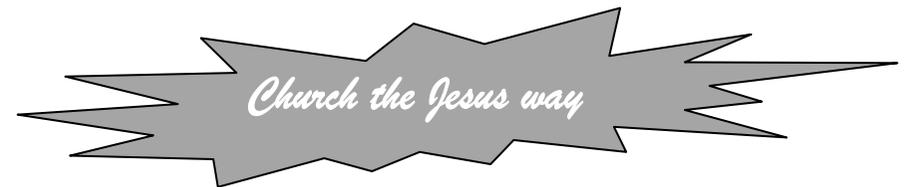




## PRINCIPLES OF LOCAL CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Last updated – July 2013



### FOR PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS OF THE VILLAGE CHURCH

- R A family in relationship with God and each other
- O Each one reaching, teaching and releasing one other
- A Depending on and obedient to the Holy spirit
- D Teaching what Jesus said and did
- S Extending His kingdom through local churches

***Our calling is to be a Jesus-centred church family  
in relationship with God and each other, extending  
His kingdom through local churches***

## **The Village Church Mission**

***To be*** a Jesus-centred church family characterised by love and acceptance, where the members are in loving relationship with God and each other within an environment of order, participation and accountability.

***To be*** a people who reach out to others, both corporately and individually outside of the congregational setting, to bring them into relationship with Jesus Christ, to teach them the basic principles of the Kingdom of God, and to then release them to go and do likewise for others.

***To be*** Christians who embrace the person of the Holy Spirit and depend on his anointing for life and ministry.

***To be*** a church that teaches sound, biblical, life giving doctrine based on the scriptural revelation of what Jesus said and did, and propagates this doctrine through other local churches

***To be*** a church that extends the Kingdom of God by establishing interdependent autonomous local churches founded on the principles presented in the book of Acts and as embodied in this mission statement.

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Fourways group was amalgamated with the Craigavon congregation. In January 1999 this congregation was released to seek its own identity and direction. The Paulshof congregation was also granted autonomy and now operates under the name of Ridgeway Family Church.

In 1996 the Village Church established the South African Theological Seminary, a registered and nationally accredited distance learning higher education institution based in Rivonia. Several of the church elders are on the board of directors and Christopher Peppler is the chairman.

In August 2002 Colin Ekman was appointed full-time Elder and Pastor of the Lonehill Village Church.

In October 2001 the Village Church planted a congregation in Peter Place under the leadership of Ken Ironside. Unfortunately this did not mature into a viable local church and was therefore reabsorbed back into the Lonehill congregation.

In October 2007 Adam Spence joined the team as Associate Pastor.

In March 2010 the Village Church planted a congregation in Chartwell under the leadership of Doug Timberlake which became autonomous some two years later.

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## PRINCIPLES OF LOCAL CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

### Module One

#### 1. FUNDAMENTALS

Welcome prospective members. We assume you are interested in membership because of your growing commitment to the local church body.

After you have completed this booklet in your own time you will be required to meet with the Elders of your congregation and other prospective members. The purpose of these group sessions is twofold. Firstly, we want you to have the opportunity of asking questions and clarifying anything which might not be clear to you. Secondly, we want to make sure that you fully understand the benefits and obligations of local church membership and exactly how we, as a church, see ourselves.

#### 1.1. PURPOSE

All local churches serve the same fundamental purpose; to be a Family of God with the Lord Jesus Christ as its head, a spiritual household in which the children of God grow and function. The church is people, equipped to serve, meeting needs everywhere in Jesus' name. Its emphasis is on producing spirit-filled people who can meet the needs of others. Its goal is for each member to be whole, equipped and released into ministry.

We, in The Village Church, have tried to sum up the general purpose of the local church as **“to carry out the ministry and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ in the areas and situations in which He has placed us.”**

**JOHN 20:21** reads, *“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you”*.

Of course, ALL local churches have that basic general purpose yet not all churches have the same specific purpose. Each has its own God-given character, flavour and spiritual DNA. This is ours: **“To extend Gods’ kingdom by establishing local congregations and by equipping individual believers to be and to make disciples of Jesus”**.

Let’s take a closer look at that statement of purpose.

### **1.1.1. ESTABLISHING LOCAL CONGREGATIONS**

**We believe that local churches need to reproduce themselves to stay productive and to extend the Kingdom of God.** Many churches include in their mission statements the idea of planting new congregations away from their home territory. We also embrace this church planting philosophy, but in addition we have a vision for planting congregations in the suburbs surrounding our churches. We will give details of this in module two under the heading of ‘Church Growth’. For now, though, it is important that you understand that as a member of The Village Church you may be asked, at some time or another, to consider leaving your congregation and joining a fairly small group in establishing a new congregation in an adjoining suburb.

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over to the Lonehill congregation to bolster their leadership. This they gladly did. After a couple of months the two Elders asked Christopher to join their team and to assume spiritual oversight of the congregation. He was working as an executive of a large bank at the time and could not devote too much energy to pastoring the little congregation. But the Holy Spirit had plans and started growing the church until by March of the next year it had an attendance of about 70. Two things then happened: The people of the church renovated the old post office depot next door and called Christopher as the full time pastor of the church.

On the 29th May 1988 Terry Rae ordained Christopher as the minister of the Lonehill Village Church and a new phase started for both his family and the local church. For the first year there was a shortage of musicians and the congregation usually made do with just a pianist and Christopher on guitar. Once a month, though, help came in the form of a music group called “Legacy” from Rosebank Union.

By October of 1988 plans for a building were under way: Lonehill had no suitable building to rent and so the church had no option but to build. In June 1989 came the news that the land under the Koppie had been sold and that the developers were bulldozing the existing building within three months. So the congregation moved to the Fourways High School while the church building was being constructed. On the 19th May 1991, the church dedicated the new (bond free) building in Lonehill and moved half the congregation across. At about the same time the church employed a second full-time elder. In June 1992 the church started a third congregation in Paulshof. In September 1993 a third full-time member of the pastoral team joined us. In May 1994 the Fourways congregation started a fourth congregation in Craigavon. That same year the pastor of the Fourways congregation left the pastoral ministry and moved to Cape Town and the number of congregations was reduced to three as the

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## • THE CHURCH

We *believe* that the one true church is the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy spirit; that the new birth and personal confession of Christ are therefore essentials of church membership and that the church on earth is the organism through which God says and does what He desires for His world.

We *believe* that the Lord Jesus Christ appointed two ordinances - Baptism and the Lord's Supper - to be observed as acts of obedience and as perpetual witnesses to the cardinal facts of the Christian faith.

## 3.3 HISTORY

Many years ago Rosebank Union Church, a well-established and large Interdenominational church, identified the need for an extension work in the far northern suburbs of Johannesburg. As a result they started a Sunday School in the Bryanston Laer School. Shortly after this they started adult Sunday services and almost immediately moved to a ramshackle building just beneath the Lonehill Koppie. Rosebank Union had employed a young man straight out of the Baptist Theological College, but after a while with the fledgling Lonehill Church he decided to pursue a calling with Youth for Christ. This left the young church with no pastor and a congregation of about 30 adults. In about March of 1987 Terry Rae, the senior pastor of Rosebank Union Church, asked Pat and Christopher Pepler to move

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## 1.1.2. EQUIPPING INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS

We see the local church as an extended spiritual family. As such, it, as an organisation, does not often evangelise, minister and so on, but rather acts as the environment in which believers can be equipped to 'do the work of the ministry'. This philosophy affects you directly in many ways. For instance, which of the following evangelism methods do you think we favour?

- (a) Mass rallies with dynamic altar calls?
- (b) Specialist EE3 or door-to-door teams?
- (c) Each-one-reach-one friendship evangelism?

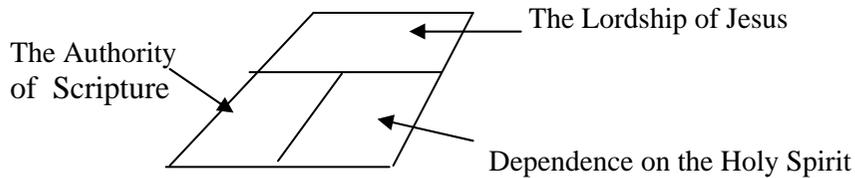
If you selected (c) then you got it right. More about this in Module Two under the heading of 'Discipleship'.

## 1.2 FOUNDATION PRINCIPLES

The Bible figures the church in several ways. One of these is as a building, a temple. Using this illustration of the church we see it as having three great foundation slabs.

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**1 CORINTHIANS 3:11** reads *“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ”*.

To see how The Village Church’s three foundation principles fit in with this statement please read the following scriptures:

(a) **EPHESIANS 2: 19-22** *“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s household, built on the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets, with **Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone**. In him the whole **building** is joined together and rises to become a holy **temple** in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a **dwelling** in which God lives by his Spirit.*

(b) **JOHN 5:39-40** *“You diligently study **the Scriptures** because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the scriptures that testify about **me** yet you refuse to come to me to have life”*.

(d) **JOHN 16:12-14** *“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, **the Spirit of truth** comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to **me** by taking from what is **mine** and making it known to you”*.

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• **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

*We believe* in the supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit in and through the life of the believer; in His empowering and equipping for service and ministry and in His definite, yet progressive work of sanctification, commencing at the time of the new birth and continuing until the consummation of Salvation.

• **SIN AND SALVATION**

*We believe* that God created man in His own Image; that man sinned and thereby incurred the penalty of death, physical and spiritual; that all human beings inherit a sinful nature which issues (in the case of those who reach moral responsibility) in actual transgression involving personal guilt.

*We believe* that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins as a substitutionary sacrifice and that all who believe and trust in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood.

*We believe* that all who repent of their sin, receive Jesus Christ by faith as Saviour and confess Him as Lord are born again of the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God.

*We believe* in the resurrection of both the just and the unjust, in the eternal blessedness of the children of God, and in the eternal banishment of all others.

• **SCRIPTURE**

*We believe* in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments in their original writing as fully inspired of God and accept them as the supreme and final authority for faith and life.

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to be given to an organisation or association, which is an ecclesiastical, educational and/or charitable institution.

Section 55: **Amendments.** Only a two-thirds majority of members in general meeting may amend the constitution.

## 3.2. STATEMENT OF FAITH

The following 12 doctrines are the non-negotiables of the Christian faith (at least as we see them). Please study them carefully. If your belief is seriously at variance with these doctrines then membership of The Village Church is not for you.

- **THE TRINITY**

We *believe* in one God, eternally existing in three persons - Father Son and Holy Spirit.

- **THE FATHER**

We *believe* that God the Father is a spiritual being, omnipotent, omniscient, holy, righteous, loving and infinitely good; having life in Himself and giving life to all things.

- **THE SON**

We *believe* that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, the only begotten son of the Father.

We *believe* in the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus, in His ascension into Heaven, in His present life as our High Priest and Advocate and in His personal and imminent return.

### 1.2.1. THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS

**COLOSSIANS 1:18** reads “*And he [that is Jesus] is the head of the body, the church*”. There is only one head of the church, Jesus. This is easy to accept in theory, but how do we apply it in practice? Please read the following scriptures:

**JOHN 13:15** “*everyone who believes in him (Jesus) may have eternal life*”.

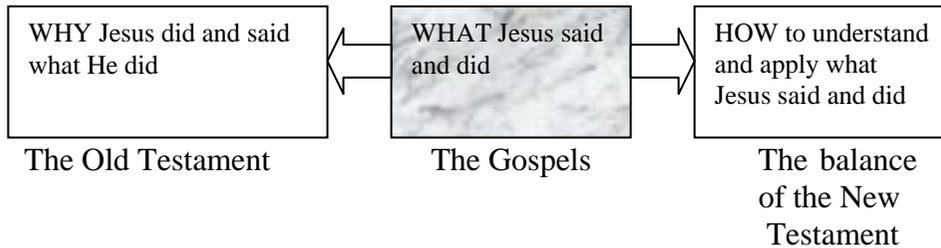
**1 PETER 2:21** “*to this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps*’.

So then, to truly acknowledge the lordship of Jesus we, as individuals and as a church, must take our example from Him. We must live and function as a body according to His example and teaching. Our church policies and practices must result from an honest answer to the question “What did Jesus do and what did Jesus say?” Moreover, our interpretation and application of scripture must be through the lens of the nature of the Godhead revealed in and through Jesus.

### 1.2.2. THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

“What did Jesus do and what did Jesus say?” How do we answer that question? By studying the scriptures. We read the Gospels, a few verses from 1 Corinthians plus a few verses from Revelation to ascertain **WHAT** Jesus said and did. We read the Old Testament to find out **WHY** He said and did what He did. We study the balance of

the New Testament to discover **HOW** to understand and apply what He said and did. We call this Christocentric Exegesis. [Theological words for ‘Christ-based understanding of the Bible’].



Let us just make the following points:

- ◆ We believe in the full inspiration of the Bible and accept it as the supreme and final authority for faith and life. **2 TIMOTHY 3:16** reads, ‘*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*’

Practically, this means that all matters of church life and functionality, all issues of doctrine and practice, and all principles and precedents must be drawn from a reasoned and responsible Christocentric study of scripture. If you, as a member, come across practices or teachings within The Village Church which do not conform to this standard then please discuss them with your Elders. By the same token, your Elders will expect you to adhere to scriptural principles.

- ◆ We believe that because the Bible is the authoritative written revelation of and from God it should normally be taught expositively rather than topically. The essential difference between the two approaches is this: Expository teaching/preaching starts with a portion of scripture and seeks to explain and apply it.

Section 32: **Disqualification of Elders.** The main feature here is that a two-thirds majority of members in a general meeting may remove an Elder from office.

Section 33: **Rotation of Elders.** One third of the number of Elders shall retire at each Annual General Meeting but may be nominated for re-election. This is a self-purging mechanism. This clause may be waived by the members in General Meeting.

Sections 34-35: **Election of Elders and new Elders.** New elders have to be nominated by the existing Eldership and appointed by an 80% majority of the members.

Sections 36-47: **Increase or reduction of number of Elders.** Co-option of Elders, meeting of Elders; quorum; vacancies; Chairman of meetings of the Board of Elders; delegation of powers, chairman of Committee; meetings of committee; validity of Acts; validation of Resolution; exemption and liabilities - all rather mundane. (Yawn!)

Section 48: **Secretary.** To be appointed by the Elders.

Section 49: **Deacons.** The Elders shall nominate deacons to assist the serving pastors in church duties not connected with the preaching of the gospel or the exercise of spiritual authority.

Sections 50-53: **Same person not to act as secretary and Elder.** Accounts, Income and expenditure accounts and balance sheet, copies for members, auditors, service of notice - once again there are no surprises here.

Section 54: **Dissolution.** Two-thirds of members in a general meeting are required to dissolve the church. The assets will then have

Section 6: **Discipline.** This gives the Elders power to suspend or cancel a person's membership if he or she is guilty of unworthy conduct. It lays out in detail how such discipline is to be applied.

Section 7 - 24: **General meetings.** These sections lay out how meetings are to be called, notice to be given, the one-third quorum required, the casting of votes and so on.

Section 25: **Serving Pastor.** This states that the appointment of a pastor and the terms of service of a pastor (but excluding his remuneration) shall be decided upon by the voting members in general meeting.

Section 26: **Elders.** This states that the church shall have at least 3 but not more than 12 Elders. It also specifies **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9** as the criteria for eligibility.

Section 27: **Powers and Limitations.** The Church has the same powers as most institutions (purchase, sell, borrow, lend, Invest etc.) but it has some distinct limitations. It may not, for instance, engage in any activity which is not of an ecclesiastical, charitable and/or educational purpose of a public character. Almost all of its limitations are prescribed by government legislation and are therefore not negotiable.

Section 28: **Management by Elders.** The main clause here is 'all the affairs of the church shall be managed by the Elders'.

Sections 29-31: **Attorneys.** Cheques, minutes. Nothing particularly interesting here.

Topical preaching starts with a subject and seeks to find scriptures that have a bearing on it.

The strength of exposition is that it relies on and emphasises the authority of the Bible: the weakness of topical preaching is that it relies on and emphasises the preacher's understanding and integrity. We do not reject topical teaching and you will find that we often hold studies around themes, but we consistently place expository preaching at the centre of our worship services

**NEHEMIAH 8:7-8** *'The Levites... instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read'*.

- ◆ We believe that the Bible is sufficient for faith and life and so we are guided by what it says and not by what it does not say. If the Bible is silent on some issue then that issue has limited relevance for us. It does not mean that the issue is unreal or non-existent; it just means that it is not important to us. The implication of this is that we reject extra-biblical doctrine and do not embrace any practice which does not conform to biblical precedent or principle.
- ◆ Having said all that, we must concede that the Bible is not clear on certain subjects [such as the form of church government, the exact method of baptism etc.,] and so we must leave room for genuine believers to interpret the scriptures responsibly and to act in the light of their own conscience. Some doctrines are so foundational to the Christian Faith that to allow deviation from them would be to embrace something alien and essentially un-Christian. These 'non-negotiables' are set out in Module Three. Other doctrines are more open to differing interpretations and applications and we

must, for the sake of unity, be charitable and non-dogmatic in these areas.

**1 CORINTHIANS 1:10** reads; *‘I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought’.*

Now balance against this the teaching of **EPHESIANS 4:2-6** which reads; *‘Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.’*

### 1.2.3. DEPENDENCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

How do we understand and live out what Jesus taught and modelled? By relying on the Holy Spirit for illumination and empowering. But our dependence on the Holy Spirit goes further than this.

We also depend on him to guide our church, to empower and enable us, and to manifest himself at any time and in any way he chooses. The only limitation we place, not upon him but upon ourselves, is the parameter of scripture. We understand that God will not reveal himself to us in a way which is inconsistent with his written word [the Bible] and so we test all spiritual manifestations against the scriptures.

Most people love to put things in neatly labelled boxes and we would be surprised if you haven’t already been asked ‘Is The Village

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## PRINCIPLES OF LOCAL CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

### Module Three

## 3. UNDERLYING STRUCTURE

### 3.1. THE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

The Village Church has a formal constitution, which is lodged with both the Department of Internal Affairs and the Finance Department, and is registered with the Receiver of Revenue. As a result we have been granted tax-exempt status. We are also allowed to own land and apply for Marriage Officer licences for some of our Elders.

The following is a synopsis of the various sections of the Constitution:

Sections 1-4: **Preamble.** Object, definitions etc.

Section 5: **Members.** This states that the qualification for membership is repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and a desire to lead a consistent Christian life as a member of The Village Church. It states further that prospective members are to apply to the Elders who will approve or decline membership. It also states that only members over the age of 16 may vote.

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Christ, to teach them the principles of the Kingdom, and then to release them to go and do likewise for others. Go back and read section 2.1.2. if you are unclear on this issue.

### 2.3.3 ANOINTING

We seek the person of the Holy Spirit and believe that as we do, he will manifest in and through us by empowering and anointing us for ministry and life.

### 2.3.4 DOCTRINE

Our doctrine is based on the centrality and lordship of Jesus Christ, the authority and sufficiency of the Bible and dependency on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In other words we faithfully hold to and seek to propagate sound, biblical and life giving doctrine. The South African Theological Seminary brings a practical application to this aspect, where church members and others can enrol on distance learning courses in theology right up to doctoral level.

### 2.3.5 STRUCTURE

We extend the kingdom of God through the multiplication of interdependent autonomous local churches (section 2.1.5.) We believe in government of the church by an Eldership group (section 2.1.6.), the centrality of congregational meetings in the life of the local church, as well as the need for both fellowship groups and celebrations with other congregations (section 2.1.4).

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Church Charismatic? ... or Traditional? ... or Evangelical? ... or Pentecostal? ... or Fundamental? etc.

These questions cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'. The Holy Spirit has a reputation for dismantling boxes and rewriting labels. In any event, what does the questioner mean by 'charismatic' or 'evangelical'? We suppose a reasonable answer would be "We do not see ourselves as 'charismatic' or as 'traditional'. Rather, we place emphasis on the need to be obedient and yielded to God the Holy Spirit, under the lordship Of Jesus Christ, within the parameters of scripture. We desire to work in partnership with him to bring fullness to the lives of others. We seek to experience him in honesty and simplicity. We acknowledge our dependence on him in all things and submit gladly to his empowering and his ministry. We embrace all that the Bible tells us of his manifestation and methods".

### 1.2.4. FOUNDATIONS OR STUMBLING BLOCKS

We believe that the Lordship of Jesus, the Authority of scripture and Dependence on the Holy Spirit constitute ONE foundation for the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Together they form the essential differentiation between the Christian church and all religious institutions. If anything is taken away from, or added to any one of them, the foundation is faulty and the building which stands on it is not a true church of the living Son of God. These three things are therefore either foundation stones or stumbling blocks. In other words, we either build on them or fall over them. Let me give you some examples.

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- ◆ If Jesus is accepted as anything less than God [i.e. if his divinity is diminished - taken away from] then the institution which arises will be a pseudo-Christian cult [i.e. Jehovah Witness, Mormon etc.] or a philosophical society, but it will not be a Christian church.
- ◆ If anyone else is put on a par with Jesus as Lord of the church [i.e. if his lordship is duplicated or added to] then the institution built on this wrong foundation will not be a Christian church.
- ◆ If the full inspiration of the Bible is not embraced then the lordship of Jesus becomes an empty and unsubstantiated concept and the institution which results will, at best, be a liberal shadow church.
- ◆ If tradition is placed on a par with scripture the result will be dead pseudo-orthodoxy. If the writing of men and women are given equal status then the result will be charismania or cultism.
- ◆ If the Holy Spirit is denied his full place within the believer and the church then the result will be legalism and dead religiosity.
- ◆ If any other spirit, other than the Holy Spirit is given access and depended on then the result will be spiritualism and pseudo-Christian occultism.

We realise that these are challenging and somewhat dogmatic statements, but it is important that you understand the nature of the foundation on which The Village Church stands. If you cannot embrace these foundation principles, we will not stop loving you and we will not criticise you ... but we will not be able to build with you.

**Do you accept these three foundational principles as the basis for your church life together with other believers within The Village Church?**

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*Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off".*

## 2.3 RELATIONSHIP, OUTREACH, ANOINTING, DOCTRINE AND STRUCTURE

Many of the subjects covered in the preceding sections can be encapsulated under the **ROADS** concept. **ROADS** is an acronym for Relationships, Outreach, Anointing, Doctrine and Structure. This can perhaps be better understood as follows: "We are a family, reaching out to others in the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit, with sound Christ-centred doctrine and a functioning model of 'biblical church life'".

### 2.3.1 RELATIONSHIP



The church is a family and its most fundamental dynamic is relationship with God and each other. The vertical part of the cross symbolizes the relationship between God and us; the horizontal bar symbolizes our relationships with one another.

### 2.3.2 OUTREACH

Each - one - reach – one - teach – one - and - release - one. Each one of us reaches out to others to bring them into relationship with Jesus

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*disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.'*

### **2.2.5 MISSIONARY OUTREACH AND CHURCH PLANTING**

We are only a small part of the greater church and so we must obviously consider the wider body of Christ and its missionary calling. We recognise the need to send out and support those whom God calls to minister away from the local church. We also acknowledge the need to be part of the growth of the larger body by planting new churches outside our local areas as directed by the Holy Spirit. The SA Theological Seminary is a major outreach of the Village Church.

Please read **MATTHEW 10:5-8**; *'These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.'*

and **ACTS 13:1-3**; *'In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and*

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If you answered 'No' then we are afraid that membership of The Village Church is not for you. If you just cannot answer at all then please go and discuss this with one of the Elders before proceeding further with membership.

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D Teaching what Jesus said and did  
S Extending His kingdom through local churches

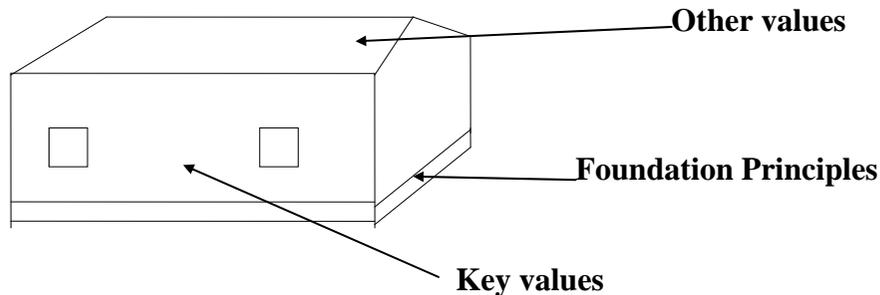
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# PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

## Module Two

### 2. ESSENTIAL BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

If the Foundation Principles are the foundation on which the local church is built then it's essential beliefs, attitudes, and values constitute the walls and roof.



#### 2.1. KEY VALUES

Now for a tough exercise. You are walking down the road when you meet a friend you haven't seen in years. The conversation turns to

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### 2.2.4 SERVICE AND SOCIAL ACTION

We see ourselves as the hands of Christ extended into our community. Part of our evangelistic testimony to the world is to meet the needs of broken and needy people in the name of Jesus. We understand that a vital part of the Church's mission is to make disciples and that social action must therefore be directed towards that end.

Please read **ACTS 3:1-16**; *'One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer — at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you*

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*their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us — see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich... as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."*

Discuss your finances with your spouse (If you have one) and then **prayerfully** decide what your monthly financial commitment to the church should be. If you want to use the Bank EFT system our banking details are as follows:

Account name = Lonehill Village Church; Bank - FNB Fourways Mall; Branch Code = 251655; Account number = 51325641897.

We believe that God finances the operations of His church primarily through believers: it is our policy as a church, therefore, to avoid long term external debt. (**PROVERBS 22:7**)

It is not our aim as a church body to acquire wealth and property. Our desire is to procure the minimum required to get the job done. People are more important to us than property.

church because your friend is also a Christian. He/she asks you where you worship and you say “The Village Church”. After asking who they “fall under”, who your pastor is, and “How many people attend?” your friend asks “So what is your church vision; what is its character, what things are important?” The question really is “What are The Village Church’s key values?” How would you answer?...Um ...err ...[think, think].

We’ll make it easier for you. We have twelve values in total and we regard seven of them as “key”. [i.e. Priority, more important, vital]

Here’s the list: Tick which you think are the seven key values.[Please don’t peek at the next few paragraphs.]

- |                             |                          |                         |                          |  |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Worship                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Prayer               | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Restoration & Revival                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Membership               | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Discipleship         | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Fellowship                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Church growth            | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Resources            | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Leadership                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Service & Social action | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. Teaching & Training | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. Missionary Outreach & Remote church Planting | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The correct answers are: 1,2,5,6,7,9 and 11. Don't feel too bad if you didn't get them all right - the reason you are reading this is to gain understanding of The Village Church's purpose, principles and values.

### 2.1.1. WORSHIP

We love to worship God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are his sons and daughters and so worship is the most natural response of our hearts.

In **JOHN 4:23** Jesus is recorded as saying “...*true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth* ..” The word ‘truth’ means literally “**that which is not hidden or concealed**”. Spiritual worship needs to be EXPRESSED. It is surely untrue to say that we can worship without any form of expression! It is like saying “My spirit is worshipping but my mind is blank and I left my body at home this morning”. We are a triunity of spirit, soul and body - whole beings, WHOLLY devoted to God. True worship must therefore encompass spirit, soul [mind, emotion, will] and body. We believe that for worship to be real and unfeigned it must be **an honest act of self-giving to God**.

**ROMANS 12:1** reads; ‘*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship*’.

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and **ACTS 2:17-21** ‘*In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*’ (**JOEL 2:28**)

### 2.2.3 RESOURCES AND FACILITIES

We freely acknowledge that giving lies at the very heart of Christian belief. We rejoice in giving of our time, our talents and our physical resources. We do not adhere to any legalistic or coercive methods of regulating giving, yet we take our obligations and Christian disciplines seriously and reverently.

Let's talk about money! No, It's not a dirty word: it is in fact about the only thing you have to show for the approximately two-thirds of your awake life that you spend at work. How you spend your money is therefore important because it reflects your priorities and value systems. God instructs us to give generously and the church needs your generous support in order to function properly.

**2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-9 and 15** makes the matter very clear: please read it carefully and prayerfully; ‘*And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on*

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This is both exciting and demanding. For those of us who are conservative by nature, or who come from traditional church backgrounds, revival can be unsettling and rather threatening. But please remember that we must not, we dare not, quench the Spirit of God. *“Do not put out the Spirits’ fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”* **1 THESS 5:19-22**

Please read the following scriptures:

**ACTS 3:19-21** *‘Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you — even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets’.*

**REVELATION 11:1-6** *‘I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshippers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want’.*

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Problems arise when we try to legislate just HOW believers should give expression to their worship of God i.e. stand, sit, clap, kneel, shout, etc. Problems also arise when we allow expressions of so-called worship which fail to conform to scriptural patterns and principles.

We encourage all scripturally valid means of offering praise, glory and honour to God and we respect the need for believers to express their feelings openly and sincerely under the anointing and control of the Holy Spirit.

We also understand that corporate worship is something undertaken by ALL believers gathered together. We believe in the participation of all worshippers and therefore encourage sharing and the initiation of spiritual songs and ministry by all, under the motivation of the Holy Spirit and within the order prescribed in scripture.

**1 CORINTHIANS 14:26 & 33** reads; *‘...when you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the **strengthening of the church**. For God is not a God of **disorder** but of peace’.*

Although the Sunday service is not the only forum for giving and receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is certainly a time when we are especially open to whatever God wants to do among us. We believe that the manifestations of the Holy Spirit described in 1 Corinthians 12 and in other places in scripture should be experienced in our day and we welcome all biblically valid ‘gifts’ of the Spirit. Tongues are a form of prayer and adoration (1 Corinthians 14:3) and when spoken out aloud in a church gathering need to be interpreted so that all present can agree and associate with the praise that the Holy Spirit is soliciting to the Father (1 Corinthians 14:13-17 & 27-

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28). We gladly receive prophetic words but we always ensure that they are carefully weighed (1 Corinthians 14:29) to ensure that they are biblically valid, point us to Jesus, and edify the church (1 Corinthians 14:3).

The keys here are PARTICIPATION and ORDER. We encourage YOU to participate fully in our worship services. Come prepared to share testimony, to pray out loud, to initiate a spiritual song, to prophecy etc, but please remember [a] be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and work with the flow of what he is doing at the time and [b] stay within the parameters of scripture and do and say only what is glorifying to Jesus and upbuilding to the church.

One last point under this heading - the role of children in the worship services.

Essentially we believe that FAMILIES ought to worship together and so we encourage parents to keep their children with them [and under their encouragement and control] during worship. We do however provide a crèche (which we call ‘the executive suite’) for the mums and babies, and a junior church for children. We also have an active youth group.

Well now, dear believer, how would you answer your ‘fictitious friend’ with regard to worship. What characterises our worship?

### 2.1.2 DISCIPLESHIP

Matthew records the final words of the Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples as “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given me. Therefore go and ...*” And what? **Make disciples.** Think of the other words he could have used: “Go and get commitments”. “Go

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*yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully’.*

And **1 PETER 4:7-11** has; *‘The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen’.*

### 2.2.2 RESTORATION AND REVIVAL

We believe that God is restoring the Church of our day to a minimum of the pattern of the church of Acts! This restoration comprises relationships, outreach, anointing, doctrine and structure. We also believe that we are entering a period of spiritual revival and that we, as a local church, need to be prepared and willing to move with the flow of God’s Spirit.

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listed in 1 Corinthians 12:14-31 and Romans 12:3-8. We expect members to seek areas of ministry under the guidance and oversight of the Elders.

We contend that all members are important and that all have roles to play. Each has a ministry which needs to be exercised in and through the local church. Generally speaking, members are expected to actively seek out areas of ministry although the Elders will sometimes approach individuals and present them with opportunities for ministry.

Members are expected to support the work of the church financially and in prayer, and to submit to scriptural leadership and discipline. Members are also required to make room for the beliefs and practices of others. Part of our commitment to the church and the Lord of the church is to refuse to become offended by how others worship or by their views on peripheral doctrines. You must maintain unity and give room to others to grow in grace and gifting. It is also important that you refrain from lobbying others when you disagree with the decisions of the Elders. If you have a problem then speak to an Elder but do not on any account jeopardise the unity of the body by rumouring, gossiping or lobbying.

**EPHESIANS 4:16** reads; *‘From him [Jesus] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work’.*

**ROMANS 12:1-8** has; *‘Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of*

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and change the world”. “Go and pronounce judgement”. “Go and sell the kingdom concept”, and so on.

If you looked up the word ‘disciple’ in a dictionary it would read, ‘a follower of another’ or something like that. We would define the word far more specifically as it applies to the Christian. For us, a disciple is one who is born again of the Holy Spirit into the family of God the Father through the redeeming and renewing work of God the Son. Further, a disciple is one who desires to be like Jesus in character, obedience and gifting; someone who is growing in the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And further, someone who seeks to reproduce spiritual life by introducing the lost to the Lord Jesus and then nurturing them until they are able to do likewise.

For us in The Village Church evangelism itself is not a key value because it is but a part of being and making disciples. We do not reject structural evangelistic methods and we do, from time to time, organise evangelistic events and programmes. However, each-one-reach-one-and-teach-one is at the heart of our church outreach. This means that YOU, not the specially gifted evangelists, are seen as the Lord’s prime means of reaching the lost.

Regarding personal discipleship please read the following scriptures:

**1 COR 1:2** reads; *‘To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours.’* What do you think it means to be ‘holy’?

**HEB 10:24** reads; *‘And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds’.* How can we help each other in the pursuit of holiness?

Regarding discipling the lost, please read the following scriptures:

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**MATT 28:18-20** *‘Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* This is the great commission referred to earlier.

**EPH 4: 11-13** reads; *‘It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ’.* So who actually does the ‘works of service’; the leaders or you?

**1 PET 3:15** reads; *‘But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.’* Sharing your faith with love and respect with all to whom the Holy Spirit leads you to.

Once again, what would you tell your enquiring friend about how we, at The Village Church, see discipleship?

For the last time then, what would you tell your friend concerning our teaching and training principles?

Well, those are our seven Key Values. Add them together and you have a picture of The Village Church character and ethos.

Please reread the material presented in Element 2.1. As a member you will be ‘buying into’ this vision and ethos and so it is very important that you understand it fully

## 2.2. OTHER IMPORTANT VALUES

We have five other values that affect our corporate church life.

### 2.2.1 MEMBERSHIP

Why do we need a formalised membership list? Two reasons: firstly, new Elders and employed Pastors, although proposed [nominated] by the existing Eldership team, are approved by the local congregation. This means that there needs to be some control on who may vote.. Secondly, membership constitutes a transition from just-looking-and-not-committed status to fully-committed-and-totally-involved status.

To avoid any hint of legalism we have selected only two criteria for membership - the person must be born again and must be committed to serving the local church. Areas of service in and through the local church are generally referred to as ‘ministries’ and some of these are

for putting into practice what we learn from scripture. [JAMES 1:22] We believe wholeheartedly in teaching and training, yet we agree with D L Moody who said: “The scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives”.

Concerning children, we see the responsibility for their spiritual nurture as resting with their parents. The church seeks to supplement and support parents in discharging this responsibility and so we support only those structures and methodologies which promote this principle. We therefore insist on involving the parents in the church based child instruction programmes.

**DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9** reads; *‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.’*

We also try to have an ongoing programme for the training of future and existing leaders of all departments of the church. This is normally undertaken in discipleship type groups lead by an Elder. We have developed a full blown Theological Seminary (The South African Theological Seminary) which is registered with the Department of Education, SAQA, and CHE as a Higher Education Institution. The SA Theological Seminary is nationally accredited right through to doctoral level, providing education and training at graduate and postgraduate level to Christians in South Africa and abroad.

### 2.1.3 PRAYER

We believe that **prayer is simply talking to God**. There is no magical power inherent in prayer; rather prayer indicates our dependence on God who, in response, answers with wisdom, knowledge, acts of power etc. Almighty God has called us into a sort of unequal partnership with himself [much like a strong father with very small and weak children]. We need him. We depend upon him. Therefore we need to ask him, and share with him, and confess to him, and adore him, and cry out to him. This is prayer.

**PHILIPPIANS 4:6** has *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God”*.

**COLOSSIANS 4:2-4** reads; *‘Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should’*.

In the Village Church we provide many opportunities for group prayer:

- ◆ Thirty minutes before each of the Sunday services
- ◆ Friday mornings at 06h30
- ◆ Monday nights at 19h30
- ◆ In home fellowship groups
- ◆ Prayer chains
- ◆ Special church prayer meetings

## 2.1.4 FELLOWSHIP

The Lord Jesus ministered to thousands at a time, but he had only between 70 and 120 disciples [LUKE 10:1, ACTS 1:15] and 12 intimate friends. We believe that the local church should be structured according to the same pattern.

Our home fellowship groups consist of about 12 people who meet every week to share their lives around the word of God and to seek to apply the word. In these groups we learn to know a small number of fellow believers intimately. When the group grows too large it plants another group.

**HEBREWS 10:25** reads; *‘Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching’.*

and **COLOSSIANS 3:16** has; *‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.’*

**It is very important for you to be part of a fellowship group of some description.** There are many options to choose from i.e. Evening groups, men’s fellowship, ladies fellowship, etc. Please contact the church office for details on 011 465-1873.

Once again, how would you answer your friend regarding fellowship?

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*in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.’*

**ACTS 20:28** reads; *‘Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood’.*

and **HEBREWS 13:17** has; *‘Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you’.*

We do not wish to function as a denomination of any sort.

We believe that women can and should serve in all and any leadership roles excepting that of Eldership. Our stance on this comes from a sincere desire to conform to the biblical pattern and conditions of headship within the extended church family.

## 2.1.7 TEACHING AND TRAINING

We understand that we must all become **doers of the Word** and not hearers only.

We provide expository and topical bible studies and programmes. We also provide opportunities in home fellowships and workshops

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Remember your fictitious friend? Well, what do you tell him about The Village Church's vision for church growth?

## 2.1.6 LEADERSHIP

We believe that the church is neither a Democracy nor an Autocracy, but a Theocracy. In other words, it is governed neither by the will of the majority, nor by the will of one leader, but by the will of God. But how does God govern his church? We believe that the best scriptural answer to that question is 'through a **plurality of Elders**'.

The full Eldership team for a group of three congregations would consist of between three and twelve men. This team has the authority to govern the whole church without reference to the full membership but they are of course accountable to both the Lord and the membership.

Heading the Eldership team is a Lead Elder who directs them and provides spiritual oversight. Decisions are reached by consensus (full agreement) although the church constitution makes provision for decisions to be taken by simple majority with the Lead Elder having an additional casting vote in the case of a split decision.

Once a planted congregation achieves full autonomy, the Eldership of that congregation will govern their affairs independently in terms of its own constitution.

**EPHESIANS 4:1-7** reads; *'As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another*

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## 2.1.5 CHURCH GROWTH

First, a comprehensive statement and then we will pick up on some of its key features.

'We project considerable numeric growth over the years but in order to maintain a high level of fellowship and participation we are committed to church planting. We see the optimum size of each congregation as 120 adults. The number of members and adherents of any congregation should not exceed 200 nor be less than 70. When a congregation becomes viable in terms of Eldership, ministries and finances we grant it interdependent autonomy. We realise that numeric growth through the creation of new congregations is both difficult and demanding yet we are committed to this biblical model of church growth'.

OK, let's pick up on some of the key points:

- ◆ **'A high level of fellowship and participation'**. We believe that each of us needs to be known and to know others. We need accountability and relationships. How many people can you know at anything other than a superficial level? Maybe 70, at most 120 if given enough time. We also believe that we grow as Christians by participating - by ministering and sharing and exercising our giftings. Fellowship and participation is only really possible in relatively small groups. Fellowship groups of 12 are wonderful yet they do not provide enough scope for expanding relationships and ministries: for this we need a congregation of between 70 and 120. Figure it out for yourself. If the church meeting consists of, say 1,000 people, how many people do you think get to participate actively in any way? Perhaps 1%. How do the others grow and minister?

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- ◆ **‘We see the optimum size of each congregation as 120 adults’.** So what happens when the number grows to, say 190? We plant another congregation of course!:
- ◆ **‘When a congregation becomes viable ...’** We believe that the local church Eldership constitutes the highest form of church government. We do not recognise ‘Bishops’ or ‘Apostles’ as having authority over a group of churches. On the other hand, we believe in growth and church planting. So how do we avoid becoming a hierarchical denomination? We grant interdependent autonomy. The criteria for this ‘cutting of the umbilical cord’ are (a) a sufficient number of Elders (there should be at least three); (b) a full range of ministries (there should be people to lead fellowship groups, to preach, to lead worship, etc.); and (c) financial sufficiency (the congregation must be able to financially support its own full time Elders [if any] and its overheads).
- ◆ **‘Interdependent autonomy’.** Certain facilities and ministries may be shared by the churches, i.e. administration, teaching programmes, office accommodation, combined away missions, etc. The congregations will therefore be autonomous yet interdependent. In reality, ongoing relationships provide the “glue” that holds the churches together.

Now, before we leave this topic, please read:

**ACTS 2:42-47;** *‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and*

*ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.’*

**ACTS 11:19-26;** *‘Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.’*

and **ACTS 14:21-23** has; *‘They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust’.*