



Joining Day Information 2014

Why membership?

The New Testament is clear that becoming a Christian and becoming a part of a local Church are inseparably linked, so that should be our experience too.

In Acts 2, the 3000 people who had repented of their sin and believed in Jesus were baptised and filled with the Holy Spirit. They were also 'added' to the Church.

Acts 2 41-47: *'Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about 3000 were added to their number that day. 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'*

In St Ives there are a number of local Churches, each one a community of believers in its own right. We need to be sure which one we belong to. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a Christian who is not part of a local Church family as their spiritual home.

History

The Bridge Church was planted by The Open Door Church in St Neots. In 1996 ten people started travelling over from St Ives area to The Open Door Church and joined various cells. The leader, Tony Thompson joined those ten into one cell and over the next few years that cell grew and multiplied to three cells, with the vision of planting a Church as soon as there was leadership for it.

In September 1999 Andy & Janet Moyle moved over from the New Frontiers International Church in Milton Keynes to lead the Church Plant. During Easter 2000, a launch date for Sunday services was set for the 4th February 2001. Over the next year the three cells became four.

An Outreach team in October 2000 began to publicise the impending launch of The Bridge Church and rapid growth began. We launched on Sunday 4th February 2001 with 78 people. Regular attendance over the next six months grew from the mid 30 in December 2000 to the 60s in July 2001.

Since this time, The Open Door Church in St. Neots has planted Newfrontiers churches in Luton, Biggleswade and Rushden. We, the Bridge Church have planted The Gateway Church in Kings Lynn, Norfolk. The Luton church has planted a church in Dunstable and the church in Biggleswade has planted into the city of Leicester.

Why does the Bridge church exist?

To Change lives, with God's love, grace and power

Our core values:

Biblical	Our lives are shaped and challenged by the Word of God.
Relational	More than just meetings, we share our lives together.
Welcoming	We're loving and accepting.
Developing	We're making the most of what God is giving us to strengthen the Church.
Grace-filled	Receiving God's Grace motivates us to give it away.
Reaching out	We see the whole of life as an opportunity to reach people for Christ.

Our vision:

1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 12

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different types of service but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.'

VISION

Vision comes from God: Glorious, exciting and OUT OF REACH!

A BIG CHURCH

A BIG Church: Where every individual is developed, cared for and used by God to extend His Kingdom. Extend the FAMILY of God.

CHURCHES WORKING TOGETHER WITHIN ST.IVES

Churches working together within St. Ives: With initiatives like the Foodbank and Church in the market place. God drawing us all over the town.

CHILDREN'S CHURCH

Children's Church at the same time as the service. To enable our kids to engage fully with God especially through a worship time with a band of its own. An explosion of children's work!

"ALL TOGETHER" EVENT-TYPE MEETINGS.

"All together" event-type meetings such as a 2014 carol service at the Burgess Hall.

WHY A BIG CHURCH?

- **A resource centre for our community:** Being effective in stemming and reversing the tide of family breakdown.
- **A resource centre for one another:** Small groups, Bible studies, prayer meetings etc.
- **A resource centre for other churches:** To strengthen and encourage other leaders; to share knowledge, (our Money Advice and Counselling Centre ;) to work together as part of the Relational Mission sphere.

Reverse Mission.

A window of opportunity for those who have experienced real poverty and suffering, particularly the friends that we have in Kenya, to speak into lives here, share the Gospel and extend God's Kingdom.

Please pray and continue to pray, so that these things will happen and the glory of God will be seen in a way that cannot be denied or explained away.

Evangelism

We seek to work together as teams, inviting people to join with us as we meet Jesus. We recognise that people need to make a journey towards Jesus and we walk with them on that journey through lasting and genuine friendships that demonstrate the love of God. Through Church planting initiatives we would expect to reach those beyond the local area.

Fellowship

We desire to create loving communities of people gathering together in small groups, called cells. Christian community is about an alternative day-to-day lifestyle, which reflects the very character of God, seen in Jesus. The life of our cells is embedded in these daily relationships and mutual sharing of life with all its joys and sorrows.

Discipleship

We take seriously Jesus' call to make disciples and therefore seek to provide a firm foundation of teaching and discipleship which enables Christians to grow in their relationship with Jesus. A variety of approaches will be used, including preaching, one to one training in the cells, conferences and other training programmes organised by ourselves, New Frontiers and others.

Ministry

We believe that God has purposed every Christian to minister according to the gifting from God, be it in a cell, through the corporate gathering or through the wider Church. The cells require and give opportunity for every member to fulfil their potential in God through ministry. It is important to allow ministry to flow between Churches, so we therefore look to send and receive ministry. We desire to take seriously the Biblical mandate to the poor.

Worship

Our highest calling is to glorify God and we seek to devote our whole lives to this end. We also seek to glorify God in intimate worship and through acknowledging our dependence on Him in prayer and seeking to hear from Him in worship. This is the basis of our life together whenever we meet as cells or corporately.

Doctrine

God

We believe in the 'Trinity' as one of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith and a starting point for all that we are and do as a local Church. The word trinity does not appear in the bible, but the idea is taught in many places. The word means 'three-in-one' and is used to summarise the Scriptural teaching that God is three persons yet one God.

God is essentially in community with himself in three persons, yet still one God – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The first Trinitarian reference is Gen 1:26 '*let us make man in our image, in our likeness*' – and uses the plural form of verb and nouns which also occurs in Gen 3:22, Gen 11:7 and Isaiah 6:8. Isaiah 43 and 45 teach of the essential oneness of God.

The New Testament gives a more complete revelation of the trinity, in Matt3:16-17 we see all three persons of the trinity involved in the baptism of Jesus. The Father clearly reveals Jesus as His Son and at the same time we have the Holy Spirit coming down on Jesus in bodily form.

Are Jesus and the Holy Spirit divine? Or are they less than God? There is much Biblical evidence to show that they are God. Jesus identified himself as God in John 8:58 using the OT word for God 'I am' – '*Before Abraham was, I am*' The Holy Spirit is referred to again and again as a person and not a mysterious force but the Spirit of God – John 14:16,17,26.

The key Trinitarian verse is Matt 28:19 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' – three persons, but only one name!

The Gospel

The Judgement of God

Why do we need the Gospel? If God is a God of love, doesn't everyone go to heaven? Why do we need to be saved? What are we being saved from?

God has made us and has authority to make laws for us – laws which are right and good for us, laws that are not un-reasonable or thoughtless, but loving and wise. God is just and will reward us or punish us according to whether we keep His laws or not.

God knows our actions and our thoughts. We can fool others, but not God. 1 Sam 16:7 *'Man looks at the outside appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'*

There is a judgement to come

Acts 17:31 'For he has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed' – that man is Jesus.

Romans 2:16 'God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ'

Romans 3:23 'For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God'

Romans 6:23 'The wages of sin is death.'

The reality is that we need saving from the judgement that is to come, when our actions and our inner thoughts will be laid bare and judged.

The elders are responsible for the whole Church and its teaching, spiritual oversight, pastoral care and discipline. They do their work in consultation with the church, making decisions after taking into consideration the views of the Body.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The good news is contained in John 3:16, 17 'For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.'

God achieved our salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ who died as our substitute – taking our guilt and making himself responsible for our sin. 1 Peter 3:18 *'For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God'* God punished His own dear Son for the sins we had committed, so that sin could be properly dealt with. God can't just let sinners off any more than a human judge can.

Our Response

In Acts 2 the apostle Peter preached about the death and resurrection to a huge crowd. Those who heard his preaching were deeply convicted of their sin, unbelief and rejection of Christ and called out *'What shall we do?'* Peter's reply was that they must *'repent and be baptised.'*

Repentance

Repentance is not just feeling sorry – that can just be regret that actions have caused certain consequences for ourselves (self-pity) and it is not just regret for the consequences that have been caused for others, although that is less self-centred. Real repentance begins with recognition of the consequences for God that we have sinned against heaven as well as the consequences for us and others. When we sin we defy God's authority, break His laws, pollute His creation, spoil His pleasure, provoke His anger and deserve His judgement.

Real repentance involves 3 dimensions – thought, word and deed (mental, verbal and practical) – taking us from the inward to the outward.

Repentance literally means to change your mind. To start to think of things from God's point of view, agree with His analysis and accept His verdict. It means to say 'yes' and give assent to His 'no'.

In a general sense it is to move from the humanist view that we are basically good and have done a few bad things, to God's view that we are bad and have done a few good things! But it moves from that to the particular where we start to think differently about specific sins. Thinking differently about former actions needs to be followed by speaking differently about them. The mouth is the channel between the inside and outside of a person (Matt 12:37, Mark 7:18-23 and James 3:9-12.) That means confessing our sins specifically – not a 'I must have sinned somewhere, at some time, after all hasn't everyone?' more a 'I have done this...this....And this'

Faith

The second part of our response is putting our faith in Jesus Christ. In Acts 16:31 Peter told the jailer to 'believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.' Putting our faith in Jesus is not just a mental assent, it's a belief that affects our whole value system, causing us to turn away from our old sinful lifestyle and live according to the teachings of Jesus.

Romans 10:9, 10 teaches that 'if you confess with your mouth that 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.' For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.'

Closely linked to repentance and faith in the New Testament are baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Baptism in Water

Baptism in water is a command of Jesus for all who follow Him (Matt 28:16-20.) It is only for those who have repented and believed (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), and in the New Testament was by full immersion. The original Greek word for baptism means 'to dip; plunge; to immerse or to submerge'. New Testament believers were, therefore, immersed in water, (John 3:23). This is confirmed by the description of Jesus' baptism (mark 1:10). Also, with Philip and the Eunuch (Acts 8:38-89).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

From the very beginning of the Christian life, the Holy Spirit has been at work. We are 'born again' by the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus promised His disciples that they would receive a dynamic power to witness for Him when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:4-8). The promise of this gift is also for us today and is borne out by Peter in Acts 2:38-39.

For Your Notes: