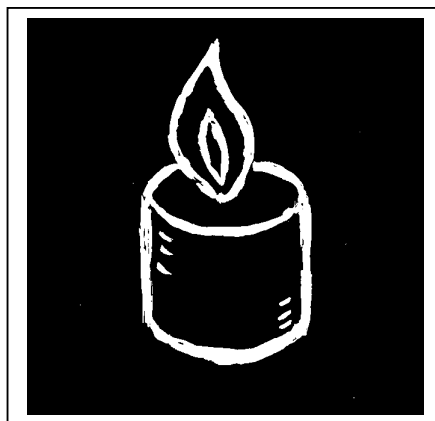


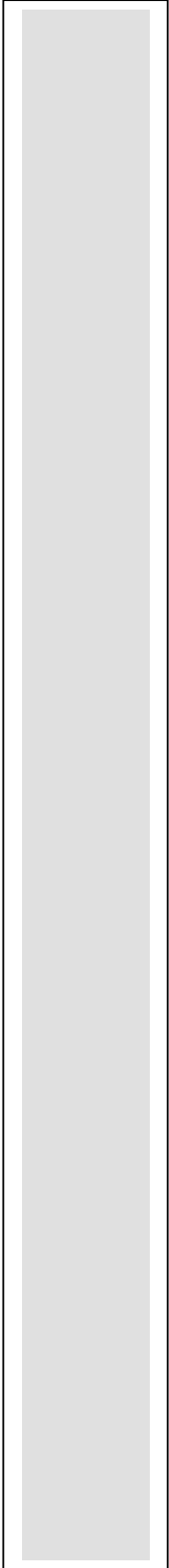
Session Four

This local expression of the family

Jesus said "You (plural) are the light of the world...a city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. .Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl..."



Page for photos of key people and contact details



Why not join us as we try to follow the way of Jesus together?

Any group that is serious about making a difference in the world needs to make decisions together and therefore needs to know who is committed to making things happen. That's why we have a form of membership. But there are some other good reasons for joining.....

1. Jesus Himself was committed to the church...so committed that he gave up everything for us ...*Ephesians 5; 25*
2. Jesus said "Follow me". Our culture is not really into being committed to anything...but following Jesus will sometimes mean that we need to be counter-cultural...willing to demonstrate in our day to day lives where our priorities are.
3. The apostle Paul tells us to be subject to one another...accountable, respectful, learning from one another in reverence for Christ. (*Ephesians 5;21*) We need to learn from you and you need to learn from us. This mutual accountability is so important for all of us in our spiritual growth.

What does it mean to be a member?

There are no 'rules of membership', but the following 6 principles have been drawn from the Bible, reflect the purposes of the church, and are a guide to the privileges and responsibilities of any church member;

1. Aiming to live a life worthy of a follower of Christ.

"...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."
Galatians 5; 16-25.

You may also find *Romans 12; 1,2*.helpful here.

2. Regular Attendance – setting aside every Sunday, whenever possible, to worship God with God's people, for our encouragement and theirs. Your attendance at church and your words of encouragement to someone may greatly help someone else in their efforts to follow Jesus..

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another" Hebrews 10; 25.

Taking Communion regularly.

Jesus asked us to remember Him whenever we take bread and wine together.

3. Giving to God's work - setting aside a realistic proportion of our income for God's work. Taking our share of responsibility for the finances of the Church.

"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income." 1 Corinthians 16:1.

"A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord." Leviticus 27:30.

4. Serving others - taking some part in the work of the Church in the UK or abroad according to our gifts and opportunities. To see our daily work as part of our service of God.

*"Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities...and there are different kinds of service to God...All of you together form the body of Christ and **each of you** is a separate and **necessary** part of it."* 1 Corinthians 12; 4-5, 27,

*"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as **working for the Lord.**"* Colossians 3:23.

5. Testifying to God's love - to share our faith and experience of God. To introduce and welcome others into the Church.

*"And you will be my **witnesses**...to the ends of the earth."* Acts 1:8

"Go and make disciples of all nations..." Matthew 28:19

"Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." 1 Peter 3; 15-16.

6. Learning to love and respect one another – to build and maintain the unity of the church.

This means really working hard at understanding one another, learning to deal with conflict constructively and forgiving one another.

Ephesians 4:32

Our Structures

The Church Meeting, which takes place every two months, is the place where all major decisions are made by the Church Members. It is here that the members seek to discern together God's will for the church. This includes the appointment of Deacons.

The Diaconate is the leadership team of the church. The Deacons are recognised by the church meeting as those whom God is calling to this role of service within the church family.

The Minister is also appointed by the Church Meeting, as the person whom God is calling to the work of teaching, preaching and pastoral leadership of the Church. The Minister is also a Member of the church, and is recognised as 'first among equals'.

Our Affiliations

All Baptist Churches are *independent*, yet *interdependent*. We make our own decisions, yet we recognise the value of supporting, and being supported by, other like-minded Christians and churches. We therefore have the following affiliations:

Cluster Churches: At this Baptist Church we are part of a local 'Cluster' of churches with We aim to support, encourage and resource one another in God's work in the locality.

Local churches together group; Wherever possible, we work together with other local churches of all denominations in order to extend God's work in this area.

Central Baptist Association: The CBA comprises Baptist Churches from all over Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. We have 4 Regional Ministers, a Youth Specialist and a BMS Area Coordinator, whose task is to resource and support the churches in their mission and their leaders. The RM's are paid for through **Home Mission**, which is a fund to which we contribute money each month...around £3.00 per member per month. Home Mission also enables new churches to be started in our newbuild housing areas, new and innovative forms of mission to be tried like street pastors and lunch clubs, university and industrial chaplaincies like our Luton airport chaplain, and 23 small but growing churches like Ringstead in Northamptonshire to call their own ministers for the first time.

www.centralba.org.uk

Baptist Union of Great Britain: BUGB is a national union of around 2000 churches to which we are affiliated. It is foremost a mission agency, supporting and initiating mission

strategies nationally. It also provides advice to churches and resources for ministers. It links us with the Churches together in England and the World Council of Churches

www.baptist.org.uk

Based at Didcot, it shares offices with ...

BMS World Mission, our denomination's agency for overseas mission. This works in over 35 countries, across four continents. Your local representative is John Smith on 01487 741003

There are six areas of mission that we participate in by giving, going, and praying: These are church planting, development, disaster relief, education, health, and advocacy. We believe mission in the UK and mission in the world are equally important so we also contribute around £3.00 per member per month to this cause.

www.bmsworldmission.org

Baptist World Alliance: BUGB is in turn affiliated to the **BWA** which represents more than 37 million Baptists world wide. It was an amazing experience to be part of the 12,000 representatives from many countries gathered at the five-yearly conference which was held in Birmingham in 2005.

And finally....just in case you were wondering.....

What's the difference between a Baptist church and other churches?

There is no one distinctive Baptist statement of belief, since we share with the rest of God's worldwide family the most important Christian beliefs. But there is a declaration of Principle that unites us!

The basis of our Union is;

- 1. That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each church has liberty, under the guidance of the holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws.*
- 2. That Christian baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, of those who have professed repentance toward god and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who "died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day."*
- 3. That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.*

Here are some of the key beliefs that, put together, make Baptists distinctive from other Christian churches:

Baptism for believers

Baptists practise baptism by immersion for those who come to a personal faith in Christ.

The local church

Baptists understand the fundamental expression of church to be a local congregation of believers. We have no line-management or authority structure, except where people (other than the local ministers who are office-holders) are employees.

The priesthood of all believers

In a Baptist church, every member is a minister! Every member has a role to play, whether in teaching, faith-sharing, social action, administration, hospitality...

We believe the final authority rests not with the Minister or Deacons but with the Members gathered together in the Church Meeting.

Religious freedom

Religious freedom for all has always been a keystone of the Baptist way. Within Baptist churches, tolerance for differences of outlook is encouraged.

In essentials Unity, in non-essentials Liberty, in all things Love.

So please don't feel pressurised in any way....!!!!

Thank-you for attending this course. We hope you've found it useful.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE INFORMATION AND EVALUATION SHEET!