

Belonging

How to participate as a committed disciple at
Community Church

*.... more and more men
and women believed in
the Lord and were
added to their number
Acts 5:14 (NIV)*

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Introduction

Belonging to a local church is often described as choosing to jump on to a bus or a tram. You will want to know where the tram is going before you get on and what route it is going to take.

This booklet will help you understand our vision (where we are going), our purpose and values (how are we going to get there) and our core doctrinal beliefs. This booklet will be a helpful tool for you to really understand what it means to *belong* to Community Church.



Part of committing to belong to the church is that you will have an informal meeting (usually over coffee!) with one of the church leaders. It is an opportunity to get to know each other, and for you to ask any questions that you have about the church.

"There is nothing like the church when it's working right. Its beauty is indescribable. Its power is breath-taking. Its potential is unlimited ... I believe that the local church is the hope of the world."

Bill Hybels

Why commit to the church?

We praise God because we are joined together as the church of Jesus Christ. In Corinthians it says:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12)

This is a beautiful illustration which shows that we are each created for different functions and that we need everyone to function in order to be a healthy body. We believe that all of us as separate parts find purpose and unity under Jesus, “the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18). The members are the church (Eph. 2:19-22).

The leadership of Community Church strives to love and care for its members well. In order for the Elders and Leaders to fulfil the responsibility to shepherd the flock, they need to know who the flock is.

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. (Hebrews 13:17)

It is clear that the Bible emphasises a corporate mission for the church and so collectively we work to accomplish our God given vision. We try to operate with minimal staff, budget, and structure because we trust the Holy Spirit to move through the transformed hearts of each one of us to mobilise the collective body of Christ to humbly serve Jesus by loving our church family, demonstrating love and grace to our communities, and glorifying God. It is a very high calling, and is hard work—but there is no other work that is so rewarding and will bring eternal Glory to our God!

Committed Members and Guests

We would expect a number of guests to join with us regularly, visitors, friends, family, non-Christians, and those who are looking in to see whether they want to join with us or not. Of course you are very welcome to join us as often as you want!

However, we believe that there is a difference between a committed member and a guest. If you are not committed then you are not fully connected or dedicated to the body, our church family. You therefore may not benefit from the discipleship, protection, accountability and care that come with being an active part of the church. This may not make much difference for visitors and non-Christians, but for a Christian to consume rather than commit to a local church we believe does a disservice to Jesus' body (the church) and themselves.

Committed members, on the other hand, commit to the church and participate as the church. This means sacrificing time, talents, and treasure; committing to the care and community of their fellow members; and submitting to the authority God has established in our appointed leaders, and engaging in the vision that God has laid before us.

What are the benefits of belonging?

In the Bible the church is described as a body, a family, a household, therefore we can see that being a Christian is not a solo effort. Belonging to Community Church is not the same as joining a local sports club. We have been set apart for Jesus and are "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph. 1:4-5 2:19). You don't join the church for the perks! The benefit is that we get to worship Jesus together, serve in His kingdom, and be children of God! We enjoy the guidance that his Word provides, and, when sin comes between us, we enjoy the reconciliation Jesus' blood provides.

How do I commit to the church?

It's a 5 step process. Connect, Believe, Learn, Commit, Converse.

1. Connect

- Attend on Sundays
- Join a Life Group
- Volunteer to serve
- Get linked in to our regular news and updates

2. Believe & Be Baptised

Members are required to be professing Christians who believe and have faith in Jesus as God and Saviour. We would expect this to have been shown through baptism or a willingness to be baptised.

3. Learn

If you are new to the church then we recommend that you attend one of our regular welcome lunches to help you understand fully who we are as a church, what we believe, and how we operate. It's also a great chance to meet others and get to know your leaders. We believe it's important to know these things so that you can make an informed decision about membership.

4. Commit

Community Church members share in their commitment to the church by participating to fulfil its vision, by agreeing to our family covenant and joyfully living in community, serving the church, and giving regularly and faithfully.

5. Converse

As the final step in joining the church, you'll meet with a church leader (usually your Life Group leader) for an informal membership discussion. This is an opportunity to confirm your commitment and ask any questions that you may have.

Community Church Statement of Faith

Here are the core statements of our doctrine of faith

1. We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, eternally existing in three Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, undivided in essence and coequal in power and glory. (Genesis 1:1, Isaiah 43:10-11, Matt 28:19, John 1:1-2, 2 Corinthians 13:14)
2. We believe in the full humanity and deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death and His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father. (John 1:14-18, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Matthew 1:23, Acts 1:9)
3. We believe that the Bible is the inspired, infallible word of God and that it is our supreme authority in all matters of Christian faith and practice. (Matthew 24:35, John 5:39, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21)
4. We believe that all have fallen short of the Glory of God and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God. However, the Lord Jesus Christ by His suffering and death has made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved from the power of sin and its eternal consequences. (Romans 3:23)
5. We believe in the personal justification of the sinner solely by the grace of God through faith in Christ Jesus who was crucified and whom God raised from the dead. (Romans 3:24, 4:25, 5:1-2, 5:18)

6. We believe in the indwelling and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit the purpose of which is the receiving of power to live and witness for Christ. We believe that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit can be a separate experience from New Birth for all believers. (John 3:6, John 14:15-17, Acts 1:1-8, Acts 2:1-38, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Galatians 5:16-23, Titus 3:5)
7. We believe in the priesthood of all believers, who from the universal church, the body of which Christ is the head, and which is committed, by His command to the proclamation of the gospel through mutual love, practical service and evangelistic concern throughout the world. (1 Peter 2:4-9, Revelation 5:9-10)
8. We believe in the personal, visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory. (John 14:1-3, Acts 1:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:15-17)
9. We believe in the immortality of the soul, in the resurrection of all people to a final judgement, eternal blessing for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked. (Matt 25:35-46)
10. We believe in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as of Divine Appointment of which all believers should avail themselves. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Matt 26:26-28, Mark 16:16, Matt 28:19)

Our Purpose, Values and Vision Statement

Why we exist (Our Purpose)

We exist to:

- Worship God
- Share Jesus with all people
- Make Disciples
- Transform Communities

What we practise (Our Values)

We aim to be a church that is:

- Full of Grace
- Prayerful
- Relational
- Kingdom focussed
- Vibrant
- Equipping
- Generous

What we intend to do (Our Vision)

As passionately involved disciples of Jesus, we will be a church with wide and effective influence in our communities, where people are saved and added weekly to our congregations.

Why we exist (Our Purpose)

We exist to worship God

We are called to extravagant, vibrant worship in all areas and all seasons of life. When we gather together we expect to experience the presence of God as we worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

We exist to share Jesus with all people

We are called to introduce Jesus to all people as we take every opportunity to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God.

We exist to make disciples

We are called to be disciples of Jesus, and to help others to become more like Him.

We exist to transform communities

We are called to be agents of transformation, as our love for God makes a radical difference in our local communities, and we equip others elsewhere to do the same.

What we practise (Our Values)

As a body of God's people, we are passionate about the Bible as the handbook for life and being led by the Holy Spirit, some of our distinctive values are:

A Church full of Grace

We are no longer under law, legalism and condemnation but live in the abundance of God's grace.

A Prayerful Church

Prayer is a vital pre-requisite for everything we do. We value personal daily prayer and regular corporate prayer.

A Relational Church

Secure in our relationship with Christ and therefore with each other, love and unity is prized. We encourage each member to build good, deep, strong relationships, in all aspects of church life.

As a church we seek good relationship with other churches in our area, with churches in the Newfrontiers family and with other churches worldwide.

A Kingdom Focussed Church

We are a diverse church in age, social and cultural backgrounds. Whilst we celebrate our differences our new life in Jesus introduces us to a Kingdom culture that transcends all other cultures.

A Vibrant Church

We are passionate about the new life that Jesus has given us. We express our joy in our vibrant meetings together and we live to share this with others.

An Equipping church

We encourage everyone to grow in knowledge, understanding and experience of the Lord and to be equipped to live a victorious and holy life for Him at home, in the workplace and in the community.

A Generous Church

In response to the amazing grace of Jesus, we aim to be a church that is known for its generosity: in heart, spirit, speech, time, hospitality and finance.

What we intend to do (The thrusts of the Vision)

1. Making Disciple Makers
2. Wide and effective influence
3. Saved and Added
4. Plant Churches
5. Resourcing the vision

1. Making disciple makers

We will see a culture of discipleship throughout the church. Everyone will be taking responsibility for their own development, lifelong learners and encouraging others in their discipleship journey.

We will be a church that identifies and empowers new leaders to take responsibility in church life and in society.

2. Individually and corporately we will be involved in the community, changing lives through the meeting of identified needs.

We will see change by being 'salt & light' in our communities.

We will have strong relationships with our neighbours and be involved in the bodies that make decisions that impact the people within our communities.

We will be supporting other churches and groups, sharing good practice, training, and encouraging, ensuring that they are also able to contribute to transformation of society.

3. Saved and Added

Everyone will have the confidence and desire to share their faith and we will see people saved weekly (52 p.a.), following Jesus and added to the church.

We will have a culture of witnessing and evangelism in the church.

4. Church Planting

We will be a church that has planted churches that plant churches.

5. Resources and Leadership Structure

We will ensure the right leadership structures, staffing levels, finances and facilities, to fulfil the above vision and its obligations in various aspects of church governance.

Church Leadership

Community Church Chafford Hundred is led by a team of Elders. We know that Jesus is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18) and he appoints leaders, his “under-shepherds”. It is clear from New Testament teaching that it is Elders that lead the local church and that there are laid out characteristics for an Elder. (Acts 14:23, 20:28, 1 Tim 5:17, 1 Tim 3, Titus 2, 1 Pet 5).

On this understanding of scripture and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we appoint men to serve the church as Elders.

We have a team of staff who work from the office and in the community. To oversee our trust, legal, compliance and charitable responsibilities we also appoint a team of trustees. For up-to-date information on the people who fulfil these roles, please see the church website.

Newfrontiers and Relational Mission

We are an independent church, but have chosen to relate to a world-wide family of churches called Newfrontiers. These are churches that have the same values as us and together we can achieve more than we would on our own.

Newfrontiers has multiple “apostolic spheres” which are groups of churches led by an individual who has the gift of an apostle and his team. We belong to the apostolic sphere called Relational Mission which is led by Mike Betts and his team. It includes churches across the UK, in Europe and the rest of the world.

As part of the Relational Mission Team Peter Vincent, who is an Elder at Community Church Bishops Stortford, oversees us as a church.

We are grateful to be a part of Relational Mission and we believe that these strong links with gifted leaders and churches brings encouragement, equipping and benefits the kingdom.



Mike Betts



Peter & Angela
Vincent



The Church Family Covenant

The Church's covenant with you

- We will appoint Elders and Church Leaders (deacons) who meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures
- We will diligently seek God's will for our church through the word of God and by the leading of the Holy Spirit. We trust that each member of the church will join us in this undertaking.
- We will endeavour to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of the Scripture and will be on guard against false teachers
- We will provide care for you and seek your growth as a disciple of Christ by equipping you for service and praying for you regularly, particularly when you are sick.
- We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary
- We will seek ourselves to be an example by fulfilling our roles as church members

Your covenant with the church

- I have read and understood the church Purpose, Values and Vision statements and commit to participate fully in this mission as a faithful disciple of Jesus.
- I have read and understood the church statement of faith and agree to maintain unity and not be divisive in areas of teaching and doctrine.
- I will by the grace of God, walk in holiness as a living act of worship to Jesus Christ
- If I fall into sin I will confess my sin before God and to Christian brothers or sisters and seek help to put my sin to death.
- I will faithfully and diligently steward the resources God has given me. This includes financial giving which will be regular, in proportion to my income and given to the church cheerfully. I will also serve sacrificially, willingly, voluntarily and joyfully by regularly participating in the church community.
- I will submit to discipline by God through his Holy Spirit, and will follow biblical procedures for church discipline in my relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ. I will submit to discipline by church leadership if the need should ever arise.
- I will endeavour to maintain a close relationship with our Lord Jesus through regular Bible reading, prayer, worship, fellowship, and practice of spiritual disciplines. This will be evidenced by such things as, my participation in weekly worship services, communion, Life Groups, church prayer meetings, service, mission, and a life that glorifies Jesus. I will be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ, knowing that my identity is in him, my life is for him and he has plans and purposes for me which he will lead me in for his glory.

I understand that this joins me with members of Community Church in worship, fellowship and mission under the leading of the elders of the church. I accept the responsibility to notify Community Church leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Community Church.

Community Church Contact Details

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