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Visitors

We do not believe in chance or accidental visits, but rather we believe that because "the steps of the righteous are ordered and established by the Lord," then it is more accurate to see things as Divine "appointments," not chance encounters. We view visitors not merely as visiting, but as our guests.

Because people are important to God, they are important to us; and we will continue striving to love them, befriend them, and welcome them into the life flow of this local church. Ministries such as our Care Team are designed to bless our first time guests and to make them feel welcome and at ease. We are acutely aware of, and sensitive to the fact that every person may feel a bit apprehensive and tentative in a new environment. Thus, we consistently endeavor to allow ourselves to be vessels of God through which His love may flow to our guests.

Our prayer is that our guests can be found in an optimum state of peace, and the Word of the Lord can then truly minister life to them meeting their innermost needs, (**I Cor. 13:8; Mt. 25:40**).

Preaching

We believe preaching to be a divine "vehicle" of God for proclaiming the "Good News" of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all mankind. In the Bible, the preaching of the Word is compared to the scattering of seed (**Mk. 4:1-20**), the seed being holy, precious and productive, eternal in nature. God has said the following concerning His Word:

- It is alive and powerful (**Heb. 4:12**).
- It is like a divine mirror to man (**James 1:22 -25**)
- It sets us apart for holy use (**John 17:17**).
- It sows us the right way to live (**Ps. 119:105,130**)
- It accomplishes great and mighty things (**Is. 55:8-11**)
- It is God's wisdom for mankind (**Prov. 2:1-22**).
- It is forever settled and sure (**P.s 119:89; Ps. 19:7**).
- It will never fail us (**Prov. 30:5-6; I Kings 8:56**).

The preaching of His great Word is a necessary part in God's process of getting His wisdom into the hands, hearts, and heads of men and women (**Rom. 10:13-17**). The Bible inquires, how shall people ever hear the Word without a preacher? (Lit. a herald; a proclaimer). Thus, it is the church's responsibility in the earth to preach, teach, disciple and train all peoples in the ways of the Lord. What a divine responsibility, but more importantly, what a holy privilege!

Music

We believe that music must have the Lord as the chief object in order to be considered "godly" music. The Lord Himself created music as a tool by which He could be glorified by mankind, His highest creation (**Ps. 22:3; Ps. 100:1-5**).

Music, in its purest form has incredible potential, capabilities, and influence over the human heart and soul. It can be used, therefore, to either glorify God, man or Satan. The Lord desires that the "Songs of Zion" be found in the House of the Lord, praising, honoring and lifting up the name of Jesus (**Luke 19:37-40**).

Praise & Worship

We believe that praise and worship are necessary, vital, and extravagant acts of love towards God. Worshipping the Lord is our number one purpose of life on this earth, and the reason for which we are created. Our relationship with the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ gives us this privilege, it involves each part of us; the use of spirit, soul and body in praise and worship.

Furthermore, we believe that praise and worship are to be alive, vibrant, and fresh. It is the Holy Spirit who inspires the believer into true worship and thus, true praise and worship will always be participatory - not a Christian spectator sport. The Word of God, the Bible, has much to say concerning praise and worship.

The use of the mouth in praise:

- O, sing unto the Lord a new song (**Ps. 98:1**).
- I will give thee thanks in the great congregation (**Ps. 35:18**).
- I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding (**I Cor. 14:15**).
- Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing (**Ps. 126:2**).

The playing of musical instruments in praise:

- Praise the Lord with the harp (**Ps. 33:2**).
- Upon a harp of ten strings, I will sing praises to thee (**Ps. 44:9**).
- Praise Him with trumpet sound (**Ps. 150:3-5**).
- Praise Him with harp and lyre (**Ps. 150:3-5**).
- Praise Him with timbrel and dancing (**Ps. 150:3-5**).
- Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe (**Ps. 150:3-5**).

- Praise Him with loud cymbals (**Ps. 150:3-5**).
- Praise Him with resounding cymbals (**Ps. 150:3-5**).

The use of dancing in praise and worship:

- Thou hast turned for my mourning into dancing (**Ps. 30:11**).
- Let them praise His name in the dance (**Ps. 149:3**).
- Praise Him with the dance (**Ps. 150:4**).
- And David danced before the Lord with all his might (**II Sam. 6:14**).

Walking and leaping in praise:

- And he leaped up, stood, and walked, and he entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God (**Acts 3:8**).
- David leaping and dancing before the Lord (**II Sam. 6:16**).

The posture of standing in praise and worship:

- You that stand in the house of the Lord (**Ps. 135:2**).
- Bless the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which stand by night in the house of the Lord (**Ps. 134:1**).

Bowing and kneeling in praise and worship:

- Come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our God our maker (**Ps. 95:6**).
- I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (**Eph. 3:14**).

Periods of congregational/individual meditative silence in waiting upon the Lord:

- Come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our God our maker (**Ps. 95:6**).
- I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (**Eph. 3:14**).

Leadership

We believe that leadership is the true key to advancement, growth, and vision realization. The world is filled with followers, supervisors and managers, but very few leaders. Time has produced a legacy of distinguished and outstanding individuals who have affected history and the ongoing development of mankind.

World renowned leaders are both men and women, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, trained and untrained; they come from every race, color, language, and culture of the world. Leaders are ordinary people who accept or are placed under extra-ordinary circumstances that bring forth their potential; and live in such a way as to inspire the confidence and trust of others.

Our world today is in desperate need of such individuals, thus we are deeply committed as a local church and local church leadership to the fulfilling of the highest and loftiest calling under the heavens: the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ! We plan to accomplish this through the following means:

- Practical, hands-on application of these truths via local church ministry involvement.
- Special seminars, guest speakers and intensified training sessions on specific subjects.

As well as the aforementioned, we also believe in a plurality of leadership in the local church; thus we, by God's grace, will continue to appoint elders, deacons and leadership trainees, as the Lord would direct.

Lastly, being of a firm conviction that the family is actually the "first church," we will always endeavor to teach and train God's men in their primary God-given role which is to be the leader, priest and the example in their home. If the home and family do not function properly, then we are surely misguided and deluded in believing that one can ever truly be effective for the Lord. So we live ever cognizant of the fact that Jesus Christ is the first and ultimate role model to be emulated for masculinity, Godliness, and servant-leadership, and we continue to train God's men to follow the "pattern" for living set forth by Christ.

Corporate Gathering

- We believe that the church, the Body of Christ in the earth, is the apple of God's eye and the love and desire of God's heart. God not only takes pleasure in His people individually, but corporately as well.

He delights in the saints assembling in one mind, offering prayer, praise, and worship as with one voice, lifting up and exalting the name of Jesus. We believe that God has definite and distinct purposes for the corporate gathering of the believers. Some of those purposes are that the church might become:

- A place where a fresh, challenging word is preached through God's ordained servants (**John 8:31 -36**).
- A place where the Holy Spirit is moving in the midst; convicting, changing, refreshing and renewing each believer (**II Chron. 15:8; Is. 40:30-41; Eph. 4:23**).
- A place where there is proper use of spiritual gifts to strengthen, encourage and build up each believer in the many-membered Body of Christ (**I Cor. 12:4,7; Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:7-16**).
- A place that gains the reputation as an accessible assembly where all those genuinely seeking God's help, God's ways and God's encouragement can come (**Is 4:1-6**).
- A place providing a framework for creating and beginning to lead God's people into the flow of His ordained changes (**Mt. 9:16 -17; Amos 3:7; I Cor. 14:7-8**).
- A place of the significant corporate expression of the church in every given locality for the God-ordained purpose of influencing their community for righteousness (**Mt. 28:18-20; Dan. 12:3; Mt. 5:13 -14**)

Tithes & Offerings

We believe that the Bible is filled with references compelling us to be good stewards of everything that concerns our lives, not the least of which is proper stewardship of finances. Every believer is accountable to God in the area of personal finances, and the Bible gives us clear instructions in this area.

The word "tithe" comes from a Hebrew word, which means "a tenth." a tithe of one's income, or increase, therefore, is one-tenth, (ten percent). Tithing refers to the practice of systematically giving ten percent of one's income back to the Lord for His work.

Some facts to consider:

- Tithing was common practice of holy men of God in Old Testament days.
- Prior to the giving of the Law, God's people tithed voluntarily
- Abraham gave a tenth to Melchizedek (**Gen. 14:18 -20**)
- Jacob gave a tenth at Bethel (**Gen. 28:22**)
- When God gave the Law to Moses, tithing was a major part of His overall financial system (**Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:20 -32**)
- Jesus confirmed tithing in His teaching and practice (**Mt. 23:23; Lk. 11:42; Lk . 18:12**).
- The local church, where an individual is fed, is the designated place for one's tithe (**Deut. 12:5, 6, 13, and 14**).
- God says the tithe is to go for the service, vision, and furtherance of His house (**Num. 18:21 -24**).
- Some say that God doesn't care what we give, only how we give. God says that He is concerned with both (**Mk. 12:41-44; Mt 5:20**).
- God says that withholding of tithes and offerings is actually robbing God! (**Mal. 3:6-10**).
- God promises abundance and an outpouring of blessing for those who live in obedience to His Word and who do things His way!

He promises:

- To open the windows of heaven over us (**Mal. 3:10**).
- To rebuke the devourer for our sakes.
- Nations will call us blessed (**Mal. 3:12**).
- We will have our needs met by His hand (**Phil. 4:19; Ps 145:16**).
- We will see miracles of His faithfulness, multiplication and provision with the nine-tenths of income that remain (**Mk. 33:44; Prov. 3:4-10; Lk. 1:37**).

God desires us to be fruitful and prosperous both naturally and spiritually, accordingly He lets us know that His way to financial prosperity and blessing is different than man's way of

success (**Ps. 1:1-3; Ps. 35:27**). His ordained way is through obedience to, and proper use of tithes and offerings.

The Gospels contain more warnings concerning the misuse of money than any other singular subject. One in every four verses in Matthew, Mark, and Luke deals with money. One in every six verses in the entire New Testament makes some reference to money. Almost half of the parables of Jesus make reference to money and its misuse, particularly in the area of covetousness.

Prayer

We believe prayer to be the single most important activity in which a Christian can and should find themselves engaged. Further, we believe that prayer is:

- A daily necessity (**Jer. 29:13; Ps. 63:1-8; John 15:5**).
- A vehicle for divine communication (**Jer. 33:3**).
- A means of divine blessing (**Mt. 7:7-11; James 5:16**).
- A personal activity (**Mt. 6:6-8**). * A corporate activity (**Acts 12:1-19**).
- A means of communication with our Heavenly Father (**Ps. 32:6-10; Ps. 40:1-4**).
- An activity which must be based on God's will and God's Word (**John 15:7; I John 5:14 -15; Ps. 119:130**).

Spiritual Warfare

We believe that spiritual warfare is a definite and distinct reality for the believer in Christ. As part of the army of God in the earth, we must stand, fight, and commit as good soldiers of Christ. We enforce His victory in the earth—that precious victory that was purchased nearly 2,000 years ago at Calvary! Spiritual warfare exists at three distinct levels:

Between God and the Heavenly Hosts and Satan and his evil forces

This is the cosmic conflict that is prehistoric in nature, finding its origins in eons past. This prehistoric and ongoing struggle is alluded to in Scripture in **Ezekiel Chapter 28** and **Isaiah 14**. Lucifer's rebellion and casting down from heaven began this titanic conflict, which continues even as we speak. However, what the Scriptures are not clear about is the nature of the combat, i.e. exactly how angels and demons do battle. In **Daniel, Chapter 10**, we read the account of the sublime heavenly being appearing to Daniel and describing warfare which had transpired between himself and the Prince (Prince spirit of darkness) of Persia. He (the angel) also spoke to Daniel concerning the fact that he had been assisted by Michael, the archangel. As an adversary, an opponent of righteousness, God allows the devil a sanctioned latitude to do his dirty work of deceiving men and wreaking havoc on the earth. However, he is held on a sovereign "string" serving as a tempter and moral tester of men.

Between the Demonic Realm and the Redeemed

Genesis 3:15, foundational for understanding spiritual conflict, provides a prophetic description of this battle in the judgment spoken against the serpent "And I will put enmity between you and the women, and between your offspring and hers, he will crush you on the head, and you will strike (bruise) him on the heel." Thus, hatred would always prevail between Christ, and all the other subsequent children of men, and the seed of the serpent. Until Jesus returns to deliver the world from Satan and sin (**II Thes 1:5-10**), the devil continues to strike at the "heel" of the body of Christ, but in Christ, we always have the victory. Satan endeavors to invest his limited power where it will reap the greatest reward. His strategy, therefore, is to undermine values, promote godless ideologies, and moral decay—anything that pollutes the minds and perverts the wills of people. He seeks to oppress the believer and to "wear out" the saints of the most High through discouragement (**Dan. 7:25**). God has given us formidable weapons of warfare to combat Satan, namely:

- Prayer - Individual and Corporate (**Mk. 9:29; Acts 12:5**).
- Fasting (**Mk. 9:29**). • The Word of God (**Eph. 6:17**).
- The Gift of Tongues (**Rom. 8:26**). • Praise (**Ps. 149:5-9**).
- Worship (**Acts 16:25**).

- Godly Friendships and Relationships (**Eccl. 4:9-12**).
- Local Church Covering and Protection (**1 Pe. 5:8-9**).
- Spiritual Leadership (**Heb. 13:17**).

The Battle to Deceive and Blind the Non-Christian

Paul tells us that “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ,” (**II Cor. 4:4**). Describing the Ephesian believers, he points out that at one time they were all dead in sin and “followed the ways of this world and of the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit who is now working in the children of disobedience”, (**Eph. 2:2**). We must pray against the tactics of the devil and stand in the gap for the lost (**Ez. 22:30**), to break the bands of wickedness over their minds, believing God to shine His light in their hearts, as Paul says, “to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they might receive forgiveness of sins (**Acts 26:18**).

We have the weapons to use against Satan and his minions, (**Eph. 6:10-18**) for “Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world,” (**I John 4:4**).

Communion - The Lord's Supper

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a spiritual act of obedience which is engaged in to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. This is a symbolic, yet meaningful, event in the life and experience of each individual believer. Though the exact methodology may vary from church to church, still the emphasis and significance of the act must remain clear. There are several purposes for the observance of the Lord's Supper which we will examine briefly.

First, we take part in Communion to show forth the sacrificial death of Christ.

The Apostle Paul puts it this way in **I Cor. 11:23-26** speaking to the Corinthian Church, "until He comes." In **Verse 24** of this passage, we see that Christ's body was broken for each and every one of us. We must have a way to individualize this reality in order for it to retain freshness and impact in our lives. A spiritual and mental renewing and sensitivity is produced afresh each time we participate in the "Lord's Supper." We are made acutely aware of the atoning power and efficacy of the Blood of the Lamb. In **John 1:29**, John the Baptist said of Jesus, "...Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!"

Our sin individually taken away and removed as far away as the East is from the West-what a liberating and life transforming reality this is intended to be! Tragically, far too often, Christians settle for living in bondage and "staleness" of experience because they have not yet gotten the revelation of the Body and Blood of Christ given for them.

In our endeavor to find the quality and manner of life purchased for us by Christ, we are encouraged to pursue holiness and to press toward the mark of the prize of the heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul exhorts us to, "Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you are truly unleavened. For indeed, Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us," (**I Cor. 5:7**).

We can and should live in His victory daily, if we can have our senses exercised concerning the spiritual dynamics of approaching the table of the Lord with sensitivity!

Second, we take part in Communion to have a deeper and more meaningful sense of Covenant established in us.

During Old Testament times, God made a covenant with Abraham (**Gen. 17:7**), for the ultimate reconciliation of sinners back unto Himself through the progeny of Abraham. In fact, God said to Abraham, "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed," (**Gen. 12:2-3**).

A covenant is a formal, binding agreement, promise, or pledge made between two parties. The covenant God made with man was for the purpose of man's salvation and blessing. This covenant required a sacrifice, which means "to give or offer up something of value in exchange for something else." In Old Testament times it (sacrifice) was considered a religious or ritualistic act belonging to worship in which offering has been made to God of some material object belonging to the offerer.

The sacrifice God required had to be of blood because life is in the blood, indeed, it represents life itself. **Leviticus 17:11** says, "The life of everything is in the blood," and that is why the Lord has commanded that all the blood be poured out on the altar to take away people's sins. Blood, which is life, takes away sins. The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament Book of Leviticus order were a mere precursor or foreshadow of better things which were to come, whose order was to be ultimately fulfilled in and by Christ, (**Mt. 5:17**). In **Hebrews 9** we read, "For if the blood of the bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot or blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the Living God? For this reason He (Jesus) is the mediator of the new covenant, by means of death (blood), for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (**Heb. 9:13-15**).

The believer should understand, know and appreciate this new and better covenant, and in doing so, apply the grace and blessings contained therein to the fullest!

Third, we partake of the Lord's Table to be able to keep the purpose and victory of Calvary's cross in right focus.

We all slip and lose our perspective from time to time. Taking the most of our opportunities on a daily basis, thus being able to "redeem the time," is really contingent on the cultivation and retention of a sensitive spirit. When we lose spiritual sensitivity, our tendency is to drift back into becoming worldlier or earthly "minded." The Scriptures teach us that we have been "...made alive, who were once dead in those trespasses and sins, and even when we were dead in those trespasses and sins, (He) made us alive together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (**Eph. 2:1, 5-7**).

God has seen fit to cause us to be seated in the heavenly places in Christ. What a divine privilege and blessing, but how often do we take that reality lightly? When Jesus said concerning the Lord's Supper, "This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me" (**Lk. 22:19**); He was instructing the disciples to grasp the eternal importance of that moment, the significance of the bread and wine (i.e. a type of His body and blood) and to carry on this practice in the days to come.

This is precisely why the church partakes of Communion, or the table of the Lord. It quickens our hearts and causes us to tune in to spiritual realities so easily overlooked living in a natural world!

Body Life

We believe that in these last days, as Scripture admonishes us, it will be absolutely crucial for the believers to be found in the house of the Lord. Gathering together with the saints of God is what caused tremendous strength and vitality in the early church, and will and must do so today. The Word of God instructs us in **Hebrews 10:24-25** that we need to “consider how to provoke (stimulate) one another to love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day, (of the return of Christ), drawing near.” We believe that the local church should be a rallying point and a “hub” of spiritual and natural activity in this historic/prophetic moment in time. Our aim is to provide direction and encourage the saints in their walk with Christ. A chief way that we plan to do this is to provide the needed center point of gathering.

In **Acts 2:42-47**, we read that the early Christians were “continually devoting themselves to the Apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” They also ate some meals together, were of one mind, and loved one another with fervency. This is the heart cry and desire of this Pastor and this church. We pray that we can, by God’s grace and favor, become that “city set on a hill” (**Mt. 5:14**), that people can come to, and count on, in this last hour.

In early New England times, one can research and see that the church, not City Hall, was the center and focal point of community activity and even of strategic decision making for the community it served. We pray that this local church can be a focal point of blessing for the community that we find ourselves a part of, for Jesus said “...but whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many”(**Mt. 20:26-28**).

Dear brother or sister in Christ, we humbly invite you to walk with us on the greatest journey this side of eternity - to follow the Savior! Let us be of one mind, one heart, and one spirit, seeking to be the salt and light for our local area. There are multitudes all around us perishing without Christ - let us join hand-in-hand and reach them together (**Jude 23**), that the kingdom of God can be established in the hearts and lives of those who can’t spiritually discern between their “right hand and their left”(**Jonah 4:11**).

Small Groups

We believe that the church has always been, by Heavenly design, a place where friendships, relationships and a sense of Spiritual family are to be developed. We can therefore think of no better place, no place more conducive to that end than a small group setting. Small groups are the setting where Christian relationships can extend beyond the church facility walls to a more personal level. It is in this environment (small groups), that commitment to Jesus Christ and to His body may be deepened and matured, and that real Biblical "Koinonia," or fellowship, may be experienced on a regular basis.

Several reasons why every person should be in a home (small) group:

It is the New Testament norm (**Acts 2:46**). Biblical Koinonia (fellowship) is more than a once-per-week meeting, a handshake, and a "Praise the Lord!" (**Acts 2:42; 4:32 -35; I Cor. 12:12 -27; Romans 12**).

Because every believer needs to be trained in a practical way in order to be discipled, committed followers of Christ (**Mt 28:18-20; II Tim. 2:2**).

Because Christian maturity is not only the knowledge of Biblical truth, but real maturity is also the ability to understand oneself and to relate to the Body of Christ, and the world in general, as a solid, socially and emotionally healthy, seasoned, Saint!

That one may be taught to become servants, which is the first step to becoming a leader, through real, practical, hands -on experience (**Mk 9:33-37; Phil 2:1-11**).

It provides a place to bring new converts for nurturing, rooting, and preservation of God's harvest for the local church and His Kingdom (**Acts 2:47; Lk. 10:30; Lk. 14:23**).

It provides a place of encouragement and protection for believers (**I Thess. 5:11; James 5:13-20**).

In a growing church, small groups provide each participant the opportunity to receive Pastoral care through delegated authority (**Ex. 18:13 -23; Acts 6:1-6; Acts 20:28**).

To see that each person will be able to discover and exercise their spiritual gifts and callings, (**I Cor.12:7; Rom. 12:3-8**).

So that each person might be a channel of life and a Living Stone in the Body (**Col. 2:19; I Pet. 2:5-9; John 7:38**).

It provides opportunity for timely discussion, teaching, clarification of prophecy, preaching, and vision as it comes from the pulpit ministry, or Gifts of the Spirit (**Hab. 2:2-3; Amos 3:7; II Chron. 20:20; I Cor. 14:26**).

Baptism

We, as the church, believe that the New Testament teaches that there are three distinct acts of grace concerning the doctrine of baptisms. Though in places the Scriptures are a somewhat unclear as to the exact lines of distinction relative to the aforementioned, we believe that there nonetheless remains adequate internal substantiation from the Scriptures themselves to warrant our theological position concerning this issue. Therefore, we believe the New Testament understanding of the doctrine of baptisms is threefold in nature:

- Baptism into the Body of Christ
- Water Baptism
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Baptism into the Body of Christ

First, Baptism into the Body of Christ is the first unique and distinct act of grace administered by the Holy Spirit on the behalf of the believer. This occurs at the moment of one's salvation experience on the sole basis of faith in Christ alone as Savior and Lord, (**John 3:3-7; Rom 10:8-13**). We can see this alluded to in **Ephesians 4:4-6**, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." We can see that what the Apostle Paul is referring to is the consistency of Biblical pattern regarding our Christian faith: one - one - one! This pattern of oneness however, deals with essential foundations of becoming a believer. To further underscore this position, we read in **Romans 6:3** the following: "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" Therefore, the baptism into Christ can be none other than the baptism into His Body--the church in the earth!

Water Baptism

Second, let's consider together the Bible doctrine of Water Baptism.

The Meaning of the Word Baptize:

The English word "baptize" comes from the Greek word "baptizo," which simply means "to dip, to overwhelm, to plunge to immerse or to submerge." It actually means to cause something to be dipped or immersed beneath the surface of water or fluid.

Why the Believer is to be Baptized:

- Because Jesus commanded that believers be baptized (**Mk. 16:16; Mt. 28:19**).

- Because the Apostles commanded it (**Acts 2:37-39; 10:44**).
- Because we validate our faith by our obedience to the Word of God (**James 2:17, 18; John 14:15**).

The Prerequisites for Water Baptism:

Baptism in and of itself cannot save anyone. It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as one's Savior that brings an individual to salvation. Therefore, baptism is only effectual for those who meet certain requirements. Those receiving baptism must have already laid the first two foundation stones in the Christian experience, namely:

Repentance (Acts 2:38). This means one is not baptized merely because he/she wants to become part of a church group.

Faith (Acts 8:12; 10:47). This means that one must be old enough to know what they are doing. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (**Mk.16:16**).

What Takes Place in Water Baptism:

We are baptized simply because we are commanded by God to do so. However, as we respond to the Word of the Lord in faith, some very important things will take place. Every person who goes into the waters of baptism should expect to experience the following by faith:

To be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (**Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; 3:1**).

In baptism, the old man is crucified. In immersion, the old man is buried. But in rising up out of the water, the new man rises to walk in newness of life.

"Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism in death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also walk in newness of life," (**Romans 6:4**).

A new victory over life-dominating sins (**Romans 6:11-18**).

A spiritual cleansing and renewal (**Acts 22:16**). The water itself effects no cleansing, but as we respond in faith to the commands of Christ, the Holy Spirit works in connection with God-ordained means.

An identification with the Name of the Lord (**Acts 2:38; Acts 8:12-16; Acts 10:48**).

A circumcision of the heart (**Colossians 2:11-12**).

The Significance of Circumcision of the Heart in Connection with Water Baptism:

In the Old Testament, God gave a covenant to Abraham in which He required those who were participating in the covenant to accept and experience the sign and seal of the covenant which was a natural circumcision of the flesh (**Gen. 17:10-14**). In the New Testament, God has taken that seal and made it a spiritual requirement. In water baptism, we receive the spiritual experience of circumcision of the heart to which the natural rite pointed. The natural rite consisted of four elements that are all symbolic of something that takes place in the circumcision of the heart.

The Four Chief Elements in the Natural Rite of Circumcision:

The cutting away of flesh. In baptism we put off the old man nature (**Col. 2:11**).

The shedding of blood. In baptism, a death to self is to take place (**Romans 6:3**).

The eighth day. Natural circumcision took place on the eighth day, which is symbolic of new beginning and resurrection life (**I Peter 3:20-21**). In baptism, we experience a new beginning and newness of life.

The new name given. In baptism, we have a new name invoked over us: the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the very expression of the fullness of the Godhead bodily!

How We Should Be Baptized:

- Scriptural baptism is baptism by immersion.
- Baptism is to be administered in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus commanded that baptism was to be administered as an act of obedience (**Mt. 28:19-20; Rom. 6:1-11**). We baptize in the name of Jesus, which name the disciples came to practice, on the basis of Jesus' ascension and exaltation (**Acts 2:33-36**). Thus, when they baptized, they baptized in this manner (**Acts 2:36-41; Acts 8:12-16; 38**).

The Responsibility of the Baptized:

Even as the waters of the Red Sea served as a separation between the Egyptian life of slavery and the land of God's provision for the Israelites of old, so the waters of baptism should serve as a permanent landmark in our lives. Baptism should signal three things:

A grand farewell to the old way of life. This means a willingness to sever all connections with ungodliness and those who live in ungodliness.

A new standard of living. This means that from baptism on, there will and must be a determination to live by the principles of God's Holy Kingdom.

A new disciple of Jesus. The believer should begin to see himself/herself as a follower, a student, and a witness to others of all that Jesus stands for. We should seek to become a student of the Word, and love the Lord with all of our heart!

Baptism in/of the Holy Spirit

Third, let us examine what the Scriptures have to say concerning what is commonly referred to as the Baptism in/of the Holy Spirit. Of all the various doctrines contained in the Word of God, this subject unfortunately is often the center or the target of much debate within the wider body of Christ. On the one hand, we have those believers who are sincere in their conviction that the gifts of the Spirit as described in the Bible no longer exist. On the other hand, we have those in the body of Christ, such as ourselves, who are equally as sincere in our conviction that the gifts of the Spirit, as well as all the other miraculous and logically inexplicable movings of God, still are available for the New Testament believer of the 1990's. Now let us fully examine this much misunderstood subject:

The Relationship of the Old Testament Believers to the Work and Ministry of the Holy Spirit:

The Spirit came upon various men in Old Testament times that enabled them to do special feats of strength (**Judges 11:29**).

The Spirit of the Lord rested upon men (**Numbers 11:25**).

Men were filled with the Spirit in a temporary fashion to perform certain God-ordained tasks (**Exodus 31:3**).

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Christ:

Christ was:

- Born of the Spirit (**Lk. 1:35**).
- Filled with the Spirit (**John 3:34**).
- Baptized with the Spirit (**Mt. 3:16-17**).
- Led of the Spirit (**Mt. 4:1**).
- Sealed by the Spirit (**John 6:27**).
- Empowered by the Spirit (**Lk. 4:14**).
- Anointed by the Spirit (**Acts 10:38**).

Is the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” a Scriptural Term?

Yes, it was used by John the Baptist (**John 1:33**), by Jesus (**Acts 1:5**), and by the Apostle Peter (**Acts 11:16**).

The Relationship of Christ to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit:

Jesus was baptized in the Holy Spirit after His water baptism in the Jordan River (**Mt. 3:16-17; John 1:19-34**).

Part of Jesus’ ministry is to baptize with the Holy Spirit (**John 1:33**). To make this clear, Jesus did not personally baptize anyone with water (**John 4:2**).

Jesus prophesied that this would be a believer’s experience given on the basis of His exaltation and glorification (**John 7:38-39**).

The Meaning of the Term, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit”

It is the enduing with power to do the commands of Christ (**Acts 1:8**).

It is a definite experience of which we can know that we have or have not received (**Acts 19:2**).

It is an operation of the Spirit distinct from and subsequent to the conversion experience (**Acts 8:12,15,16**).

It is something to be experienced as part of the Christian foundation in our lives (**Acts 2:38-39**).

Does one Have To “speak in other tongues” to prove that they’ve been baptized in the Holy Spirit?

No, a person does not “have to” speak in tongues in order to prove that they’ve been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Our contention is that it is more accurate to say that a person “gets to” speak in other tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance (**Acts 2:4**). Remember, the giftings and various manifestations of the Spirit are optional for the believer to choose, to receive, or to reject for their own lives. A gift is simply that--a gift! One can choose to accept or refuse any gift based upon individual choices. We believe that all of the manifestations of the Spirit are relevant and necessary for today, but speaking in other tongues is not the singular “proof”

of having been baptized in the Holy Spirit. In other words, we believe that a person can be baptized in the Spirit without necessarily speaking in other tongues!

Who may receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

All believers in Christ of all ages are candidates for the baptism of the Holy Spirit (**Mk. 16:17**). “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call (**Acts 2:38-39**).

How does one receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Fulfill the prerequisites of repentance and faith before asking for this experience.

Ask Jesus, the baptizer with the Holy Spirit, to give you this gift (**Lk 11:9-13; Mt. 3:11**).

Exercise your faith by speaking in an unknown tongue daily, as the Holy Spirit would give you utterance of course. It is a major key to spiritual vitality (**Jude 20; I Cor. 14:15**), but certainly not the only key!

Some Biblical reasons for speaking in other Tongues

It is one of the signs of the believer (**Mk. 16:17**).

It is a way for our spirit to be built up in faith (**I Cor. 14:2,4,15,18**).

It is a way to magnify the Lord (**Acts 10:46**).

It is part of our spiritual armor (**Eph. 6:18**).

It is spoken of in Scripture as a “refreshing” (**Is. 28:11-12; I Cor. 14:21**).

Beloved, God wants every believer to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary in every Christian for the service that Christ demands and expects of us. Jesus and the Apostles waited to enter into their ministry until this “endowment with power” was experienced. Let us never see such a wonderful provision of God as a mere “option” to be equally as easily received as discarded, but let us continually seek and we surely will find. (**Mt. 7:7**)

Spiritual Gifts

We as the church, believe in the reality, existence, and availability of spiritual gifts for the Believer in Christ, today-not just in former days. Further, our belief is also that these, “gifts” are to be understood Biblically in three distinct areas of application:

- The Motivational Gifts (**Rom. 12:3-8**)
- The Gifts of the Spirit (**I Cor. 12:8-10**)
- The Governmental Gifts or 5-fold Ministry (**Eph. 4:7-12**)

First, the *Motivational Gifts*, are in essence, a listing of spiritual “enablements” given by God to the individual; thus, depicting their individual sources of life motivation. These inherent attributes thus become the “flame” or driving force of each person with the concomitant signs evident in each person’s life for others to see, (i.e. those with the gift of mercy, will be easily touched with the feelings of another’s infirmities, and always be prone to exude an empathetic spirit etc.) (**Rom. 12:8**).

Second, the *Gifts of the Spirit* can best be understood as those gifts which are wrought and produced only by the Holy Spirit, spontaneously manifested, and whose chief purpose is to work for the common good of the Body of Christ via the meeting of human needs by supernatural means (**I Cor. 14:24-25**).

The Holy Spirit moves graciously, powerfully and sovereignly whenever and wherever He is allowed to move without human logic or carnal restriction. The gifts of the Spirit are available to every believer, for God is no respecter of persons (**Mk. 16:17-18**). Whenever one avails themselves to the Holy Spirit’s moving and inspirations, they then truly are candidates for usability in His supernatural dimension (**I Cor. 12:4-7**).

Last, the *Governmental Gifts, or “Five-Fold” ministry gifts* as they are sometimes called, are those gifts related to governing or leading in the house of the Lord. It refers to the titled or established leadership in the midst of God’s people.

We believe fully in the present-day existence and indispensability of the offices of the Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher. These offices or types of God-given gifts differ from gifts of an “everyday” sense in in major ways:

There is a definite and distinct call of God upon this person’s life for full-time ministerial service.

Due to the depth and nature of this calling, the degree and expression of their gifts will be somewhat more sharpened, defined, and public-oriented as opposed to an occasional usage of someone by the Holy Spirit- wonderful as that may be!

Some ministries believe and teach that the offices of the Apostle and Prophet no longer exist, having been done away with subsequent to the original Apostolic Age, (approx. 96AD). This opinion, we contend, lies contrary to the clear, consistent flow and pattern of Scripture.

Further, we contend that this opinion also is found contrary to the revealed character, nature, and external purposes of God — ongoing and alive in Christ and His Church! (**Heb. 13:8; Mal. 3:6; Eph. 4:11-17**).

Evangelism

We believe that the church has a God-given mandate to reach a lost and dying world for Jesus Christ. We are each given a charge to do our part in fulfilling the Great Commission as described by Jesus in **Matthew 28:18-20** and **Mark 16:15-16**.

The church works in cooperation with the Holy Spirit and thus is enabled and equipped to reach the lost (**I Cor. 3:9**). We believe evangelism to be central to the plan of God for the world, not simply an optional issue for the Christian (**Mt. 24:14**).

World evangelism is accomplished through two primary means;

First, it is accomplished through mass evangelism such as television, radio, printed literature, mail-outs, handouts, evangelistic crusades etc.

Second, it is accomplished through personal one-on-one evangelizing on one's job, in the marketplace, winning the friend to Christ, relative, loved one, next door neighbor, etc.

Each individual believer has a ministry of reconciliation in the earth! This ministry is for the "least to the greatest," and the Lord will enable each person by His Holy Spirit to get the job done! (**II Cor. 5:18**)

Missions

Our vision is to:

- Establish churches in the communities, states, and regions of our land as the Lord raises up people to do so.
- Send men and women all over the world on mission trips from our local church and bible school.
- Seek to establish churches in any foreign countries wherein we may send missionaries. Each foreign church will function according to the local culture of that particular country and will seek to address the needs of, and minister to the lost in that society.
- Send out missions teams, if necessary for seasons of time to help in the beginning of these mission churches and works.

Church Membership

We believe that commitment to God and to one another is imperative if we are to grow and bear fruit. First, let's discuss and examine commitment to God. Our commitment to the Lord finds expression in our daily desire for Him and our resultant faithfulness to Him. We generally allow God to sanctify us - that is to set us apart for holy purposes, only to the degree that we are committed to Him. Jesus said to the Laodicean church in the book of Revelation, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish that you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth," (**Rev. 3:15-16**). The Lord is not pleased with a lukewarmness of Christianity, but rather desires a fervent, white-hot faith.

We believe and strongly teach the aforementioned as a present-day Bible truth, mandate, and reality for Christians. The Word of God is forever settled in Heaven, and thus, what God has said is precisely what He meant. Upon close examination, the issue of commitment is really an issue of character and integrity. For instance, the reason why one chooses not to frequent a bar, or some such place, should not be simply because they are "afraid" of God, but rather should be because we love Him and are committed to Him fully. Love, character and integrity should be hallmarks of the Christian's life, (**Num. 14:24; I John 5:1-3**). When we decide to allow God to change us, one thing is certain. The Lord will always cause us to be conformed to the image of the Son, (**Rom. 8:29**). In other words, the way Jesus was/is the precise direction that the Holy Spirit will always point us to, and cause us to become. Jesus was a committed person, (**John 4:32-34**). He was fully committed unto His Father and fully committed unto the task at hand - Calvary's cross! The eyes of the Lord still run to and fro throughout the whole earth actively seeking such people (committed) in this last hour. May He find us to be such a people! (**II Chron. 16:9a**).

Now let us examine and discuss the aspect of commitment to one another. All true Christian commitment will and must find a secondary avenue of expression horizontally—from person to person. We are joined to one another by virtue of being a member of the Body of Christ in the earth, (**I Cor. 12**). We are made members of God's family upon being born again through a personal relationship with Christ, (**Rom. 8:15**). But we believe that there also lies another point of Divine connection between believers, which is the connection between a person and their local church. The believer's relationship to their local church can and should be understood as being the "planting of the Lord," (**Is. 61:3**). The Bible tells us plainly that God is the husbandman or the vinedresser, (**John 15:1-5**). We are also told that Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. The Father as the vine dresser takes each one of us, and lovingly and carefully plants us in a seedbed or "vineyard" where we can grow and mature. This "vineyard" is the local church. Plants do not plant themselves, but they are planted. The same with us. The Lord directs us by His Spirit to exactly where we need to be planted. It is in the place of Divine "planting" where one experiences peace, joy, a sense of belonging, and an inner, spiritual "sensing" of the placement of the Lord. It is a great blessing to experience such things. You simply know that you're in the right place for you, and exactly at the right time! Conversely, when one is not in the "right" place of the Lord's planting for that time, then nothing really seems to "fit" for them. Being in the right local church for you (as defined by the Holy Spirit), is extremely important therefore. It is the place where one is fed,

nurtured, and trained to do the work of the ministry. It is also the place where you get a first-hand opportunity to bear the fruit of the Spirit (**Gal. 5**), because of being open to the Lord and committed to the local assembly. It is one's spiritual "family" and the place where we can rest in the Lord and allow our "roots" to go down comfortably. It's a place where the preaching of the Word, Spirit-led worship, and prophetic moving of the Holy Ghost prevail.

Local church membership, therefore, is simply the expression of the realization and acknowledgment of the planting of the Lord, and one's response in commitment to that fact! It is not some sort of binding, religious, legalistic set of requirements on an individual or family. The local church is made aware of who is committed, and the local believer then knows that they can call that church "home," being assured that the local church family and its leadership is fully committed to them, as well. Church membership serves also as a protective device against roving wolves who may drift from church to church at will, polluting good people concerning commitment, doctrine, etc. These "Lone Rangers" have also been known to fleece the sheep of local churches for money, whereas had they themselves been members of a local fellowship, spiritual leadership could then have spoken into their lives lovingly. Again, the Lord was, and is, a committed God! We read in **John 3:16**, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We know that Jesus said in **John 15:8**, "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be my disciples." He also said in **Verse 16** of the same chapter, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain..." Remaining speaks of fruit that will abide and stand the test of time. This is everything that flimsy, roving uncommittedness is not!

The leadership team of this local church invites you to walk with us as we endeavor to walk with the Master. Let's see God's purposes and God's great dreams for us in this local fellowship come to pass in our lifetime and through our hands, efforts, and obedience to Him.

Church Growth

We believe that church growth is a vital part of the will and plan of God for His people. Based upon natural, biological facts and processes, we come to the clear conclusion that ultimately, “Anything living grows!” It’s upon that premise that we approach the Lord in faith, from His hand receive vision, and by His grace pursue that vision with a single eye and with a whole heart. Vision is what motivates God’s leaders and provides the impetus for church outreaches and advancement. The Bible declares that “Without a vision the people perish (are unrestrained)” (**Prov. 29:18**). When God’s vision is embraced by the church leadership, and when it is articulated properly to God’s people, the results may not be automatic or instant, but they will be certain - the local church will advance, and the people of God will be involved and fulfilled. Thus, church growth comes about as a result of the following contributing factors:

- Spirit Led Prayer
- Christ-Exalting Worship (**John 12:32**)
- Supernatural Power
- Servant Leaders
- Kingdom Family Relationships
- Passion for the Lost
- Maturation of the Believers
- A Kingdom of Priests
- Strong, Flexible Church Structure
- A God-Size Vision