

Church Membership

1. Why Have Membership?

- **Universal and Local**

When someone trusts in Jesus as Saviour, God immediately adds them to the worldwide body, the *universal* church. Each person within this *universal* family is also called to gather, worship, grow and serve within a *local* church in their area.

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. 1 Corinthians 1:2

The general truths of the *universal* church taught in the New Testament letters are always applied specifically to the context of the life of a *local* gathering.

The body is one and has many members...so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and have all been made to drink into one Spirit...God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as he pleased...now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Each local expression of the church is specifically called to unite around and steward the core teachings and commands of scripture.

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 1 Corinthians 1:10

The first assembled gatherings of believers in Jerusalem give us a beautiful model of how the *universal* church functioned within a *local* community.

Those who gladly received his word were baptized; 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. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house...and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:41-46

- **Insider and Outsider**

The universal church is, at once, both the most inclusive, and the most exclusive gathering. It is inclusive in the sense that any individual who trusts in Jesus is made a part of it, while at the same time, only those who trust in Jesus are made a part of it.

We see, in scripture, three categories of people who are present in each congregation. First, the born-again believer, second the unbeliever, and third the believer who is continuing in unrepentant sin. Scripture demonstrates that the church was able to distinguish who was a part of the church fellowship and who wasn't.

- ***The Born-Again Believer***

When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus. 1 Corinthians 5:4

- ***The Believer Continuing in Unrepentant Sin***

I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one...is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 1 Corinthians 5:11-13

- ***The Unbeliever***

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people - not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world... For what have I to do with judging outsiders...God judges those outside. 1 Corinthians 5:9-10, 12-13

2. Reasons for Membership

- **Custodians and Stewards of the Truth**

Each local church is called and equipped by God to believe, live out, proclaim and guard the truth of scripture. We are entrusted with the gospel and are obligated to uphold it in purity of teaching and conduct. This responsibility and privilege is not designated only to the church leadership, but to the whole church. Membership allows the church family to recognise each other as fellow custodians and stewards of the truth of scripture.

...you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 1 Timothy 3:15

- **Decision Making**

A local church has many decisions to make in its daily running. There are financial decisions, decisions about who will be in leadership within the church, decisions about how to go forward in certain ministries and programmes. Since Jesus is the head of the Church, the heart of every local church, in its decision making, must be “Lord, not our will, but your will be done”. Church membership helps us to ensure that only born-again believers, indwelt by the Spirit, walking in obedient fellowship with Jesus and his people are part of the decision-making process of the church family.

The twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, brethren, seek out from among you seven men...whom we may appoint over this business...the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose...[seven men] whom they set before the apostles... Acts 6:2-6

- **Partnership**

While there are many skilled and talented people who attend church, the New Testament is clear that only those in Christ are meant to serve within a local church family. Church membership helps us to ensure that only born-again believers walking in obedient fellowship with Jesus play any kind of significant role of serving, teaching or leading within a local church family.

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Romans 12:4-8

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies... 1 Peter 4:10-11

- **Accountability and Church Discipline**

God has given us the church the loving responsibility of humbly keeping one another accountable for our obedience to Christ, our service of one another and our portrayal of Christ and his glorious gospel to the world. This includes the restorative process of church discipline.

If a member of a local church continues, after a number of pleading calls to repentance over a specific sin, refuses to repent, that member is reluctantly removed from church membership, under the authority of Jesus Christ, and asked to refrain from partaking of the Table. This removal is not punitive in nature, but restorative. The prayerful hope is that this wayward brother or sister would, as a consequence, realise how serious their sin is, and so turn back to God in repentance. The church is then given the glad privilege of graciously restoring that brother or sister to the fellowship.

Church discipline also serves to keep the purity and testimony of the church intact before a watching world as they see that the church does take sin seriously.

By joining yourself to a church, you are, in submission to Jesus, inviting that local gathering of brothers and sisters to serve you in this way. You are also becoming a brother or sister in Christ who volunteers themselves to serve your church family in this way.

if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two

more...and if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Matthew 18:15-17

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together... deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 Corinthians 5:4-5

if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness... Galatians 6:1

Church Culture

Culture: a set of shared beliefs, attitudes, values, goals, and social practices that characterizes a group of people.

Church Culture: every church has a culture. By God's grace and for his glory, our desire is that gospel doctrine will create and foster a gospel culture.

One cannot explain the explosive dynamite... of the early church apart from the fact that they practiced two things simultaneously: orthodoxy of doctrine and orthodoxy of community...a community which the world could see. By the grace of God, therefore, the church must be known simultaneously for its purity of doctrine and the reality of its community. Our churches have so often been only preaching points with very little emphasis on community, but exhibition of the love of God in practice is beautiful and must be there.

Francis Schaeffer

At Blurton, we are committed to four core beliefs, attitudes, values and goals that we pray will continue to shape us.

1. **Christ Centred**
2. **Biblically Based**
3. **Gospel Focused**
4. **Community of Believers**

3. CHRIST CENTRED

Our great passion is to see Christ worshipped, exalted and praised in our own lives, in our gatherings and in our city.

- **Jesus is the Creator of the Heavens and Earth**

Jesus is the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe. Everything was created by him, through and for him. All creation is subject to his authority.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. Colossians 1:15-17

The head of all rule and authority. Colossians 2:10

- **Jesus is the Head of the Church**

Through his death and resurrection, Jesus is the exalted Lord of New Creation. Jesus is the Builder and the Head of the Church. He unites us to himself and to one another.

He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. Colossians 1:18

The head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together. Colossians 2:19

- **Jesus is the Fulness of God**

As part of the Godhead, Jesus is the glorious embodiment of beauty, truth and love. From him flows life, light, joy, peace, love and every good gift and spiritual virtue.

For it pleased the Father that in him all the fullness should dwell. Colossians 1:19

In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:3

In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Colossians 2:9

- **Jesus has Overcome Death, Sin and Satan**

Through his death and resurrection, Jesus defeated and shamed his enemies. One day every one of his enemies will bow the knee and confess that he is Lord.

Having disarmed principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. Colossians 2:15

- **Jesus has Rescued Us and Completes Us**

Jesus's death and resurrection means we can be forgiven, rescued and made new in him. To know him is to have full, free and eternal life.

The kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14

Having made peace through the blood of His cross... reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight. Colossians 1:20-22

Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27

You are complete in Him. Colossians 2:10

Having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. Colossians 2:13-14

Your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Colossians 3:3-4

- **Jesus is Our Focus, Motive and Example**

Jesus is presented as the motive for living the Christian life and the greatest example to us of how to live in such a way that pleases God. Jesus is continually working in us to transform us. The more we know him, the more we grow in him.

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Colossians 2:6-7

The Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. Colossians 2:19

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Colossians 3:1-2

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus... Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. Colossians 3:16-17

If anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. Colossians 3:13

- **Jesus is the Reality of the OT Shadows**

The Old Testament was always pointing towards Jesus. The point of the Old Testament was to direct us to who Jesus was, what he would come to do, and what he would achieve.

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Colossians 2:16-17

- **Jesus is the Centre of Paul's Message**

The focus of Paul's message, both to Christians and unbelievers was the person and work of Jesus.

Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ. Colossians 4:3

Therefore, our desire is to make Jesus the centre of everything that is believed and practiced in our church and every person within our church family. Our constant goal is to keep presenting Jesus as our Saviour, Redeemer, Advocate, Intercessor, Groom, Friend, Brother, Lord, and Example. We want to make much of Christ. We want everything we do to point to him.

4. BIBLICALLY BASED

We meet through the week to study God's word together. Our goal is to submit everything we do as a church to Scripture.

- **Biblical Authority**

The Bible is our final rule in all matters of faith (what we believe) and practice (what we do). Cultures, experiences and feelings change and can be unreliable, while the word of God is unchanging and can be totally trusted. God wants us to submit our cultural norms, traditional standards, feelings and experiences to the inerrant and sufficient revelation of himself and his will in his word.

The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever. 1 Peter 1:24-25

From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:15-17

- **Biblical Primacy**

Because of the above, we want the reading, teaching and preaching of scripture to be front and centre in our church gatherings. As we gather to fellowship, pray, sing and break bread, we want the foundation to be the reading and proclamation of Scripture.

Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 1 Timothy 4:13

The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

- **Biblical Worship**

Emotion, entertainment, experience, excitement, performance and production are not the chief aim of worship. Rather, God is worthy of our praise and thanks, our brothers and sisters need to be pointed to the gospel and we ourselves need to be reminded of God's good character and promises in Christ. Our worship is to be grounded in our understanding of and response to the word of God. Therefore, every hymn, prayer and sermon is to be rooted in Scripture, and is to be done in a way that is faithful to God's word.

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:24

Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:18-20

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Colossians 3:16

- **Biblical Leadership**

Scripture presents two offices within the church leadership: pastors and deacons. Pastors (also known as bishops and elders) are responsible for shepherding their brothers and sisters by teaching, praying and being an example. These men are to be of Christlike character and are to be trusted and submitted to, so much as they themselves submit to Scripture.

He Himself gave some to be...pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-12

Be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12-13

Preach the word...convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 2 Timothy 4:2

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17

5. GOSPEL FOCUSED

We love to proclaim the good news of Christ. Our desire is to grow in our understanding of how the gospel impacts our daily lives.

- **Our One Message**

The Christian message is the gospel message. The one message Jesus entrusted to his church is the message of the gospel. The gospel is the central theme of scripture, including the Old Testament. For all eternity our praises will be filled by the great theme of the person of Christ and his work on the cross. The only real solution to our broken world and fallen humanity is the gospel. Religion, moralism, political views, activism and education can never provide an answer to the problem of sin. Therefore, the gospel should be the theme, the message and the focus of the church now and for all eternity.

Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24:27

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Mark 16:15

Daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. Acts 5:42

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. Romans 1:16

For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:2

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 1 Peter 1:10-12

You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Revelation 5:9

- **No Grace Graduates**

The whole of the Christian life begins, continues and is finished by grace. We receive Christ, the Spirit and Eternal Life by faith alone. We are to continue in the same way; leaning on Christ by faith. There is a common view that the gospel is only the beginning of the Christian life. This view can lead to the idea that maturity in Christ is synonymous with an understanding of deeper theological concepts, an exactness on all doctrinal points and/or outward adherence to biblical or traditional standards. While growing in our understanding of scripture and believing what is true is important, they should never distract from the goal of becoming more like Christ. While outward obedience is important, we can never truly obey and, therefore, should never try to, without the continual inward work of Christ by the Spirit. This inward work of Christ, working his character into us, will then express itself outwardly in our speech and lifestyle. The Holy Spirit's great ministry here on earth is to point both believers and unbelievers to Jesus. Therefore, at Blurton Baptist, our focus and emphasis is the person and work of Jesus.

But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will testify of me. John 15:26

We all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. 2 Corinthians 3:18

Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Galatians 3:2-3

Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:9-11

It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Philippians 2:13

As you received Christ Jesus the Lord [by faith], so walk in him, rooted up and built up in him and established in the faith. Colossians 2:6-7

6. COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

We are striving to live out the 'one-another' commands of the gospel as we serve, worship and live in community together.

- **One Body Many Members**

When we trust in Christ as our Saviour, we are brought into right relationship with God and we are also brought into right relationship with the other citizens of New Creation. Jesus is the Head of the church, and each member becomes an integral part of the body. This is true in both in the universal and local church sense.

For as we have many members in one body...being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Romans 12:4-5

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit... there should be no schism in the body. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 25-26

- **Unity and Diversity**

The beauty and richness of the church is not in its uniformity or sameness, but in its unity in diversity. We each have our unique backgrounds, personalities, gifts and skills that God delights in. Each part has a unique part to play in contributing to the life and health of the body as a whole.

All the members do not have the same function. Romans 12:4

If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 1 Corinthians 12:15-20

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Ephesians 4:7

- **Personal not Private**

While the way into the Christian life is through a personal relationship with Christ, and ongoing fellowship with him is of a personal nature for each believer, the Christian life was never intended to be private, but communal. Every individual believer needs their brothers and sisters and the giftings that God has given them.

Those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary...the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 1 Corinthians 12:22, 25-26

Speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:15-16

- **One Another Commands**

The bulk of Christ and the Apostles' instructions to the church revolve around our interactions with and attitudes toward one another. The New Testament is very clear that one of the main ways we serve Christ is by serving our brothers and sisters. As the gospel continues to transform us, through the Spirit working in us, our fellowship with Christ is evident in our fellowship with each other.

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another...be of the same mind toward one another...love one another...let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another... receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God... admonish one another...greet one another with a holy kiss. Romans 12:10, 16, 13:8, 14:19, 15:7, 14, 16:6, 16

Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love... be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you... speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...submitting to one another in the fear of God. Ephesians 4:1-2, 32, 5:19, 21

Church Purpose

Purpose: the reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists.

Church Purpose: the Church of Jesus Christ has a God given purpose. The purpose of the Church is to bring glory to God now and forever:

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen - Ephesians 3v20-21.

Therefore, at Blurton, we are committed to this purpose:

TO KNOW CHRIST AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN

We bring glory to God in three ways:

1. **Worship** - *Our lives of praise and obedience to God*
2. **Fellowship** - *Our lives of mutual ministry to one another*
3. **Mission** - *Our lives lived out in the world around us*

7. KNOW CHRIST • MAKE CHRIST KNOWN

The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins with this question: *what is the chief end of man?* The answer given is: *to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.*

Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, and return is wrapped up in the purpose of bringing God glory through a new humanity who can glorify and enjoy God forever. The church exists for God and for his glory. The church has been created by Christ to bring glory to God through worshipping him, building up his people and reaching out to the lost.

- **Worship**

Humanity was created to worship God in intimate fellowship. Since the fall we have not lost that innate desire for worship and relationship. Our rebellion is seen, not in our inability to worship, but in our worship of everything and anything but God. We are all idolaters. Jesus came to rescue idolaters from their false gods and turn their hearts back to their Creator. We gather together to enjoy fellowship with and worship of God through reading and preaching the Bible, praying, singing hymns, and seeing the gospel through the two ordinances. Worship, however, is not just what we do on a Sunday morning. Worship is about learning to trust and submit the entirety of our lives over to Jesus and his teachings.

[Humanity] exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.
Romans 1:25

The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. *John 4:23-24*

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ who you have sent. *John 17:3*

By the mercies of God...present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
Romans 12:1

- **Fellowship**

Part of knowing Christ and making Christ known is our being pointed to and pointing one another to the rich truths of who Jesus is and what he has done, is doing and will do. We gather to learn more about the person, character, promises and work of Jesus. We hear his word, sing his praises, seek him in prayer and so we come to know Jesus more and more, while helping one another to come to know Jesus more and more.

That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:2-3

- **Mission**

Jesus told his followers that they were to be witnesses of him. They were called to tell others about who he is, what he has done and how they can receive eternal life. The church exists, not just to make Christ known to one another, but to shine the light of the good news of Christ into a world of darkness. We are called by Jesus to live in such a way that demonstrates the reality of the gospel and to declare the truths of the gospel message

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. Matthew 28:19-20

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Mark 16:15

Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations Luke 24:47

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. Philippians 2:14-15

Having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:12

8. GIVING

- **Why Give?**

Giving is a form of worship. All throughout the Old and New Testament people worshipped God through giving. Everything we have ultimately comes from God and we acknowledge that by showing him our gratitude and honour by giving back to him a portion of what is his.

Both riches and honour come from you...who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from you, and of your own we have given you...all this...is from your hand, and is all your own....I have willingly offered all these things; and now with joy I have seen your people, who are present here to offer willingly to you. 1 Chronicles 29:10-17

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Hebrews 13:16

- **The Tithe**

The idea of giving a tenth of your income is an Old Testament principle. In the New Testament there isn't a specific percentage obligated. If a believer wants to tithe, they are free in Jesus to do so. However, we are not to impose this rule on others.

Let each one give as he purposes in his heart. 2 Corinthians 9:7

- **How Do I Give?**

2 Corinthians 8-9 give us some helpful principles about giving:

- ***Our giving is to be motivated by the gospel***

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. (8v9)

- ***Our giving is to be empowered by grace***

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches...the abundance of their joy...overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. (8v1-2)

- ***Our giving is to be glad, not grudging or forced***

They were freely willing...a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation...not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver (8v3, 9v5, 7)

- ***Our giving is to be in proportion to what we have***

On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper (1 Corinthians 16v2)

- **Where Does My Giving Go?**

We don't just give to our local church. We may also give as individuals to other people and ministries. However, money given to the church helps in a number of ways.

- ***Pastors***

The New Testament teaches that pastors are to be financially supported by their brothers and sisters in their local church.

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine...the labourer is worthy of his wages. 1 Timothy 5:17-18

The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. 1 Corinthians 4:4-14

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Galatians 6:6

- ***Missions and Evangelism***

Our giving also goes to efforts to share the gospel in our community and city, as well as supporting those who are involved in full time gospel work in the UK and abroad.

Your care for me has flourished again...you shared in my distress...you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Philippians 4:10-20

- ***Needs of the Local and Universal Church family***

Part of our giving goes to the meeting of needs within our church family and may also be used to meet the needs of believers in other places.

Let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10

They desired only that we should remember the poor. Galatians 2:10

- **Church Building and Ministries**

Churches also have bills to pay. There is rent or mortgages, gas and electric, phone and internet, insurance, website bills and more. Churches use printers, computers, projectors, instruments, sound and video equipment and other items. Sometimes the building needs to be updated for health and safety reasons or to make it more accessible and useful. All of this is paid for through the generous and willing giving of those who are part of that local church.

Church Membership

Thank you for taking the time to read through this material. If you would like to become a member of Blurton Baptist, please speak to one of our pastors.

Those who would like to become members of Blurton Baptist must:

- Be born again through faith in Jesus Christ
- Be baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit
- Be walking in obedience to the teachings of Jesus
- Be living in harmony with others
- Agree with our Church Culture and Purpose
- Be willing to biblically submit to the Church Leadership
- Be willing to submit to Church Discipline

Statement of Faith

1. God

There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Trinity). God is unchangeable in His holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator; Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to His sovereign will for His own glory.

2. The Bible

God has revealed Himself in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. Every word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

3. The Human Race

All men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God. Every person is therefore under the just condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please Him.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all his words are true. On the cross He died in the place of sinners, bearing God's punishment for their sin, redeeming them by His blood. He rose from the dead and in His resurrection body ascended into heaven where He is exalted as Lord of all. He intercedes for His people in the presence of the Father.

5. Salvation

Salvation is entirely a work of God's grace and cannot be earned or deserved. It has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ (as mentioned above) and is offered to all in the gospel. God in His love forgives sinners. All who believe in Christ are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

6. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ and to apply his work of salvation. He convicts sinners, imparts spiritual life and gives a true understanding of the Scriptures. He indwells all believers, brings assurance of salvation and produces increasing likeness to Christ. He builds up the Church and empowers its members for worship, service and mission.

7. The Church

The universal Church is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved belong. It is made visible in local churches, which are congregations of believers who are committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; for pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

8. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been given to the churches by Christ as visible signs of the gospel. Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into His Church but does not impart spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all and involves no change in the bread and wine. All its blessings are received by faith.

9. The Future

The Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory to reign on earth. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment (Hell) and the righteous will be welcomed into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God. God will make all things new and will be glorified forever.

