tent of Meeting), and later a temple, they were to be primarily a place for his presence (Exodus 25:8-9; Deuteronomy 12:4-7). His presence was what marked them out as God's special people. Worship is our response to the presence of God. It is true that, individually, we are tabernacles for his presence (2 Corinthians 5:1-4; 6:16) - God dwells in us by his Spirit; and our lives are to be offerings of worship (Romans 12:1). But the corporate church is also the temple (Ephesians 2:21-22) and our experience of his presence corporately - and our worship together - is an absolute priority.

God Wants us to Worship in Spirit and in Truth

Jesus challenged a woman who was trying to be religious with him – he told her that God was looking for worshippers who worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:7-26). This means that in worship we are led by the Spirit within us, in a real response to a fresh revelation of God that comes from being in his presence. We don't worship him from habit, religious routine, a sense of duty, sentimental feelings etc. It is our spirit responding to God's Spirit. And it is now no longer through prescribed rituals, as in the Old Testament, but through spiritual relationship.

We Need To Be Free To Worship

Moses was sent to set the people free from Egypt so that they could worship their God (Exodus 7:16). People in spiritual captivity cannot worship God. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit brings freedom so that we can behold the glory (or likeness) of God (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). If a person's spirit is bound up by sin, guilt, anxiety, religious traditions and notions, preconceptions, inhibitions, stubbornness etc. they cannot worship in spirit and in truth.

Corporate Worship Will Cover a Full Range of Expression

The Bible, and especially the Psalms, shows us that praise and worship involves a rich variety of expression. We can shout and dance and jump in praise, we can be stilled and silenced by the beauty of his presence; we might sing quiet thoughtful songs full of content, or simple refrains repeated again and again in awed wonder, or shouts of triumph and joyful ‘noises’. The spirit that is fully free will not stick to one ‘style’ but will respond to however God leads us.



Look and read the following for evidence of this variety and creativity in worship: Psalm 47:1; 81:1-2; 98:4-6; 134:2; 150:3-6; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14; 2 Samuel 6:16; Ephesians 5:19-20

Responding to the Moods of God

Someone has said that God is a God of moods but not a moody God. He doesn't fly off the handle or go into a sulk. But when he makes his presence felt in our corporate meetings he comes in different moods and, even within the course of a meeting his moods may vary. Sometimes he comes to dance and celebrate; sometimes to quieten us with his love, longing to hear the simple expressions of love from his children. Sometimes he comes in power and might to stir up his army; sometimes, in his awesome holiness that causes us to bow down. At other times he comes to freshen us up with his Spirit, with a sense of fun and delight; and again at other times with a sobering sense of his calling and purpose. We need to be free and responsive in spirit to let God come and do what he wants.

Question: Shouldn't I find a style of worship that I feel comfortable with?

Our personality types and temperaments can affect our expression of worship. Not everyone will find it easy to be exuberant and loud. Equally some find it difficult to be quiet and still. But we should never allow our personality to inhibit our expression of worship. The spirit that is free will respond to what God wants. The issue is not what we feel comfortable or happy with, but that we delight God's heart.

Notes

6

So What's New?

When you start coming along to a new church, there are perhaps some new teachings or practices that you are not used to and that you may have some understandable questions about. They will be different for different people, but in this study we are going to consider some of the most common ones that people ask about.

All the Beliefs and Practices in a Church Should Be Based on Scripture Only

As Christians we are to be governed in what we believe and how we behave by the teachings of God's inspired word, the Bible. This is also true about how we build the church. The Bible does not give us hard and fast rules on how a local church should function, but it does give us some clear principles. We seek to follow its teachings to the best of our understanding and would want to continually re-examine our practices in the light of Scripture. The following represent some of our beliefs and practices:

Water Baptism

We believe that all Christians should be baptised by full immersion. The only qualification for baptism is a profession of faith. We don't wait for a long period for someone to prove that they are ready, but we believe that people should be baptised as soon as is practically possible after they have committed their life to Christ. We don't baptise infants, though if we feel a child is old enough to make a commitment to Christ, then they are old enough to be baptised. We would want all the members of the church to be baptised.

See
Matthew 28:19
Acts 2:38
Romans 6:1-11



Baptism in the Holy Spirit

We believe that God wants all his people to receive a fully empowering baptism in the Holy Spirit which is distinct from the conversion experience. It provides you with the power to live the Christian life and to serve God. It is also a key to being released into the kind of worship that we looked at in the previous study, especially into speaking in tongues, singing in the Spirit and using the gifts of the Spirit. We believe the ideal is that people should be baptised in the Spirit when they first come to Christ. If you have not been baptised in the Spirit, you will need to be open to us praying for you to be so in order to be part of the church.

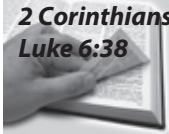
See
Acts 1:8
Acts 2:4
Acts 8:14-17



Tithes and Offerings

We believe that the Bible teaches that all we have belongs to God and that we are to express our acceptance of this and honour the Lord by giving him the first tenth of our income. It also teaches that he wants us to be generous givers like him and that we should bring offerings (distinct from the tithe) whenever we meet together for worship. In general, the income from the tithe supports the people ministries in the church and the offering covers things related to the building and practical areas. We should also be ready and willing to respond to any appeal for an offering to help God's people and to further his purpose in the world. This is a core teaching of the church, and although you may need help to get to a place of faith to start tithing, you will need to be open to this in order to become a member of the church.

See
Proverbs 3:9
Malachi 3:8-10
Matthew 23:23
Matthew 6:19-21
1 Timothy 6:6-11,
17-19
2 Corinthians 8, 9
Luke 6:38



Church Government

There have been many different beliefs over the years about what the Bible teaches about the government or leadership of the church. Here at Community Church, we believe that God calls, appoints and raises up his leaders. This will be recognised by other leaders and the people that they are called to lead. *Apostles* are the key leaders (or 'master builders' as the Bible calls them) and they will often oversee a number of churches over a wide area and even across the world. They appoint *elders* in the local churches to take the responsibility on their behalf for the on-going government of the local church. Although we believe that women may lead and minister in every other area, it is our understanding of Scripture that only men are called to positions of governmental leadership in the church as they reflect a fathering role to the family of God.

See
1 Corinthians 3:10
Ephesians 2:19-20
1 Timothy 5:17
Acts 14:23;
Acts 20:17
Philippians 1:1



Head Coverings

We believe from what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 that head covering is a simple sign, like other signs in the Bible e.g. baptism, laying on of hands etc., which illustrate important truths. Although men and women are equal in value and in what they receive in salvation, we believe that God also created men and women different, and that we should celebrate the distinction between the genders because it illustrates something wonderful about the relationship between God and humanity. We also believe that God puts an order between the sexes so that, for example, a husband is the 'head' of his wife in marriage, without that in anyway implying inequality. When a woman wears a head covering it is a simple sign that she has equal authority to pray and to prophesy without denying her distinctiveness as a woman or the order that God has put in place. It is not a sign of her subjection, but rather her authority. When a man uncovers his head to pray and prophesy, he shows that he also gladly accepts his God-given role.

Church in the Home

We believe that for far too long the church has been thought of in terms of institutions, buildings or meetings. The church is a community of people who share a common life together because of their relationship with God. The church is far more than just its Sunday meetings or the sum total of all its meetings and activities. It is people in community, sharing life together. We see this in the Bible as the early Christians met from home to home and shared things in common. We try to encourage this by having weekly small group meetings where people can share and pray more intimately, but even these are not meant to be just another meeting; they are a way of encouraging us to be a community.

See
Acts 2:42-7
Acts 4:32-37
Romans 16:3,5
Colossians 4:15



Taking Steps

Throughout this booklet we have given you some practical suggestions about what you might need to think about and do. We don't just want you to read about some ideas and beliefs; we want you to move forward in your Christian pilgrimage with the people he has joined you to, in order that we might see his one church built, his kingdom advanced and his name glorified in all the earth. Here are some more practical suggestions on the basis of the present chapter:

- 1. If you are a Christian, you need to be baptised as a believer whatever church you belong to. Arrange this as soon as possible.***
- 2. If you have never been baptised in the Holy Spirit, find out more about it and allow God to develop a desire for it within you. We would gladly pray for you.***
- 3. Tithing is a source of blessing for yourself as well as an expression of obedience. Study the Scriptures concerning it and seek to start practising it whichever church you eventually decide to join. If you chose to join us we can help you get to a place of faith for this.***
- 4. Whichever church you eventually decide to join, make sure you submit yourself to the leaders and get involved in the community life of the church.***
- 5. If you feel God may well be joining you to us here at Community Church then please arrange to meet up with one of the elders in the near future to discuss this.***



Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. (Ephesians 4:14-15)

Appendix 1 Vision & Values

Our Vision: The Church We See

We see a church that is a strong and healthy community of people whose lives are being changed as they follow Jesus in every area of their lives, and who work together with a common sense of vision and purpose.

We see a church where God is worshipped passionately and freely and where the presence and power of God are evident.

We see a church that is governed in its beliefs and practices by the Word of God and the Spirit of God, and not by customs or traditions.

We see a church whose members are fully committed to one another and to God's purpose for his world.

We see a church that is full of life and faith, with people enjoying the goodness of God, and living completely free from anything that would oppress them.

We see a church in which there are real and close friendships, warm relationships and an openness to all people from whatever background.

We see a church that is not built around meetings or a building, but is centred on relationships and a shared life, as we meet from home to home.

We see a church that is influencing and impacting its surrounding community and that does not retreat into a safe Christian ghetto.

We see a church that is committed to what God is doing right across the nations of the world and is in real relationship with apostolic, prophetic and other ministries in order to advance God's kingdom throughout the world.

We see a church that speaks with a credible voice into all the issues that face our society; and that is actively demonstrating a positive and godly example to that society.

We see a church that is growing and reproducing itself across the whole region.

We see a church in which everyone is learning to play their part and to do so gladly with faith, commitment and integrity.

It is one thing to have a vision. But where we want to get to in the future will affect how we live now. Therefore, our vision determines our values. These are the things that we are committed to seek to do - with God's help – in order to see our vision become reality. What we see is brought nearer by what we do.

Our Values: What We Are Committed To

We are committed to living every part of our lives in obedience to God.

We are committed to serving God and his purpose in whatever way he calls us to.

We are committed to encouraging, helping, challenging, correcting and serving each other so that we can each live for and serve God better.

We are committed to following the vision and teaching of the apostolic leadership of the church.

We are committed to honesty, integrity, loyalty and love in our relationships with each other.

We are committed to dealing with disagreements and conflicts that arise between us in a godly and honest way.

We are committed to supporting the work of the church in the giving of our time, our effort, our gifts and our finance.

We are committed to discipling others and to be discipled by others.

We are committed to seeing the common vision fulfilled whatever the cost and however long it takes.

Notes

A large area of horizontal lines for writing notes, consisting of approximately 25 evenly spaced lines.

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