



SEND EVANGELICAL CHURCH **MEMBERSHIP COURSE** **THE CHURCH**

Readings: Acts 2v36-47, Ephesians 2v11-22, 5v22-33

God's design is to place us in a local church.

1 WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

A) The people of God, committed together

i) The people of God: loved by God

- 'Christ loved the church' (Eph 5v25)
- 'I will be their God, they will be my people' (Gen 17v7,8, Ex 6v7, Rev 21v2,3)

ii) People who belong to God: believers

- 'Christ gave himself up for her' (Eph 5v25-27)
- 'Repent and be baptised' (Acts 2v38,39)

iii) Believers committed together: members

- 'added to their number' (Acts 2v41,47)
- 'save yourselves (v40), those being saved (v47)'
- there is individual conversion and corporate commitment

If Christ loved the church, we should love the church and want to be part of the church.

B) Universal Church & Local Church

i) Universal Church: to which all true believers belong is scattered throughout the world. (Eph 1v22, 3v10, 5v23-27)

ii) Local Church: is a visible expression of the universal church.

- Singular congregations
E.g. Corinth (1Cor 1v2, 2Cor 1v1), of the Thessalonians (1Thess 1v1)

- Plural congregations
eg Churches in Galatia (Gal 1v2, 1Cor 16v1), in Asia (1Cor 16v19), in Macedonia (2Cor 8v1)
- Church in a house
eg Nympha (Col 4v15), Philemon (Philem v2), Lydia (Acts 16v15,40), Gaius (Rom 16v23), Aquila and Priscilla (1Cor 16v19, Rom 16v5)

Being a member of a local church is the visible expression that we belong to the universal church.

C) Descriptions of the Church

- i) Body of Christ (Eph 1v22,23, Col 1v18, 1Cor 12v12-27)
- ii) Household of God (Eph 2v19, 1Tim 3v15)
- iii) Temple of God (1Cor 3v16-17, Eph 2v20-22)
- iv) God's Building (Matt 16v18, 1Pet 2v5, Eph 2v20-22)
- v) God's Flock (Acts 20v28, 1Pet 5v2)
- vi) God's Field (1Cor 3v9)
- vii) Bride of Christ (Eph 5v22-33, Rev 19v7-9, 21v2,9)
- viii) The Old Testament descriptions of Israel are applied to the church (1Pet 2v9,10)

These describe belonging to God and belonging to each other.

There is a difference between *attending* and *belonging* to a church, as there is a difference to being a visitor in a household and being a member of the family. Visitors, however welcome, remain visitors, family members share in all aspects of the family. There is a relationship between members of the family, which a visitor cannot fully share.

Membership in a church is like becoming a member of God's family, which meets at that local church.

2 WHAT SHOULD A LOCAL CHURCH DO?

A) Recognition of a Local Church (see We Believe page 61)

For a church to exist the members of the church should recognise certain commitments:

- i) to faith in Christ and godly living (Acts 2v38, Gal 3v26,27, 1Pet 2v5-7,9-12)
- ii) to sound Biblical doctrine (Acts 2v42, 1Tim 4v6,7,13,16)
- iii) to one another in prayer, worship, mutual service and evangelism (2Cor 8v5, 1Thess 1v2,3,7-9, Acts 2v42-47)
- iv) to their leaders who teach, administer the sacraments and conduct pastoral care and discipline (1Tim 3v1-7,15, 5v17, Titus 1v5-9)

B) Activities of a Church

The Scriptures show that a church should be doing a number of things.

- i) Preaching and Teaching (1Tim 5v17)
- ii) Biblical Worship (John 4v23,24, 1Pet 2v10)
- iii) Prayer (Acts 4v23-31)
- iv) Scripture Reading (1Tim 4v13)
- v) Giving (2Cor 9v12,13)
- vi) Baptism (Matt 28v19)
- vii) Communion (1Cor 11v23-29)
- viii) Discipline (1Cor 5v1-5, 12)

ix) Good Works (Gal 6v10, Luke 10v25-37)

x) Witness (1Pet 2v11,12, 1Thess 1v8)

The church is to declare God's praises to the watching world. The message is to ring out from us to the world.

In Eph 3v1-13, Paul records that God has made the gospel known to him (v2). Paul made this gospel known to all (v8,9) and God, through the church, makes this gospel known to the spirit world (v10).

Witness and evangelism are key for a church. This is how we glorify God.

C) Characteristics of a Church

A church should show friendliness (Heb 13v1,2), be involved in Evangelism (Acts 1v8) and Good Works (Gal 6v9,10, Heb 13v16). There should be Good Order (1Cor 14v33,40) and Joy in Christ (Heb 13v15).

In joining a church we look for these characteristics and seek ways of increasing them in the local church.

3 WHAT ABOUT SEND EVANGELICAL CHURCH?

A) Aim

- i) SEC exists to bring glory to God.
- ii) We are a group of local Christians who have found the Christian faith relevant for today. We seek to strengthen our faith, introduce people to Christ and serve the local community.
- iii) The church is to help people 'to know Christ and make him known'. We focus on 'mission and maturity'.
- iv) Our focus is on evangelism in Send area - "Sharing Jesus with the people of Send". We would encourage members to live in the area. Our corporate evangelism is focussed on this area.

B) Beliefs

We are an FIEC Church.

This means the church's doctrinal position and conduct of church life has a stress on God's grace in salvation and living.

E.g. Doctrine of Salvation

What we believe about salvation can be summarised by 5 statements.

- i) We are completely unable to save ourselves, we need God's grace. (Eph 2v1-5, Rom 8v7,8, 3v23, called Total Depravity / Total Spiritual Inability)
- ii) The initiative in salvation is always with God, who freely, in grace, chooses us and enables us to respond to him. (Rom 8v28-30, Eph 1v4,5, called Unconditional Election / Unconditional Choice)
- iii) Christ died on the cross to pay for the sins of his people. This was an act of free grace. (2Cor 5v18-21, 1Pet 1v18,19, Rom 4v24,25, called Limited Atonement / Particular Redemption)
- iv) God calls us in the gospel and gives us the gift of faith to repent of our sins

and trust in Jesus Christ.

(Rom 8v9-17, Eph 2v4,5, 1Cor 2v12-14, called Irrevocable Call / Irresistible Grace)

- v) God by his grace, keeps those who are his, enabling us to persevere in the Christian life.
(Rom 8v28-30,38,39, 1Pet 1v3-5, called Perseverance of the Saints)

This is sometimes called 'the doctrines of grace', 'being reformed', the '5 points of Calvinism'. Sometimes the acrostic TULIP is used.

We do not believe that we are able to save ourselves. We do not choose God and the gospel of our own free will. We do not keep ourselves for heaven. For these things we need God's grace.

E.g. Christian Living

We begin the Christian life by God's grace. We need grace to continue to grow. We need God's gracious Spirit to equip us for service, to grow in godly character, to keep us persevering in the Christian life. We need to exhibit this grace in our relationships together and with others.

(Eph 2v8-10, 2Tim 2v1, 2Pet 3v18, Jude v21, Col 1v9-14,4v6)

As an FIEC Church we practise believer's baptism and have an open communion table for those whom we believe to know the Lord.

C) History

The Church was built in 1875 to fulfil an outreach vision of a group of Christians from Guildford. It was called "Cartridge congregational Church." The Church supported missionaries and was an effective witness for many years. However by the early 1970s the Church had died out and the building lay derelict for many years. In 1973, among bidders for the building were the local spiritualist group. This prompted a desire from Christians at East Horsley Evangelical Church, to replant and redevelop the Church. This was while Paul Bassett was minister at East Horsley and while the Olson family came to settle in Send and worship at East Horsley while praying that the good news could be shared in the village. Paul Bassett was running Friday evening bible studies for people in the village and many came to faith at that time. The money was raised to purchase the building and Send Evangelical Church was opened May 30th 1974. The first minister of Send Evangelical Church was Eric Olson, previously a missionary to Scandinavia, the second Richard Brookes and the third Owen Jones. Chris Webb is the present minister.

D) Structure of the Church

The authority in the church rests with Christ, our Lord and Head. He has given us his Word and his Spirit, so we might discern the mind of Christ together.

- i) Lord and Head: Christ is the head of the church. (Col 1v18,2v19, Eph 4v15,1v22) He rules and cares for his church by his Word and his Spirit. (2Tim 1v13,14, Rev 1v12-20) He has chosen to exercise this care through men to whom he has delegated the task. (Matt 16v19, 24v45, 1Thess 5v12, John 16v12,13, 2Tim 2v2)
- ii) Members: we are all members together under Christ in the church with differing gifts and service. (1Cor 12v12-31)
- iii) Elders: are to teach (1Tim 3v2), pastor (1Pet 5v2, Acts 20v28), manage (1Tim 3v5) and lead (1Thess 5v12, Heb 13v7,17) the church. There is plurality of elders (more than one Phil 1v1, Acts 14v23, Titus 1v5) and a parity of elders (all elders are equal Acts 20v28, 1Pet 5v1,2). There is a difference in gifting. The elders are accountable to God for his church. (Heb 13v17)
- iv) Deacons are the general helpers of the elders to whom the elders can delegate particular tasks. (Acts 6v1-7, 1Tim 3v10,13)
- v) The Church council is composed of Elders and Deacons who The Elder(s) and Deacons meeting together shall be called 'The Church Council', the Chairman of which shall be elected by the members of the Church Council but will normally be the Pastor.
- vi) The Church Council is the decision making body of the Church excluding those matters decided by votes of the membership as a whole as specified in the recently published Church rules.

E) Ministries & Activities – see Church members Meeting Minutes.

The church's activities and work is run in teams. There are teams for Sunday school, youth ministries, Evangelism, Cleaning, Redevelopment, practical work and Finance.

F) Missionary Involvement

The missionary interests of the church are focussed in 3 main areas. This enables us to follow on a regular basis specific missionaries and ministries.

- i) New Tribes Mission - principally their work in Western Thailand with the Pwo Karen where our missionaries Robin and Rosemary Griffiths live and work.
- ii) Mike and Jo Griffiths who work in a hospital for the disabled in Myanmar/ Burma supported by OMF
- iii) Edie Olson who works with Child Evangelism Fellowship in New Jersey

As a Church we take an interest in mission work both local and international. We support Friends International who work at Guildford University, by helping organise events to supplement their programme.

G) Fellowship with Others

- i) We seek to cooperate with those who hold to the truth of the gospel. We believe you need both trust and truth in working together. (Acts 15v1-4,22-31,36, 16v4,5, Rom 15v26, Gal 1v6-9, Acts 20v29,30)
- ii) Locally - We are part of the South East Gospel Fellowship which is a group of Churches of differing denominations here in the South East. We expect to take part in an annual mission in 2010. Traditionally SEC has had combined meetings with East Horsley, Horsell Evangelical church and Knaphill Grace Baptist Church.
- iii) Nationally - FIEC is all about equipping churches that are shaped by the Bible and driven by the gospel to become a powerful movement of God's people that, in his hands, can help to change the nation.

The thrust of our ministry lies in:

- promoting true gospel unity wherever we find it
- reaching communities with the good news about Jesus
- discipling believers so that they become effective followers of Jesus
- growing leaders who will be able to exert a powerful gospel influence in this generation and the next

FIEC is a member of Affinity: a national organisation for 'church-centred partnership for Bible-centred Christianity'.

SUMMARY

Christ loves the church and died for her. The church is central to God's plan for his glory in the world. We should belong and serve in a local church.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 Why is the church important to Christ?
- 2 Why should a person be in membership in a local church?
- 3 What should a church be doing?

BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

1Peter 2v4-12

- 1 What is the relationship between Christ and his people? (v4-7)
- 2 What descriptions are given of the church? (v9-12)
- 3 What should a church be doing? (v9-12)

RESOURCES

SEC CMM meeting minutes.

SEC Members address lists.

Website: <http://www.sendec.org/>