

Zetland Evangelical Church

An Introduction to Church Membership, Baptism and the Lord's Supper

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What is the church?

The church is the people of God, gathered in the presence of God. More specifically, the church is the people of Jesus Christ, gathered in the presence of God and the presence of Jesus Christ.

This was seen, in part, when God rescued the people of Israel from Egypt and they gathered together at Mount Sinai. It will be fully seen when Jesus Christ returns.

The church was purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. The church is being built by Jesus Christ. The church is the bride of Jesus Christ.

What is the purpose of the church?

The ultimate purpose of the church is to worship God. However, while the church is in this world, it has two additional purposes: to gather God's people and to nurture God's people.

Jesus instructed His followers to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey all that He commanded. He is present to help and protect His church as it seeks to accomplish this mission.

What is a local church?

There is one worldwide church; it consists of all who are united to Jesus Christ by faith. However, since every believer cannot, at present, gather together in one place, this one church is represented by many local churches.

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

(Matthew chapter 16 verse 18)

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”

(Ephesians chapter 5 verse 25)

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

(Matthew chapter 28 verses 18 to 20)

A local church is any gathering of Christian believers that is faithfully seeking to fulfil the threefold purpose of worshipping, gathering and nurturing. In particular, a local church exists where:

- God is reverently worshipped
- God’s word is faithfully preached
- Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are rightly administered, and
- Biblical discipline is maintained.

Every local church should appoint elders and deacons. The primary responsibility of the elders is to teach and guide the church; the primary responsibility of deacons is to support those in need.

What is baptism?

Baptism is a symbol of a believer’s union with Jesus Christ. The believer goes under the water to express his union with Jesus Christ in His death and burial; the believer rises up from the water to express his union with Jesus Christ in His resurrection.

Baptism is also a public declaration of the believer’s new identity because the believer is baptised into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Everyone who believes the good news about Jesus Christ should be baptised.

“Then those who gladly received his word were baptised; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

(Acts chapter 2 verses 41 and 42)

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into his death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”

(Romans chapter 6 verses 3 to 5)

What is the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper is also a symbol of a believer's union with Jesus Christ. Bread is broken in memory of Christ's broken body, and wine is poured out in memory of His shed blood. Believers eat the bread and drink the wine, remembering that Jesus died for their sins and rejoicing that He is returning soon.

Believers are commanded to regularly participate in the Lord's Supper until He comes again.

What is biblical discipline?

Biblical discipline involves lovingly and gently admonishing believers who sin and refuse to repent. The aim of such discipline is to maintain the purity of the church and to restore those who sin into a right relationship with Jesus Christ.

All believers are called to admonish, comfort and support one another.

What is church membership?

Church membership is the means by which a local church recognises those believers who are committed to helping it fulfil its threefold purpose.

Members of a local church should:

- meet together to worship God as often as they are able

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.”

(1 Corinthians chapter 11 verses 23 to 26)

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”

(1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 14)

- work together to share the gospel and nurture believers, according to the gifts God has given
- support the work of the church through regular giving, and
- submit to the authority of the church, as far as it is in accordance with the Bible.

Church membership is both a privilege and a responsibility. It is a privilege to be part of a worshipping, witnessing and nurturing community; it comes with a responsibility to worship, witness and nurture.

Every believer should express their participation in the worldwide church by becoming a member of a local church.

How do I become a church member?

Membership of Zetland Evangelical Church is open to all who give evidence of saving faith in Jesus Christ and who are in agreement with the church's "Statement of Faith and Worship".

Applications for membership should be made to the elders of the church. Two of the elders will then meet with the applicant and report to their fellow elders. On acceptance the applicant will be welcomed into membership at the next Lord's Supper.

The elders of Zetland Evangelical Church are: Peter Millier, Eddie O'Brien and Richard Penn.

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

(Hebrews chapter 10 verses 23 to 25)

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in and for three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures... And some of them were persuaded, and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.”

(Acts chapter 17 verses 1 to 4)

Further questions

Q: Which should come first: being baptised, becoming a church member or taking the Lord's Supper?

A: In the New Testament, those who believed the gospel were first of all baptised, and then they joined themselves to a fellowship of believers and regularly participated in the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41-42). The usual sequence is therefore baptism, church membership, and then participating in the Lord's Supper.

Q: Who should be baptised?

A: Jesus commanded His disciples to baptise those who believed His teaching (Matt 28:18-20). On the day of Pentecost, Peter urged those who heard His message to repent and be baptised (Acts 2:38). Therefore everyone who believes the good news about Jesus Christ should be baptised.

Q: What if I was baptised as an infant, should I be baptised as a believer?

A: The Bible teaches that every believer should be baptised. So if you have come to faith in Jesus Christ, and if you have not been baptised as a believer, you should be baptised.

Q: If I have been baptised as an infant, but not as a believer, can I become a member of Zetland Evangelical Church?

A: The elders are committed to believers' baptism. However, as a pragmatic measure, believers' baptism is not a condition of membership of

Zetland Evangelical Church. If you have been baptised as an infant and sincerely believe in infant baptism, you are welcome to join the church.

Q: If I am a child, should I be baptised and become a church member?

A: If you want to be baptised, you should first of all speak to your parents. If they are willing for you to be baptised, they should speak to one of the elders of the church. Your parents, or the elders, may want you to wait for a while before being baptised so that you can be certain of your faith. Church membership should automatically follow baptism.

Q: Isn't everyone automatically a member of the church?

A: Every believer is automatically part of the worldwide church of Jesus Christ but, to become a member of a local church, you must publicly commit yourself to that church and that church must publicly commit itself to you. If you are a believer, you should become a member of a local church. If you regularly attend Zetland Evangelical Church, we encourage you to become a member of this church.

If you would like to discuss any of these issues or if you would like any more information, please speak to one of the elders.

Statement of Faith

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, are the inspired Word and Words of God, and are thus the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct both for the Christian and the Church (2 Tim 3:16; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Pet 1:19-21; 3:15-16; Rom 15:4; Isa 8:20; Matt 22:29).

And we believe that the Scriptures teach:

- The unity of the Godhead and the divine co-equality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; the sovereignty of God in creation, providence, redemption and final judgement (Exod 3:14; Matt 28:19; John 1:1, 14, 18; 10:30; 14:8-11; 15:26; 1 Cor 8:6; 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 4:4-6; Gen 1:1, 27, 31; John 1:2-3; Rom 1:20; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2-3; Eph 1:11; Prov 16:33; Acts 2:23; Rom 9:14-23).
- The deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; His virgin birth; His real and perfect manhood; the authority and infallibility of all His teaching; His atonement for sinners by His substitutionary sufferings and death; His bodily resurrection; His ascension into heaven; His present priestly intercession for His people and His personal return in glory (Matt 28:17; John 1:1; Rom 9:5; Phil 2:6; Heb 1:8-11; Luke 1:26-38; John 4:6; Matt 25:32-46; John 5:22, 27; Matt 7:24-29; 1 Cor 15:3; 1 Pet 2:24; Rom 5:9-11; Luke 24:36-43; Acts 1:9; Heb 4:14-16; 1 Thess 4:16; 2 Thess 1:7).
- The personality and deity of the Holy Spirit; the necessity of His regenerating work to make the death of Christ effective to the individual sinner, granting him repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; His sanctifying work as He indwells all who believe; His work in guiding the local church in its government, ministry and worship according to the Word of God (Eph 4:30; 1 Cor 2:10-13; 12:4-11; John 14:26; 16:13-15; Acts 5:3-4; John 3:5-8; 2 Thess 2:13; Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 12:4-11).
- The total depravity of human nature in consequence of the fall, rendering man subject to God's wrath and condemnation and in need of regeneration; the justification of the sinner by grace through faith alone in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Gen 6:5; John 3:3; 1 Cor 2:14; Rom 8:5-8; Eph 2:1-10; Rom 3:21-28; 5:1, 9-11).
- The resurrection of the body; the judgement of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, with the eternal blessedness of the righteous and the eternal conscious punishment of the wicked (Job 19:26; 1 Cor 15:35-53; Matt 25:31-46; 13:40-43; Luke 16:23-26; Mark 9:42-48).
- The universal Church, of which Christ is the Head (which includes all true



Christians in all churches) and the local church (Matt 16:18; Eph 5:25-27; 1 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1).

- The continuing obligation to observe the two sacraments instituted by Christ, which are Baptism and the Breaking of Bread (Matt 28:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Rom 6:3-6; Col 2:12; Acts 2:38-41; Luke 22:17-20; Heb 9:25-28; 10:10-12).

This document has been based upon, and is supported by, the Church Constitution dated 8 January 1990. The Statement of Faith is identical to the one approved at that time.