

STRUCTURE

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE BELIEVE

CHRIST
IS HEAD

HUMAN
OVERSIGHT

MINISTRY
AND CARE



LIFE
COMMUNITY
MINISTRIES

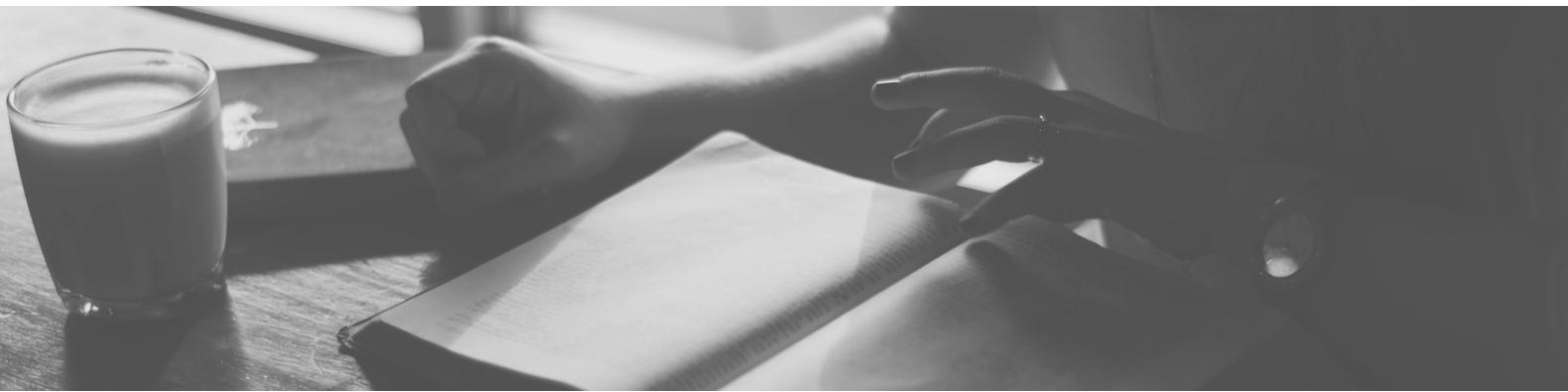
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The Church exists to Glorify and serve Christ, it is His workmanship and His bride. Colossians 1:17-18 And He is the head of the body, the church & Ephesians 5:25-28 as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her... Christ is the head of the church and any human leader in His church must be submitted to His authority before and above every other authority.

We submit to Christ as the head of the church by being:

BIBLE BASED

The nature and Character of God are revealed to us throughout His word and specifically in the life of Jesus. Jesus said in John 14:9-10 "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father ... The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does His works..." The teachings of Jesus and the Bible in general must be held as a final authority in the structuring and running of the local church. See also 2 Tim 3:16 "All Scripture is breathed out by God..." We believe that the Bible is God's primary way of leading us in how we are to live as believers in Christ.

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SPIRIT LED

Jesus told us in John 14:26 "The Holy Spirit is given to the church to be her Helper." In this same passage Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things and remind them of Jesus' teaching. We believe that the Holy Spirit leads us into truth bringing revelation of scripture to us and enables us to remember and apply the word of God in our lives. He renews our minds with the word of God and empowers us to keep Christ as the head of His church. He is the one that gives Spiritual gifts and Ministry gifting to the church. As a local church we are submitted to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We believe that He guides us in to truth and reveals to us the will of the Father.

GOD SERVING

The church is to serve God's vision and calling. The church must never become about the ministry of one man or about pleasing and serving man but rather we exist for the honour and glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Colossians 3:16-17 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, ... And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus." Our ministry as a local church must be in the light of serving God first and foremost. It is His church, for His Glory.

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MINISTRY
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The Bible lays out a very clear pattern for local church leadership. While we believe God can bless His church however it is structured we desire to have as Biblical a structure as possible and so we encourage our churches to adopt an Eldership structure.

ELDERS

In Acts 14:23 we find the title Elder, which literally means an older one. One who is recognised as senior in understanding, experience and character. In 1 Tim 3:2 we find the title Overseer. Sometimes translated Superintendent or Bishop. These terms should be understood as different names for the same office. A good way for us to understand the role of an Elder is to think of him as a father of the local church family. As churches were established in the book of Acts we see that Elders were appointed to oversee each congregation. See Acts 14:23. Elders are to be people that are known for their good character, have proven their ability to lead well and are able to teach the word of God to his people.

STRUCTURE

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE BELIEVE

CHRIST
IS HEAD

**HUMAN
OVERSIGHT**

MINISTRY
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See 1 Timothy 3:2. We need to be careful not to misunderstand the term Elder. It is not referring to age but spiritual maturity. For example Timothy. In 1 Timothy 5:17 we read "Let the Elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour..." This idea of 'ruling' is not dictatorial but as a father who settles disputes and makes decisions on behalf of the family. Rule implies the idea of a guardian or protector rather than a king or dictator. There are no women Elders in the new testament church. There is debate in churches whether this means we should not have women elders today or whether this was due to the culture of the day. We leave this decision to be decided by the local Elders of each church congregation.

DEACONS

Scripture is not very clear on the exact role of the Deacons (Servants). It is very likely that those appointed to wait on tables in Acts 6, were the forerunners of who would later be called Deacons. The title Servant, should not mislead us. The New Testament Deacon was given position of trust and responsibility. The qualification for Deacons differ from Elders in two ways. There is no clause that they mustn't be new converts as they are as stated in 1 Timothy 3:10 "tested first" and the requirement to be able to teach is removed from Deacons. See 1 Timothy 3:8-13 for the full requirements of Deacons.

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CHRIST
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HUMAN
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MINISTRY FUNCTIONS

Alongside the position of Elders and Deacons the Bible also lays out several ministry functions given to equip the church for ministry. We find these functions listed in Ephesians 4:11-13 "And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The functions are not positions in the church but ministry gifting for the building up of the body. An Elder or Deacon may also perform a function of one of the ministries outlined in Ephesians 4. People with these gifting are often obvious candidates for Eldership but the function and the position should not be confused.

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THE BOARD

We encourage, where possible, our churches to be registered and recognised by the legal authorities of their country. Where Life Community Churches are registered as an NGO, they are subject to local laws. Board Members for the church should be selected from among the congregation for their ability to oversee the practical and financial affairs of the church. Candidates should be chosen on the basis of their experience in management and must demonstrate godly conduct. The board work closely with the Elders and ensure that decisions made by the Elders are in the best interest of the church. Where possible it is good practice to have one or two board members that are also Elders or Deacons.

SMALL GROUP LEADERS

We encourage all members of our churches to be part of a Small Group. These groups meet at different times in the week in different homes. Each Small Group is led by one or two members of the church that look out for the spiritual and practical needs of the members of their group. We consider Small Groups a key avenue for pastoral care in the life of the local church. Small groups should be led by those who qualify to be Deacons.