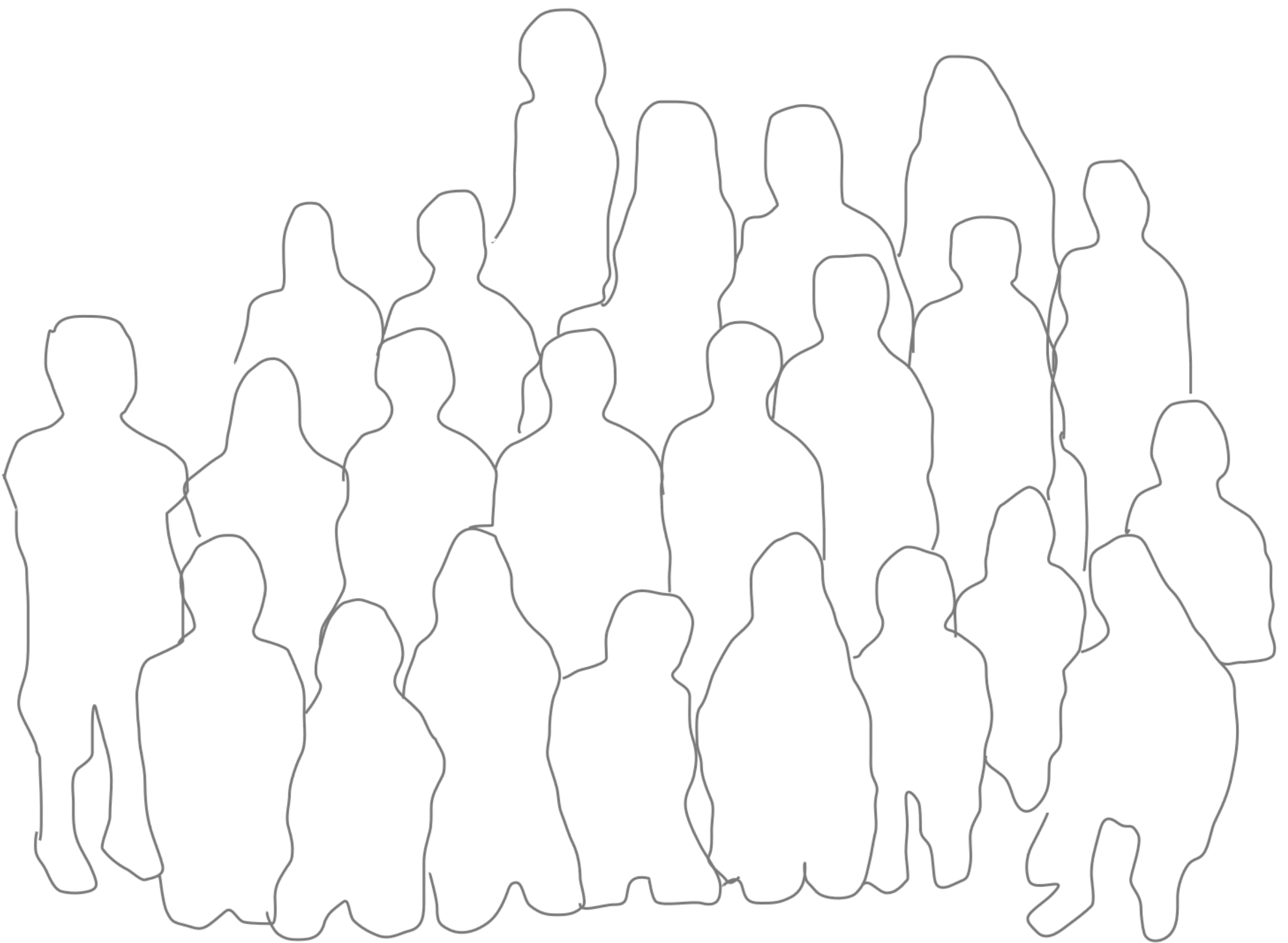


CHURCH

MEMBERSHIP INFO



WHY BOTHER WITH CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

This is a question we are frequently asked as Pastors.

Some people feel that because they grew up in a church, they are automatically members of that church. Others feel that it's too inclusive, or too exclusive, or that it hampers their freedom to go or be wherever they feel they should be, while others feel that it's like "big brother" keeping watch over them just so that their tithes are paid.

Others feel that it is too secular – It's like signing up to be part of a tennis or bowling club. Some feel that it's too traditional or too ritualistic to become a formal member of a local church. Their belief often stems from an understanding that they are part of the universal church of God, meaning – because they are believers, they are already part of God's kingdom. But that is only half the meaning of being part of God's kingdom.

Perhaps you haven't given any real thought to why you should become a member of a local church. So, why be a church member? Why not just be able to go and participate as and when you feel like it?

Well, when we use the word member we are using it in context with passages from scripture (Neh. 9:38 OT, 1 Cor. 12-14 NT) that imply that "member" is somebody who, whether by a signature or a word of commitment or promise, says, "I'm committed to a people, a people who hear the word of God preached, a people who perform the ordinances that Jesus gave to his church (baptism and the Lord's Supper), and a people who commit to the 'one another' ". This is the covenant nature of the church and of Christian discipleship. It's a commitment that follows strongly God's commands to love each other, exhort each other, admonish each other and hold each other accountable, and those you cannot do as one who looks in from the outside.

If you say, " I believe the New Testament says, 'Be a part of a community' and part of that is giving yourself to ministering there and receiving ministry there, advancing the cause of the gospel there and upholding the name of Jesus there but then resisting putting your name on the line for that, is probably not a biblical conviction. It's probably a Western thinking independent, give-me-elbow-room, don't-get-in-my-face-too-often conviction, which is not biblical at all.

WHY BOTHER WITH CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

So, The reason we use the word “member” is because Paul uses it in 1 Corinthians 12-14 when he is referring to the church as a body of believers and he uses the analogy of a body to describe how we all fit into and play our part in the body as a whole. The local church—not just the global church—is a body. The reason we know it's local and not just global is because, while in Ephesians 1 and Colossians Paul talks about Christ as the head of the body, in 1 Corinthians 12 he's talking about a head with eyes and ears that are members of the body.

So the body analogy has one global meaning, and it has one local meaning. There's global membership in the body universal, and there's local membership in the body where I'm a finger or an eye or an ear or a foot. And everybody is a member.

So, the word "member" in 1 Corinthians 12-14 means you're part of a local organism, and you, the finger or eye, ear or foot belongs. It should care about what happens to the eye, and the eye what happens to the finger. And it should function in a way that has some organic coherence to it. It's very hard to do what the Bible calls a church to do unless it knows who the members are and who aren't.

- 1** In joining a church you make visible your commitment to Christ and his people. It's one way to raise the flag of faith as you commit before God and others that you are part of this local body of believers. It's here that God expects you to be involved, nurture others and grow in and live out your faith. The majority of Paul's letters were written to a local body of believers (only a few were to individuals and those were Pastors). We see the same thing in Revelation as Jesus speaks to individual congregations in places like Smyrna, Sardis, and Laodicea. The New Testament knows no Christians floating around in “just me and Jesus” land. Believers belong to churches.

WHY CHURCH MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

- 2** Making a commitment makes a powerful statement in a low-commitment culture. Many outside clubs (soccer, hockey, book club etc..) require more of their members than our church does. We unfortunately try force the church to be like our consumer culture where everything is tailored to meet our needs and satisfy our references. When those needs are not met, we can always move on to the next product, or job, or spouse. Joining a church in such an environment makes a counter-cultural statement which says “I am committed to this group of people and they are committed to me. I am here to give, more than get.”
- 3** Membership states in a formal way, “I am part of something bigger than myself. I am not just running to my own drum beat but one that God is beating out .
- 4** Membership keeps us accountable. When we join a church, we are offering ourselves to one another to be encouraged, rebuked, corrected, and served. We are placing ourselves under leaders and submitting to their authority (Heb. 13:7). It is a mark of growing in Godliness. Prov. 27:17 says “Iron sharpens Iron. You can’t be sharpened when you are continually on your own, veering away from body involvement nor can your gifts be appropriately used in order to edify (build up), exhort (encourage), and comfort the church.

Mark Dever, in his book *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, writes,

"Church membership is our opportunity to grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love. By identifying ourselves with a particular church, we let the pastors and other members of that local church know that we intend to be committed in attendance, giving, prayer, and service. We allow fellow believers to have great expectations of us in these areas, and we make it known that we are the responsibility of this local church. We assure the church of our commitment to Christ in serving with them, and we call for their commitment to serve and encourage as well."

WHY CHURCH MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

5 Membership will help the pastor/s and elders be more faithful shepherds. Hebrews 13:7 says, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.” They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. This is hard enough to do on any given day but more difficult when the church or pastors don’t know who is really a part of this flock.

6 Joining the church gives you an opportunity to make promises before God of making your faith in him relevant and potential as you engage in the church and its other members and from there, as you are fed and encouraged to go out and be the salt and light in your world and community. At SWBC when you become a member you make promises to pray, give, serve, attend worship, accept the spiritual guidance of the church, obey its teachings, and seek the things that make for unity, purity, and peace. These things are not taken lightly. They are promises before God and before your fellow saints in the Lord and we must hold each other to them. By not doing this you do miss out on great spiritual benefit, for you, your leaders, and the whole church.

CONCLUSION

Its often very sad to see believers drifting from one church to another with no real purpose or intention of using their gifts and exercising their spiritual fruit within that local body. Christ was wholly committed to us in that he left his place in heaven and came to be part of us here on earth and he gave everything of himself – even his own life, so that we can emulate his sacrificial and binding love to one another in a prayerful, exhorting and committed way.

BAPTIST PRINCIPLES

1 DIRECT LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

By this we understand that Christ exercises His authority over the believer and the local Church directly, without delegating it to another.

2 THE CHURCH

The whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The local church, being a manifestation of the universal church, is a community of believers in a particular place where the Word of God is preached and observed. It is fully autonomous and remains so notwithstanding responsibilities it may accept by voluntary association.

3 BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

An act of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and a sign of personal repentance, faith and regeneration; it consists of the immersion in water into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

4 THE CONGREGATIONAL PRINCIPLE

Each member has the privilege and responsibility to use his/her gifts and abilities to participate fully in the life of the Church. We recognise that God gifts His Church with Overseers (who are called Pastors or Elders) whose primary function is to lead in a spirit of servant hood, to equip and provide spiritual oversight, and Deacons whose primary function is to facilitate the smooth functioning of the Church. This principle further recognises that each member should participate in the appointment of the church's leaders, and that constituted church meeting, subject to the direct Lordship of Christ and the authority of Scripture, is the highest court of authority for the local Church.

5 THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

Each Christian has direct access to God through Christ our High Priest, and shares with Him in His work of reconciliation. This involves intercession, worship, faithful service and bearing witness to Jesus Christ, even to the end of the earth.

BAPTIST PRINCIPLES

6 RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

No individual should be coerced either by the State or by any secular, ecclesiastical or religious group in matters of faith. The right of private conscience is to be respected. For each believer this means the right to interpret the Scriptures responsibly and to act in the light of his conscience.

7 SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

In the providence of God, the two differ in their respective natures and functions. The Church is not to be identified with the State nor is it, in its faith or practice, to be directed or controlled by the State. The State is responsible for administering justice, ensuring an orderly community, and promoting the welfare of its citizens. The Church is responsible for preaching the Gospel and for demonstrating and making known God's will and care for all mankind.

SWBC STORY

2021 marked our 40 year anniversary as a local church!

- Began as a Sunday School by members of Strand Baptist Church.
- Progressed to regular services at Beaumont Primary.

BUILDING GROWTH

The present ground was purchased in 1983.

Originally the sanctuary was in the back hall.

The present sanctuary was dedicated in 1997.

Later extensions have included:

- Main Foyer & Room above the foyer.
- The church offices and upstairs hall.
- Renovation of the back hall and outdoor play area.
- Recent installation of surrounding a fence.
- Garage and stairs to upstairs hall renovation.

PEOPLE GROWTH

What began with a few kids and adults in a garage has grown to a membership of just over 400 members.

With the addition of kids and teens and adherants means that about 800 people who consider SWBC as their spiritual home.

MISSION

We regard ourselves as a vibrant multi-general church that remains committed to our rallying cry of moving “Forward with God”.

MISSION STATEMENT

“To be a fellowship of Christ-followers, growing in the faith and impacting our community”

BAPTIST HISTORY

We are a small expression of a much larger family.

GLOBAL HISTORY

“It’s immediate roots lay in small groups of believers within England which had separated from the State Church during the period of the English Reformation in the 16th Century...it was also shaped by successors of the earlier continental ‘Anabaptist’ movement which had begun in Zurich, with its emphasis upon...baptism of believers.”

(European Baptist Federation Council | Appendix B | September 1992)

Today Baptists form a major denomination within the Protestant Evangelical Stream – regarded as the 4th largest denomination.

The Baptist World Alliance, formed in 1905, joins some 40-60 million Baptist in over 150 countries throughout the world.

Today, for example, there are Baptist Union in nearly every European country and the Northern and Southern Baptists are well-known in America.

SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY

Baptist families were among a group of 4500 British emigrants that left England for SA in 1820.

- Under the religious leadership of William Miller, the first Baptist church in Grahamstown was established in 1823.

The Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) was founded in 1877.

- Made up of provincial associations
- Several Theological institutions (E.g. CTBS, BTC & Christ Seminary)
- Hold an annual nation assembly representing over 700 congregations.

CHURCH VALUES

1. BIBLE BASED

We believe that God speaks authoritatively through His Word, the Bible, and that people are challenged and built up as God's Word is preached and taught faithfully. This will be the cornerstone of the church's activities.

2. OUTWARD LOOKING

We believe that the Great Commission is central to the Church of Jesus Christ. We will therefore be strongly committed to taking the Gospel to the world through sending and supporting distant missionaries, moving into our local community to serve and evangelise, and supporting the broader church within our community and nation.

(Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 5:30-32. Luke 15)

3. RELEVANT

We believe that the salvation and discipling of people has to be effective in a diverse and changing world. Without changing the central truth of Scripture and the call to relevance, we will strive to present ministry in a way that is creative, evolving, future-looking and ultimately effective.

(1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

4. AUTHENTIC CONDUCT

We believe that God calls Christians to be imitators of Christ and that personal conduct is a powerful form of witness. Therefore we will encourage member and adherents of the church to appreciate the importance of their behaviour and to continually remember the primary call to love. Relationships will always be more important than programmes. Where discipline is required, this will be handled in a firm but gentle manner.

(Ephesians 4:25-32; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

5. EXERCISING OF GIFTS

We believe that God has given each individual specific gifts which can be exercised for the benefit of the church at large. We will encourage all members and adherents to discover their genuine gifts and to exercise them in conjunction with a balanced life and commitment to family. Gifts will be channelled to minister in ways that are holistic, disciplined, focussed on spiritual growth and characterised by enthusiasm and joy.

(1 Corinthians 7:7; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12)

CHURCH VALUES

6. PRAYING FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS

We recognise that the world is a hostile and demanding place. We will therefore strive to create a spiritual and emotional haven for our member and adherents where love, acceptance, encouragement and positive relationships characterise fellowship in the church. We will encourage members to meet together both at corporate service and in small groups to share each other's burdens and resources and to pray for each other and the church. At the core of our meetings will be the commitment to praying for the world, our country, our community, our church, our missionaries and our congregation.

(Acts 2:42-47; Romans 12:9-21)

7. EXCELLENCE

We believe that God is by nature a glorious and excellent being. We will endeavour, therefore, to reflect His majesty in our ministries and activities. Without compromising the overriding command to love, we will encourage our gift-exercising members to seek excellence in their areas of service. We will strive for effective use of time, careful use of our resource and tidy housekeeping of the premises.

(Colossians 3:17; 2 Corinthians 8:7; Proverbs 15:7)

8. COMMITTED TO UNITY

We fully appreciate how fragile human relationships are, even amongst believers. We also recognise that many areas of service have failed because Christians have been unable to work effectively with each other. We, therefore, jealously uphold the concept of unity in the church and exhort believers to settle issues quickly and sincerely. (Ephesians 4:1-6; Psalm 133; Romans 15:7)

9. BALANCED WORSHIP

We recognise that God calls us to relevant and orderly worship and that when we come together as a body we should unite in lifting our praises to Him. As result, we will strive to worship in an inclusive orderly, objective and balanced way. (Psalms 149:1; Hebrews 13:15)

10. DISCIPLESHIP

We recognise that the Christian life is one of spiritual and practical growth that requires instruction and discipline. We will, therefore, provide theological input and practical training to ensure that our members grow in their faith and that the great Christian disciplines are taught and encouraged.

(Philippians 3:12-14; 2 Timothy 2:2)

MINISTRY OVERVIEW

There's a wide scope of opportunity to serve the Lord at SWBC. This is where we will need members to support in the form of time, prayer and financial giving.

SUMMARY

- Missions Department
- Prayer Ministry
- Hospitality/Welcoming
- Media & Livestream
- Building Maintenance
- Kids Ministry
- Youth and Young Adults
- Schools
- Counseling
- Ladies & Men's Ministries
- Seniors Ministry
- Connect Groups (Bible Studies)
- Worship/Music Department
- Evangelism (e.g Alpha)
- Communication
- Meals of Compassion
- Kombi Duty
- Communion Setup
- Coffee after service

CoONSTITUTION CLAUSE 8.1

Members shall be expected to support the ministry and maintain the fellowship of the Church by prayer, attendance at services whenever possible, engaging in some specific service, conscientious financial support as God provides, and by introducing others to the Church.

STATEMENT DOCUMENTS

Over the years we have at times needed to establish certain statement documents related to some aspects within the life of the church.

They are:

1. Giving to the work of the Lord.
2. Philosophy of Worship
3. Position statement: Healing Ministry
4. Position statement: Women in Leadership

These can currently be found on our website here:

<https://swbc.co.za/resources>

CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

CONSTITUTION CLAUSE 5: MEMBERSHIP

The membership shall consist of:

5.1 Those whose names are in the Church register of members at the time of the adoption of this constitution.

5.2 Those who have given evidence of their personal salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have confessed that faith in baptism by immersion, have accepted this constitution and who have been admitted to membership in terms of Clause 6.1.

ADMISSION OF MEMBERS

CONSTITUTION CLAUSE 6: ADMISSION OF MEMBERS

6.1 After attending a new member's orientation class, application for church membership shall be made in writing to the Eldership or the Secretary, whom in turn shall submit the application to the Executive for consideration. Applicants need to be those who have given evidence of their personal salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have confessed that faith in baptism by immersion, have accepted this Constitution. If approved by the Executive, their names shall be placed on the Church notice board, included in the church bulletin and announced at all services for two consecutive weeks following which, if there have been no formal and motivated objections in writing to the Executive from the members, their membership shall be approved.

6.2 In the event that the application in 6.1 is approved the applicant shall be welcomed by the members of the church at a church service and be given a church Membership certificate, signed by a pastor and the Church secretary, which is evidence of Membership of the SWBC.

EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS

CONSTITUTION CLAUSE 8: PRIVILEGES & OBLIGATIONS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

8.1 Under the divine Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ the final authority and responsibility in all matters touching the life and service of the church rests with the membership. Each individual member has the responsibility and right to participate fully in the Church's (SWBC) life and government, including the appointment of its leadership.

8.2 Every member shall be entitled and expected to attend General Meetings, unless prevented by some reasonable cause, and to exercise his/her vote for the welfare of the whole Church (SWBC), in a spirit of prayer and love.

8.3 Members shall be expected to support the ministry and maintain the fellowship of the Church by prayer, attendance at services whenever possible, engaging in some specific service, conscientious financial support as God provides, and by introducing others to the Church.

APPLYING FOR MEMBERSHIP

Should you want to move forward in the process of becoming a member of SWBC, please fill in a membership application form and submit to one of the pastor or the church office.

THANK YOU!

