

TRINITY
CENTRAL

MEMBERSHIP

DOCTRINE





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Want to understand more about what we believe as a church? In this Doctrine booklet, we go into a little more depth than in our 'Membership Booklet'.

This is not exhaustive by any means - that would require much more than a booklet! Our hope is that this section will give you a better sense of how we are seeking to understand God through the Bible, and to work out faith in our everyday lives.

It acts as a reference to some of our beliefs and ways of operating.

This section may also give us some things to talk about:

- there may be ideas here that are new to you and you would like to understand them better, or
- concepts that you disagree with, and would like to understand whether we can go forward together.

So, let's get into it!



GOD: THE TRINITY

We believe there is one true God. God has always existed as three persons, each of whom is fully God: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. God is infinitely loving, powerful, and wise. He is holy - this means that God has never sinned in thought, word or deed and is utterly pure in every way. He knows all things. He made all things. He is good.

(Gen 1:1, 26; Deut 6:4; Matt 28:19; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:1-3; Rom 1:19-20; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 4:4-6, 1 John 1:5, 1 John 4:8)

God the Father

God the Father spoke the universe out of nothing and daily sustains all that He has made. He faithfully keeps all His promises. He works all things together for good to those who love Him, and hears and answers prayer. He is loving, compassionate and just. He is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness: forgiving sin, but never excusing, minimizing or ignoring human wrongdoing. He is our saviour and desires that all people would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth of who He is. God the Father so loved the world that He voluntarily gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to save all who believe in Jesus from eternal death so we can live forever with Him.

(Gen 1:1; Lev 19:2; Ps. 104; Lam 3:22-23; Rom 1:20; Romans 3:23-26; 5:8; John 3:16; Rom 8:28; 1 Tim 2:3-4)

God the Son *(Jesus Christ)*

Jesus Christ is the Father's only begotten Son. Jesus is eternally God. All things were created through Him and for Him. He is the rightful ruler of all creation and He holds all things together by the word of His power. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born to Mary, Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He lived a perfect and sinless life, performed many miracles, and taught with authority. He voluntarily died on the cross in our place and for our

sins. By doing so He removed our guilt, suffered the punishment we deserved for our sins and reconciled us to God. In a mysterious way Jesus became sin so that we might become righteous: holy and blameless before God.

On the third day following His death Jesus physically rose from the dead. In the days and weeks following He appeared to hundreds of witnesses. He bodily ascended into heaven where now He sits at the Father's right hand.

He is our saviour and desires that all people would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth of who He is. Jesus is the Head of the Church, which is His body. He rules over all, intercedes for His people, and will one day visibly return to earth to judge the living and the dead.

(Matt 1:18-25; 20:28; Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1-3; 20:28; Acts 1:11; Rom 3:21-26; 5:6-9; 1 Cor 15:3-8; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 1:4; Col 1:15-23; 1 Tim 2:3 6; 3:16; Heb 1:1 4; 7:25; 9:28; 1 Pet 4:5; 2 Pet 3:9; Rev 22:12-13)

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is eternally God. Before Jesus came to earth, the Holy Spirit temporarily filled certain individuals with power to achieve God's purposes. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit at his baptism. Following his return to heaven, Jesus and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgement. He is the 'Helper' who leads us to repentance and unites us to Jesus in faith so that we are new, 'born again' people. He lives permanently in believers to comfort, counsel, empower, and lead us. He is the Spirit of Truth who guides us into truth. The Spirit helps us engage with the Father's love for us, and empowers our love for one another and the world. The Spirit gives us gifts to help us serve God and one another. We believe that all the gifts of the Spirit listed in the Bible are essential for the strengthening of the church and the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ to all nations.

(Gen 1:2; 1 Sam 16:13-14; Job 33:4; Ps. 51:11; Luke 3:21-22, 4:1; John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Rom 8:9; 12:6-8; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 12:4-11; Eph 1:13-14; Gal 5:22-26; 1 Pet 4:10-11)



GOD'S COMMUNICATION TO HUMANITY

God has revealed his existence and power to humanity in His extraordinary creation, of which we are a part.

God has supremely revealed Himself to us in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, who lived among us. Jesus' life and teachings are preserved for us in the Bible. We believe that the Bible (the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments) is the God-inspired record and means of His saving work in the world.

We believe that the Bible is:

Inspired by God

The Bible was written by human authors as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit and is without error in the original manuscripts.

Authoritative

The Bible is our supreme authority in all matters of faith and life.

Sufficient

The Bible contains all the written words of revelation from God that He intended humanity to have. We believe the Bible is complete and must not be added to, superseded, or changed.

The Bible's purpose isn't just to inform but to transform. It is not a textbook to study but the living, active, life-giving Word of God. Therefore believers should read it frequently and attentively as God's personal communication to them both individually and as the Church. As we hear, believe, apply and live according to the written Word, we will be equipped as disciples of Christ to be witnesses to the world of the good news of Jesus Christ.

N.T. Wright, an English theologian, says:

...the Bible does what God wants it to do when, through the power of the Spirit, it enables people to believe in Jesus, to follow him, and to share the work of the kingdom ... We become sharers in God's kingdom work by loving him with heart, mind, soul, and strength, and the Bible is the primary means the Spirit uses to bring about that heart-and-life renewal. The authority of scripture is therefore the dynamic, not static, means by which God transforms humans into Jesus-followers and therefore kingdom-workers. - Surprised by Scripture

If you wonder what God's will is for your life, be prayerfully reading your Bible!

(Psa 19:1-4; Mark 13:31; John 8:31-32; 20:30-31; Acts 20:32; Rom 1:18-20; 2 Tim 3:14-17; Heb 1:1-2; 4:12-13; 2 Pet 1:20-21; Rev 22:18-19)



THE BIBLE'S PURPOSE ISN'T
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HUMANITY

We believe that men and women were created by God in His own image to be in loving relationship with Him. However, the first man and first woman, Adam and Eve, questioned the reality of God's love for them and disobeyed God's explicit command. By doing so they rebelled against God's good authority and became subject to physical and spiritual death.

Ever since then, all people are born sinful by nature - we freely and frequently choose to disobey God in all areas of our lives. Where God calls us to love Him with all our being and love our neighbours as ourselves, we often fail to do either. Finally, men and women are completely unable fix this sin problem in themselves and others and restore their fractured relationship with God.

(Gen 1-3; Psalm 8; Mat 22:34-40; Rom 3:21-26; 5:6-19; 7:14-25; Eph 2:1-5)

Man and Woman

God created both women and men in His image, with equal worth and dignity. He created them with gender distinctions that are important to our humanity and part of God's good creation. These distinctions between male and female are complementary versions of God's image and are thus fundamental to the goodness of God's creation.

For this reason, the fundamental equality of men and women does not equate to 'sameness'. Rather, we believe that men and women were created by God to complement each other as they seek to fulfill God's will in their lives. Men and women are mutually dependent. Like a dance, when the dance partners assume their differing roles they are able to enjoy the dance. Men and women have differing gifts and roles but work together for the glory of God. In this way they reflect the eternally joyful relationship of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Bible speaks of differing roles within the marriage relationship and the church.

Within the marriage relationship we affirm that God created the husband to humbly lead his family by serving his wife and children, and the wife to be a helper suitable for her husband. The husband is called to love his wife as himself. As her 'head', the husband is responsible before God for the

flourishing of his wife. He must exercise his God-given authority in a loving, sacrificial way that serves rather than dominates her. The husband's model is Jesus Christ, who gave up everything, including his life, to make his bride, the church, sinless and holy.

In the same way, Jesus calls the wife to submit to her husband and respect him, to support him rather than oppose him. This submission is a gift that is freely and joyfully given and cannot be compelled. The wife's model is Jesus Christ who, though equal with the Father, out of love gladly humbled himself to the Father's will. Further, we recognize that the wife's (and husband's) ultimate 'head' is Jesus Christ, and therefore the wife is not called to submit to her husband in things that are sinful.

(Gen 2:18-25; Matt 19:4-6; 1 Cor. 11:3-12; Col 3:18-21; Eph 5:21-33; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Pet 3:1-8)

In the New Testament we see numerous instances of both men and women leading and using their God-given gifts to serve the church but we also see limitations placed on one specific role: God has given responsibility to guide, guard and govern the church to Elders, men who fulfil the qualifications outlined in 1 Tim 3, Titus 1 and 1 Pet 5. Elders have responsibility before God to 'father' the church and to raise up men and women to lead in all other areas of church life. Thus, we strongly affirm that women can and should be deeply involved in the leadership and ministry of the church, but women are not called to be Elders.

In practice, this means that the bulk of the teaching of the gathered church (typically done during a Sunday service), will be performed by Elders. Occasionally visiting speakers (who are often Elders in their own contexts), or those who have been identified as potential Elders, or others in the church, will be invited to speak by the Elders. Elders bear the responsibility not only for instruction of the gathered church in the foundational truths of the Christian faith but the direction and governance of the church.

Within the context of the gathered church women are encouraged to pray and exercise spiritual gifts as led by the Spirit, just as every man is. Women are encouraged to lead ministries and to speak and teach in various contexts. Some examples include evangelism, leading worship, leading works for the poor and needy, teaching in contexts such as School of Leadership or other forms of training, discipleship and small groups. These are just a few examples.

(Gen 2:7-25; Acts 20:17-35; 1 Cor 11:3-16; 14: 26-35; 1 Tim 2:9-14; 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-11)



THE GOOD NEWS (THE GOSPEL)

The grace of God is love freely shown to guilty sinners contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their demerit. ... once a man is convinced that his state and need are as described the New Testament gospel of grace cannot but sweep him off his feet with wonder and joy. For it tells how our Judge became our Saviour. - J.I. Packer, Knowing God

Our Judge became our Saviour

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit chose together to save humanity through Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus willingly sacrificed himself so that we could live. On the cross, Jesus has done what we could not do for ourselves: he has taken upon himself God the Father's just and necessary punishment of our continuing rebellion against Him. Jesus lived a life that was perfectly in tune with the Father's will - he never sinned. He became our substitute and traded His perfection for our guilt. The Father punished Jesus for our sins instead of us. This is known as the 'atonement'.

Jesus Christ then rose physically from the dead on the third day following his death on the cross. He physically appeared to many of his followers. A few weeks later he was taken up to heaven where he is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

Men and women can now receive by faith the perfection ('righteousness') of Jesus as a free gift because of the atonement. This means we can be completely forgiven and made righteous even though by nature we are sinners who are spiritually dead. The power of Jesus transforms spiritually dead sinners into spiritually alive saints - the holy ones of God. We receive a new nature.

Salvation is not something we can earn or achieve - it is a free gift from our merciful and loving God.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. -Eph 2:4-8

(Isa 53; Mark 10:32-34; 10:45; 15:1 - 16:8; Acts 1:1-11; 2:22-36; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; Rom 3:21-31; 5:1-11; 8:1-4; 1 Cor 15:1-11; 2 Cor 5:14-21; Heb 1:1-4)

Turning To God

*Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,
- Acts 3:19*

We must accept God's free gift of salvation in order to benefit from it. We do this by trusting in Jesus for our salvation - believing in Him - and by utterly rejecting our old, sinful way of life and seeking to live a life that pleases God. This turning away from our old broken life and turning towards God in heart and mind is what the Bible refers to as 'repentance'. We put our trust in Jesus and what He has done rather than in other gods, or money, or security, or personal fulfillment, or achievement, or whatever we have trusted in, or found identity in, instead of Jesus.

Even our faith in God that leads to our repentance is itself a gift of God.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.
- Eph 2:8-9*

(Mark 1:14-15; Luke 15:8-32; 24:45-48; John 6:35-40; Acts 2:36-41; Rom 12:1-2; Eph 2:1-10; Col 3:1-17)

God Gives us Himself

God's grace is the foundation of our relationship with Him. It is central in everything we do and proclaim as a church. God's grace is His undeserved, transforming favour, given to us in Jesus Christ. Because of our sin we deserve God's punishment, but because of Jesus we get His forgiveness. We deserve God's wrath, but get His love. We deserve death, but get life.


The Apostle Paul says it this way:

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. – For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.—Rom 8:6-8

This good news gets even better when we realize that, again by His grace, God is transforming us day-by-day to be like Jesus. Grace does not give us permission to sin but rather the power to overcome sin. This power is the reality of God the Holy Spirit living in us. God's grace is the gift of Himself to us - first in the person of Jesus Christ, and second in the presence of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Grace is not a thing. Grace is not stuff that God gives us apart from himself. He doesn't run out of it. God gives us himself when we don't deserve it; that is grace. The oft-repeated definition of grace as an undeserved gift is right but does not go far enough when referring to the grace of God. Grace is a gift, but God is not only the giver, he himself is the gift. God graces us with himself. - Jeremy Treat

(Luke 22:14-20; John 3:16-18; Rom 8; Tit 3:3-7; 1 Cor 6:18-20; 1 Cor 10:1-14; 2 Cor 3:17-18; Col 1:15-23; Heb 12:1-2)



WE DESERVE GOD'S WRATH,
BUT GET HIS LOVE.
WE DESERVE DEATH,
BUT GET LIFE.



THE CHURCH

The church is here for mission, a mission to bring about the rule of God in the world, to start communities of God's people from all backgrounds in every people group, to serve the world through social action and in their everyday employment, and to extend this to every people group on earth.
- David Devenish, *What On Earth is the Church For?*

We believe that the Church is a living spiritual body of which Jesus Christ is the head and all Christians are members. This 'universal church' is composed of all believers in Jesus Christ at all times and places. The Church's mission is to faithfully serve and prophetically represent God as He advances His kingdom on earth.

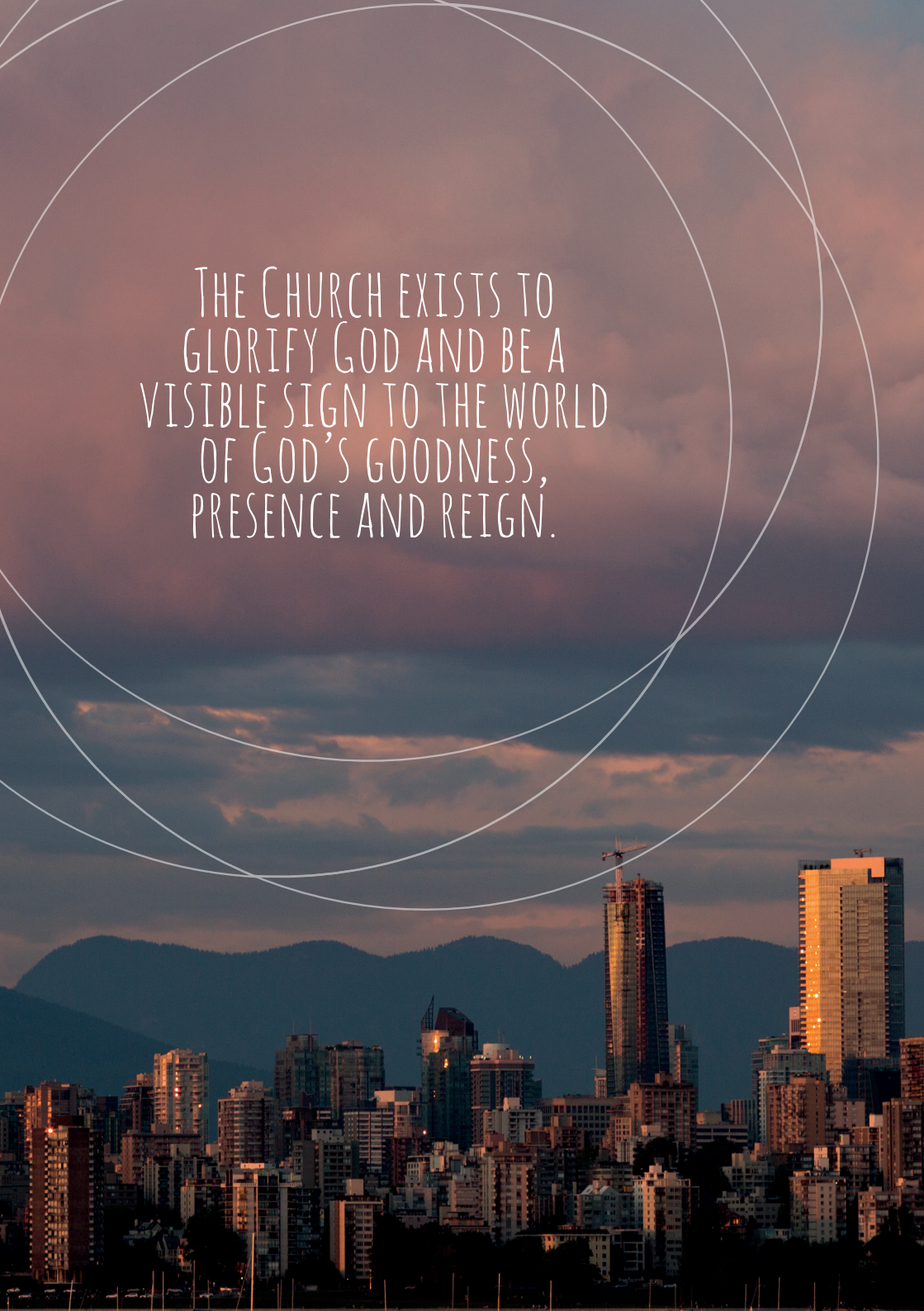
The universal church is expressed in local churches. These churches exist at particular times and places, consisting of a family of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and joined together for worship, fellowship, and mission. The Church exists to glorify God and be a visible sign to the world of God's goodness, presence and reign. We believe that God has entrusted to the Church the task of continuing the work Jesus began. The Church does this by proclaiming the good news of what Jesus has done, making followers of Jesus from every culture and people group on earth, and serving the poor.

(Mat 10:7-8; 16:17-19; 28:16-20; John 14:12; Acts 6:1-6; Rom 15:17-27; Gal 2:10; Eph 2:19-22; Col 1:18; Acts 1:8; 2:42; Heb 10:23-25)

We believe the ministry of the local church is performed by the full membership of the local church, empowered and equipped by the Holy Spirit and serving in humility and dependence on God under the human authority of the Elders. The Elders provide primary leadership, but are not solely responsible for directly performing or directly leading all the ministries of the Church. Church members are accountable to God and to one another.

Members submit to the authority of the church leadership and the church leadership leads in humility and love.

(*Mat 28:16-20; Acts 2:8:4-8, 26-40; 18:24-28; Rom 16:1-4, 6, 7, 9, 12; 1 Cor 16: 15-18; Eph 4:1-16; 6:21-22; Col 4:7-14, 17; 1 Pet 2:9*)

A city skyline at sunset with two large overlapping white circles framing the text. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and blue, with clouds catching the low light. The city below is a dense cluster of buildings, some with lights on, and mountains are visible in the distance. The text is centered within the circles.

THE CHURCH EXISTS TO
GLORIFY GOD AND BE A
VISIBLE SIGN TO THE WORLD
OF GOD'S GOODNESS,
PRESENCE AND REIGN.



BAPTISM AND COMMUNION

Baptism

Jesus began His ministry by being baptized, a response of obedience to the Father and a declaration of the start of a new people. Every believer in Jesus Christ should be baptized in water as He was, as a public demonstration of his or her faith in and obedience to Jesus. Baptism is an external celebration of a new spiritual reality: the death of the old sin-enslaved person and the 'new birth' of a child of God - a new creation. Baptism signifies our participation in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. It signifies that the believer's life is intimately linked with Jesus and His body, the Church.

(Matt 3:13-17; 28:18-20; Acts 2:38-41; 22:14-16; Rom 6:3-5; 1 Cor 12:12-13; Gal 3:26-28; Col 2:9-15; 1 Pet 2:4-10)

Communion

The breaking of bread together, commonly called Communion or the Lord's Supper, is something we do regularly at Trinity Central. It focuses our worship on the giving of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. It reminds us of the great news that Jesus has promised to return to this world at the end of all things. It is a weighty yet glorious celebration of all that Jesus has done, and will do, for us.

(Luke 22:19-20; John 6:25-59; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 11:23-26)

The Kingdom of God

Centuries before Jesus was born, God's prophets spoke of the coming of something called the Kingdom of God (sometimes referred to as the 'Kingdom of Heaven'): a future time when all injustice, war and oppression would cease and the peoples of the earth worship only God. Here is an example from the writings of the prophet Isaiah:

It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
and many peoples shall come, and say:
Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.
For out of Zion shall go the law,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

- Isa 2:2-4

When Jesus began His ministry he proclaimed the good news that "The kingdom of God is at hand."

Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

- Mark 1:14-15

In other words, when Jesus the King came, He ushered in His Kingdom. Jesus came healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and setting free those people living in darkness.

He was the 'first fruits' of the Kingdom - an early taste of the Kingdom and a guarantee that the fullness of the Kingdom would one day be a reality on earth. The future has invaded the present.

We currently live in a time where the Kingdom is 'now' (the Holy Spirit is amongst us in power) but 'not yet' (the world is still full of pain and brokenness). The church is a present demonstration of the reality of the Kingdom, and God's chosen agent of its fulfillment.

[The church] is a "royal nation" (1 Peter 2:9), in other words, a counterculture. The church is to be a new society in which the world can see what family dynamics, business practices, race relations, and all of life can be under the kingship of Jesus Christ. God is out to heal all the effects of sin: psychological, social, and physical.

*On the other hand, the church is to be an agent of the kingdom. It is not only to model the healing of God's rule but it is to spread it. "You are . . . a royal priesthood, a holy nation . . . that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). Christians go into the world as witnesses of the kingdom (Acts 1:6-8). To spread the kingdom of God is more than simply winning people to Christ. It is also working for the healing of persons, families, relationships, and nations; it is doing deeds of mercy and seeking justice. It is ordering lives and relationships and institutions and communities according to God's authority to bring in the blessedness of the kingdom. - Tim Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road**

The Kingdom will be fully realized when Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead, and all things are made new. The children of God will live with him forever in resurrected bodies of extraordinary glory.

(2 Sam 7:12-16; Dan 2:44-45; Mat 6:9-13; 6:33; 9:35; 10:26 (kingdom parables); Mark 1:14-15; Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36; Acts 1:6-8; 19:8; Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 15:50-57; Rev 11:15; 21:1-4, 22-27)



LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

The gathered church is meant to be a place where the presence of the Holy Spirit is evident; you can't miss Him if He is manifest! We are expected to be a Spirit-filled community, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody" to the Lord with all our heart (Ephesians 5:19). - Terry Virgo, The Spirit-Filled Church

As believers, our life is meant to be one of being filled with the Spirit, living by the Spirit, and operating in the gifts given by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the present fulfillment of God's promise to be with us: everything we do should be done 'by the Spirit' or 'in step with the Spirit.'

The Holy Spirit is the source of our unity as brothers and sisters in Christ. As we love our brothers and sisters by humbly serving each other the Spirit fills our hearts with grace for each other. The Spirit directs our mission to the community and world around us through prophetic guidance. The Spirit empowers that mission by giving various gifts to members of the body (see below).

(Zech 4:6; Acts 8:26-29; 9:10-18; 13:1-3; 16:6-10; Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:4-31; Eph 2:11-22; 4:1-7, 11-13; Phil 2:1-4)

Filled with the Spirit

Jesus called the Holy Spirit the 'Helper' and the 'spirit of truth' (John 15:26). He taught his disciples that the Holy Spirit would:

- bear witness about Jesus;
- convict the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment;
- guide the disciples into all the truth;
- declare the things that are to come;
- glorify Jesus; and
- take what belongs to Jesus and declare it to the disciples.

After he rose from the dead, Jesus told his disciples to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit before they attempted to fulfill the great task he had given them about proclaiming the gospel to the world.

In the Old Testament book of the prophet Joel, God promised one day to pour out His Spirit upon 'all flesh'. Jesus referenced this when he told his disciples to "stay in the city until you are clothed with promise from on high" (Acts 1:4-5). We read in Acts 2 that God kept his promise on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the gathered church while they were praying together. Peter and the disciples spilled out into the streets of Jerusalem, praising God in languages they hadn't learned. When a crowd gathered, Peter began preaching the gospel, calling the people to repent and receive the Holy Spirit:

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." - Acts 2:38-39

The gift of the Holy Spirit is for everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself - which means ALL believers. We can receive the Holy Spirit spontaneously as Peter and the other disciples did on the day of Pentecost, and as Cornelius and his household did when Peter preached the gospel to them. We can also receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands and prayer, as did the people of Samaria and the twelve men Paul met near Ephesus.

We can be confident that God will give us the Holy Spirit when we ask Him, as He is a good Father who delights to give us good gifts.

(Joel 2:28-29; Luke 11:13; 24:44-49; John 15:26; 16:1-15; Acts 2: 1-47; 8:4-17; 10:44-48; 19:1-7)

Walking with the Spirit and Fruit of the Spirit

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. - Galatians 5:16-26

As Christian believers we live in joyful response to God who has saved us and called us to live for Him. If and when we sin, we confess that to God (and other believers) and trust Him to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. As we discern God's will for our lives (see for example 1 Thess 5:18 and Mat 28:16 - 20) we respond in faith-filled obedience, trusting the Spirit to give us the power to obey God's leading and follow in Jesus' footsteps. As we go on in the Christian life the Holy Spirit shapes and moulds us in the likeness of our brother and Saviour Jesus Christ: full of love, joy, peace, etc. The 'fruit of the Spirit' is the mark of a maturing Christian.

(Rom 12:1-2; 1 Cor 6:9-20; 2 Cor 3:17-18; 5:16-17; 1 John 1:9; 2:1-6; 2:15-17)

Gifts of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit has given many gifts to the church including prophecy, teaching, faith, healing, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues and words of knowledge and wisdom. All the gifts of the Spirit continue today and have been given for the building up of the church and the spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ to the world.


In 1 Corinthians 12 the apostle Paul says:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. - 1 Cor 12:4-7

Jesus said that we cannot be fruitful in our lives unless we abide in him, and he in us. Without Jesus we can do nothing for the Kingdom. Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to be his very presence in us, as His body. The Holy Spirit's gifts strengthen the body so that we can accomplish the mission Jesus Christ has given the church. Without the Holy Spirit and His gifts, the church cannot be fruitful.

Jesus not only preached the good news of the Kingdom of God, but He demonstrated it through miracles, healing, raising the dead and casting out demonic spirits. Jesus promised that his followers would do all this and even more. After the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost, we see various members of the church performing healings, miracles, speaking in tongues, prophesying, and raising the dead. People come to belief in Christ as the message of Jesus and his Kingdom is not only proclaimed but also demonstrated.

(John 14:12-14; 15:5; Acts 3:10; 9:36-43; 14:1-3; 1 Cor 12:4-31; 14:1-18; 14:26-33; Rom 12:3-8; Eph 4:11-16; 1 Pet 4:10-11)

A warm, golden-brown background with a blurred orange in the foreground and a white circular graphic overlay. The text is centered within the circle.

AS WE LOVE OUR BROTHERS
AND SISTERS BY HUMBLY
SERVING EACH OTHER THE
SPIRIT FILLS OUR HEARTS
WITH GRACE FOR EACH OTHER.



EPHESIANS 4 MINISTRIES

And he [Jesus Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. - Eph 4:11-16

Jesus gave the Church 'people gifts' as well as 'spiritual gifts'. These people are 'the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds (or 'pastors') and teachers. Jesus has given these gifts so that the church may be a mature, 'adult' body - one suitable to be joined with our head, Jesus Christ. These 'people gifts', like spiritual gifts, were for both the early church and the church today: they remain necessary until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

This means that the Church cannot function effectively without these gifted people. The 'people gifts' can be summarized as follows:

Apostle

Apostles are given by God to shape the church into a missional community, and lead the church into Gospel breakthrough in new areas.

They play a key role in laying the proper foundations (doctrine, vision and values) for local churches and church plants. Apostles operate in close relationship with, and provide support to, local church eldership teams

and church-plant leadership teams. Apostles do not just relate to church leadership, however, but as much as possible are in loving relationship with the church as a whole.

Modern attempts to recover the gift of ‘apostles’ have often been viewed with suspicion, being interpreted as an attempt to gain the same authority as the original apostles, who are attributed with writing the New Testament. This is a bit misleading as the New Testament was actually written by apostles and non-apostles (e.g. Mark, Luke, Jude and the anonymous author of Hebrews). Luke, who wrote the single largest portion of the New Testament (the Gospel of Luke and Acts), is not identified as an apostle.

Nevertheless, we strongly affirm that ‘the twelve’ apostles and Paul, who encountered the risen Jesus Christ, played a unique role in establishing the authoritative teachings of the Church as reflected in the New Testament. Modern apostles do not write scripture and their teachings are authoritative only insofar as they faithfully reflect the Bible’s teachings.

However, we affirm that the gift of the apostle today is as important as it was in New Testament times: spearheading church planting, building right foundations into churches, raising up and setting Elders in place, and catching churches up together in Christ’s global mission.

(Acts 14:21-28; 15:1-35; 18:7-11; 20:18-21; Rom 15:14-24; 1 Cor 3:5-10, 12:28; 2 Cor 10:13-16; Eph 1:1; 2:19-20; 1 Thes 1:2-7; 2:8-12)

Prophet

The church is a prophetic community, demonstrating the coming Kingdom to the world around us, and living in vibrant relationship with God. Our expectation is that God’s voice will be heard among the church.

In order to equip the church to become this prophetic people, Jesus gives prophets as gifts to the church.

In addition to strengthening, encouraging, comforting and building up the church through the exercise of their prophetic gift, prophets serve the church by equipping and teaching others to do the same.

Prophets call the church to a deeper walk with God. They remind the church of her prophetic role among the nations, and they equip believers to hear from God and to live out this prophetic call which God has given to the church. They often embody God’s heart for the poor, for justice, for truth.

Prophets mentioned in the New Testament include Agabus and the four daughters of Philip the Evangelist. Prophets are rooted in a local church but quite often their gift is exercised in a translocal context. It is not uncommon for an apostle to work with one or more prophets as members of his apostolic team.

Prophecy is a subjective revelation given by God to a believer which (at least in the context of a public meeting) is for the strengthening, encouragement, comfort and building-up of the church and conviction of unbelievers. Prophetic words are weighed and tested by the church, holding on to what is good. Prophecy does not replace the Bible in the life of a believer, and in fact all prophecy is weighed against the Bible and its authoritative teachings. The Bible contains God's unchanging word to us, and is our main source of guidance for proper life, belief and action. However, prophecies are a gift from God that provide great strength, encouragement, conviction and/or guidance.

The Bible is clear that all members of the church may prophesy and should desire to do so. As God's 'sheep' we all hear the voice of our Shepherd, and all participate in sharing this with others.

(Acts 2:14-18, 38-39; 11:27-30; 13:1-3; 15:32; 19:1-7; 21:8-11; 1 Cor. 11:4-5; 1 Cor 13:9-10; 1 Cor 14:1-5, 22-33, 36-40; 1 Thes 5:19-22)

Evangelist

All believers are called and empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel to those who are not yet believers. However, Jesus has given us the gift of the evangelist to equip us for this work.

Sometimes evangelists have a supernatural ability to proclaim the gospel in a way that is particularly effective for seeing many respond positively and come to faith in Jesus Christ. However, evangelists might equally be more gifted in speaking to small groups or individuals. But the key gifting of the evangelist, according to Eph 4, is to equip the church to live evangelistically.

Evangelists serve local churches by modelling a lifestyle of telling people about the good news of Jesus Christ. They equip and train believers to share the gospel in their own lives, thus making the church increasingly effective in reaching those around them.

(Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 2:37-41; Acts 8:4-8; Acts 8:26-40)

Pastor

The church is a pastoral community: one of its defining features is the love of Jesus which is on display in the church. Through our relationships with each other, the church demonstrates heaven to the world around us, the love and grace of the age to come in a world full of 'ungrace' and broken relationships.

Pastoral care is the responsibility of every believer, we care for one another in God's family.

The word 'pastor' is simply the Greek word for 'shepherd' - thus, pastoring is, in essence, shepherding. It happens in many ways in the church - we all shepherd one another.

In Ephesians 4 Paul refers to the fact that, while many will pastor others in the life of the church in many ways, there are some who are given by God to pastor the church - and by this we mean helping churches to health and equipping the church to be pastoral. In this sense, an Ephesians 4 pastor not only cares for others, but equips and trains other believers to care for one another. Pastors model care for those in the church, and train the church to become a caring community.

Sound Biblical teaching is a key component in pastoring the church, which is why this gift is often referred to alongside that of teacher (in fact, in Ephesians 4 it is ambiguous as to whether is referring to one role or two: pastors and teachers or pastor-teachers). We explain the roles separately but we recognize that, quite often, they are inseparable.

As a church we are cautious of the way in which the word 'pastor' is often used in the western church today - effectively using the word 'pastor' to refer to those who are employed by the church or lead the church. Often it is used as a 'status' term - we refer to leaders as 'Pastor Jim' or 'Pastor Bob', when we wouldn't refer to any other profession that way - e.g. 'Engineer John' or 'Nurse Betty'. This becomes particularly unhelpful when we begin to see this as a form of respect or submission, therefore putting leaders on a pedestal.

Sadly, when using the word 'pastor' in this way we can miss the Biblical gift of people who are given by God to establish the church as a caring community.

In Trinity central we refer to those who have been called by God and appointed to oversee and teach the local church as 'Elders'.

However, not all Elders are primarily pastors/teachers - their primary gifts might be in other areas, which are still vital to the life and health of the church.

Within the church the Elders release pastorally gifted people in order to care for the needs of the people within the church. Some people are particularly gifted to care for others by giving loving care, spiritual advice, prayer and support. People with a pastoral gift often help numerous individuals within the church. Beyond this, all believers are called and empowered by the Spirit to care for one other.

(Acts 13:1-3; Rom 12:7; Col 3:16; Titus 2:1-5; Heb 5:12; James 3:1; Acts 18:24-28)

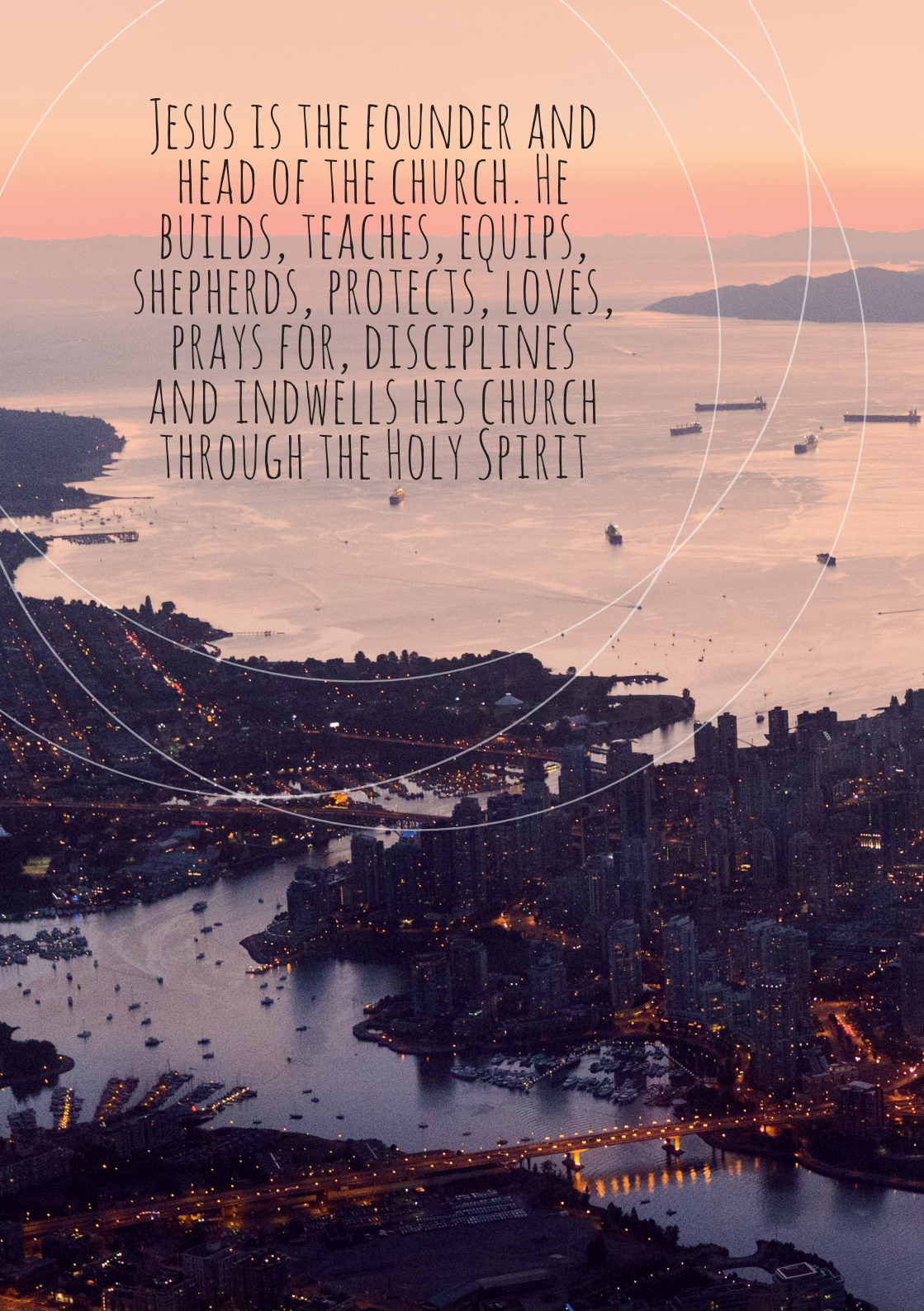
Teacher

The church is a community established in the truth of God's existence and salvation. Therefore, what we know and how we live out what we know is important. To this end, God gives gifted teachers to the church to instruct us to believe 'rightly'.

Once again, when Paul mentions the gifts of the ascended Christ in Ephesians 4 he includes teachers in the list. These aren't simply people with a teaching gift, they are people given as gifts by God to the church to help the church understand the big picture of God, creation, redemption and eternity - and to equip the church to teach this to the world. A teacher is supernaturally gifted in effectively communicating biblical truth, both locally and trans-locally. A teacher equips believers in various ways: to handle the Bible well, understand Biblical teaching, practice spiritual disciplines such as prayer and fasting, and guard against false teaching.

While Elders carry the primary responsibility for teaching apostolic doctrine to the gathered church, there are many teaching opportunities and contexts within church life apart from those exercised by the Elders. This might include leadership training, LifeGroups, children and youth ministry, specialist seminars of topics ranging from singleness, marriage and parenting to emotional health, cultural engagement, and more.

(Acts 13:1-3; Rom 12:7; Col 3:16; Titus 2:1-5; Heb 5:12; James 3:1; Acts 18:24-28)

An aerial photograph of a city at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and purple. The city below is illuminated with lights, and the water is dark with some boats. The text is overlaid in a white, hand-drawn style font. Two large, thin white circles are drawn over the image, one centered on the text and another overlapping it from the right side.

JESUS IS THE FOUNDER AND
HEAD OF THE CHURCH. HE
BUILDS, TEACHES, EQUIPS,
SHEPHERDS, PROTECTS, LOVES,
PRAYS FOR, DISCIPLINES
AND INDWELLS HIS CHURCH
THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT



WHO LEADS THE CHURCH?

Jesus Christ

Jesus is the founder and head of the church. He builds, teaches, equips, shepherds, protects, loves, prays for, disciplines and indwells his church through the Holy Spirit. Jesus leads the church to fulfill His purposes on earth. The church is Jesus' future bride.

(Mat 16:18; John 17:11-26; Rom 8:38-39; 1 Cor 3:16; Eph 1:5-14; 3:17-19; 4:7-16; 5:23-25; Heb 3:1; 12:4-11; 1 John 2:27; 4:19)

Elders

The Elders of a local church carry the primary leadership and governance responsibility for it. Elders provide primary oversight in all areas of spiritual, temporal and community life of the Church. They are confirmed and appointed by apostolic ministry, and recognized as the spiritual and governing authority under God by the believers who make up a local church. Elders are accountable to God for the way they care for the people entrusted to them. In the Bible we read that the Elder's role is to oversee, to shepherd and to vigilantly superintend which we summarize as 'guiding, guarding and governing' the church.

Qualifications for eldership are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Based on these and other passages (including Gen. 2:18-25 and 1 Tim. 2:8-15) we believe that eldership of the local church is restricted to qualified men. Biblically, men and women carry different leadership roles in the home and church. This does not detract from the Biblical truth that men and women alike are created in the image of God and have equal value and dignity - neither is innately superior or inferior to the other.

Given their mandate to Guide, Guard and Govern the church, Elders' responsibilities at Trinity Central include:

- Setting church vision, values and overall strategy to accomplish the church's goals;
- Teaching apostolic doctrine in the church, and countering erroneous or false teaching;
- Overseeing deacons, teaching, evangelism, worship, prophecy and other church ministries;
- Discerning, training and mentoring new Elders and Deacons;
- Setting in place the discipleship culture of the church to enable the members' growth in Christian maturity, both individually and collectively;
- Caring for members through the pastoral structure of the Church which may include Elders, Deacons, pastoral staff and volunteers, small group leaders and various ministry leaders;
- Performing Church discipline when necessary;
- Praying for the sick;
- Governing the overall affairs and administration of the church.

As a general principle, we do not believe that democracy (all members voting) is the biblical governance pattern for the local church. However, we do believe that church members have a key role to play. Elders need to listen to what God is saying through church members and not operate in isolation, or 'lord it over' them. We expect God to speak through all church members. The Elders should utilize the wisdom, strengths and gifts of the church members. The Elders are responsible for weighing their input and making final decisions.

(Gen 1:26-31; 2:7-25; Acts 14:21-23; 20:16-38; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14: 26-40; 1 Thes 5:12; 1 Tim 2:8-15; 3:1-7; 4:1-16; 5:17-22; Tit 1:5-11; 2:1-15; Heb 13:7,17; Jam 5:13-16; 1 Pet 5:1-11)

Deacons

Some church members will be recognized as 'Deacons' (from the Greek *diakonos* meaning 'servant'). Deacons are leaders recognized within the church who work in partnership with the Elders. Elders commission Deacons with authority to help the Elders lead and serve the church in their particular area of gifting and responsibility.

The Deacons' leadership releases the Elders to focus on prayer, teaching, shepherding and governing responsibilities. For instance, in Acts 6 we see the twelve apostles appointing believers of good reputation who are full of wisdom and the Spirit to see to the physical needs of the poorest members of the Church (the widows) so that the apostles could devote themselves to prayer and preaching the gospel. This propels the mission of the church forward.

Deacons are people of significant character, ability and spiritual gifting. Qualifications for the role of deacon in the church are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. We believe that serving as a Deacon in the church is open to qualified men and women.

(Luke 8:2-3; Acts 6:1-7; 9:36-41; Rom 16:1; Phil 1:1-2; 1 Tim 3:8-13; Tit 2:3-5)



SINGLENES AND MARRIAGE

Our world tends to either idolize marriage and degrade singleness, or idolize singleness and degrade marriage. For instance, in modern Western culture there is a great emphasis on personal freedom and independence, and therefore many people avoid the commitment of marriage because they see it as too confining. On the other hand, more traditional cultures tend to idolize marriage as necessary to preserve the social order and leave a legacy - you are not really part of society unless you are married. Both views teach that you are not a whole person unless you pursue their definition of the highest good.

However, the Bible affirms both marriage and singleness as Godly callings. Each provides a distinct and valuable way for Christians to show the goodness of God to the world. The single life allows a Christian to demonstrate to the world that truly Christ is enough: one can be a whole, fulfilled person without forming a long-term romantic attachment to another. The married life allows a Christian to demonstrate to the world that one can be a whole, fulfilled person while living a life of Christ-like sacrifice in service to another.

All Christians are called to be single for at least some period of their lives. The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7 that singleness is a gift from God that allows our undivided devotion to God. Some Christians are called to be single for long periods, perhaps their entire lives. Paul was a single man with a flourishing apostolic ministry, numerous loving relationships with people of both sexes, and full of the Holy Spirit. Jesus lived a perfect and emotionally complete life as a single man and indeed accomplished more for the human race than anyone before or since. Although single, Jesus had rich relationships with both men and women. Singleness is clearly not a second-best option!

Similarly, many Christians are called to be married for at least part of their lives. Marriage was part of God's original creation even before sin entered into the world. God saw Adam was alone, and created something new: a woman named Eve to be a helper suitable for Adam. This joining together of the first humans in the beginning demonstrates God's pattern for marriage: it is to be between one man and one woman, for life. The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 that marriage is a picture of Jesus Christ's relationship with the church: the husband is to love his wife sacrificially, for her blessing and growth in God, just as Jesus died for the Church. Marriage is not simply a contract but a covenant - a radical union of two people for as long as their lives shall last.

In sharp contrast with our culture, the Bible teaches that the essence of marriage is a sacrificial commitment to the good of the other. That means that love is more fundamentally action than emotion. - Tim Keller, The Meaning of Marriage

Sex is the 'glue' that affirms and strengthens the marriage union. Sex is not merely a physical act but a mysterious joining of two people at all levels of personality - spiritual, emotional, and of course physical. It is one person gifting their entire self to another person. This can only truly take place within the context of the commitment of marriage. Sex outside of marriage is hugely destructive to the people involved and ultimately to their community. For this reason sex outside of the covenant of marriage is prohibited for Christians.

However, marriage and sex are only the foretaste of what God promises us: a joyous and eternal union with Him, beside which the greatest human love and passion is like a candle to the sun. This is why a single Christian can be just as fulfilled (or more so) as a married Christian: unhindered devotion to the God who is the source of all joy. Curiously enough then, the Christian view of sex is incredibly high, while at the same time affirming that sex is by no means necessary for a fulfilled, joyful life.

(Gen 2:15-24; Song of Songs; Prov 5:15-23; 18:22; Mat 19:4-6; John 11:1-5; 15:12-17; Act 15:20; Rom 16:1-16; 1 Cor 6:12-20; 7:1-40; Eph 5:18-33; Col 3:1-17; Heb 13:4-7; Rev 21:1-27)



FAMILY

Family is one of the great gifts that God has given us. God told Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” - to have children. Being part of a loving family is a great blessing as well as a great responsibility. While we affirm the basic goodness of family, we must be careful not to make our biological family an ultimate thing. Jesus was clear that His true family was not his earthly father, mother, sisters and brothers but rather his heavenly Father and those people who obeyed Him.

This does not mean that Jesus dishonoured his parents - as a child he obeyed them and as a man he provided for his mother before he died on the cross. However, our deepest belonging as disciples of Jesus is not to our biological family but to our spiritual family. The good news of the gospel is that, because of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice, we are cleansed of sin, restored to relationship with God, and are now adopted as His children and heirs! This means that all Christians are family - they are brothers and sisters who share God as their Father.

(Gen 1:28; Mat 12:46-50; Luke 2:41-51; John 1:12-13; 19:23-27; Rom 8:14-17; Gal 3:23-29; Eph 2:19; Col 1:1-2)

What of those Christians who do become parents? The Bible lays out a number of duties for parents and children:

- *parents are to diligently teach their children God’s commandments and tell them the stories of the great things God has done to save his people; (Deut 6:4-7, 20-25; 11:18-20)*
- *parents are to train their children in godliness; (Prov 22:6)*
- *parents are to discipline their children for the children’s good; (Prov 19:18; 23:13-14; 29:15,17; Heb 12:7-11)*
- *children are to obey their parents and to honour them; (Ex 20:12; Eph 6:1-3; Col 3:20)*

- *fathers are to bring their children up in the knowledge and instruction of the Lord while being careful not to provoke their children to anger or discouragement; (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21)*
- *Christians should provide for their relatives and particularly for their own household; (1 Tim 5:8)*

Children are particularly precious to Jesus (Mat 19:13-15). Therefore we must honour children and guide them to Jesus. Children are, by the grace of God, our present or future brothers and sisters in Christ.



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