



LIVING HOPE
BIBLE CHURCH
PIETERMARITZBURG

MEMBERSHIP CLASS

TEACHER NOTES

“Give yourself to the Church. You that are members of the Church have not found it perfect and I hope that you feel almost glad that you have not. If I had never joined a Church till I had found one that was perfect, I would never have joined one at all! And the moment I did join it, if I had found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect Church after I had become a member of it. Still, imperfect as it is, it is the dearest place on earth to us. All who have first given themselves to the Lord, should, as speedily as possible, also give themselves to the Lord’s people. How else is there to be a Church on the earth? If it is right to refrain from membership in the Church, it is right for everyone, and then the testimony for God would be lost to the world! As I have already said, the Church is faulty, but that is no excuse for your not joining it, if you are the Lord’s.

Nor need your own faults keep you back, for the Church is not an institution for perfect people, but a sanctuary for sinners saved by Grace, who, though they are saved, are still sinners and need all the help they can derive from the sympathy and guidance of their fellow Believers. The Church is the nursery for God’s weak children where they are nourished and grow strong. It is the fold for Christ’s sheep—the home for Christ’s family.”

—Charles Spurgeon

“The Best Donation.” (No 2234) an exposition of 2 Corinthians 8:5 delivered on April 5, 1891 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, England.

OUR LEADERS AND HISTORY

Go to our church website (livinghopepmb.co.za) and read through the About Us sections for the most up-to-date information on the leadership and history of our Church.

In particular visit these two pages.

1. Our current church leaders and deacons livinghopepmb.co.za/leaders
2. Our history and milestones livinghopepmb.co.za/history

OUR CONVICTIONS

This can also be found online at livinghopepmb.co.za/beliefs

THEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

LHBC stands on the historical shoulders of:

- Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy of 1978 A.D.
- Baptist Confession of 1689 A.D. (believer's baptism and autonomy of church)
- Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646 A.D. (clear doctrine is important)
- Protestant Reformation of 1500's A.D. (high view of God and Scripture)
- Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed of the first few centuries A.D. (Gospel simplicity and Trinity respectively)
- NT Churches' teaching and practises (Apostles of our Lord Jesus)

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

There are five distinctive qualities about LHBC that explain why LHBC exists. Each of these were reasons for the start of LHBC in 2013. Although we do share some like-mindedness with some of the churches and many of the other believers in Pietermaritzburg, we believe these five distinctive elements accurately define some of the differences between LHBC and the other churches.

We hold these dear, because they remind us of the things that often go missing as churches grow and change. We pray that these will always be a part of the make-up of LHBC.

1. Expository Preaching

Preaching that “explains” the meaning “from” the text, instead of preaching that merely “uses” a text to support a belief.

2. Biblical “one another” fellowship

All the commands in the NT that address the behaviour between “one another” as Christians. In other words, there cannot really be those who profess faith in Christ, commit to membership at LHBC, but do not actively and visibly fulfil their fellowship duties to the rest of the members. (See “Our Expectations of Members” later for more detail.)

3. **Biblical approach to the Great Commission**

We believe that the Biblical approach to the Great Commission is through personal evangelism and church planting. As such we emphasize the personal responsibility of every Christian to share the Gospel news with those he/she interacts with every week. Missions, on the other hand, is a corporate responsibility, and as illustrated in the book of Acts, is primarily centred on church-planting missionaries.

4. **Five Solae of the Reformation**

- a. ***Sola Fide* (by faith alone):** Salvation is solely based on our faith in Christ, not any works we have done, religions we are following, or experiences we value.
- b. ***Sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone):** The Bible is the only source of Divine revelation and is without error. Scripture by itself is sufficient for all spiritual, emotional, and moral matters.
- c. ***Solus Christus* (through Christ alone):** Our salvation is accomplished completely by Christ alone. There is no other way of salvation.
- d. ***Sola Gratia* (by grace alone):** In salvation we are saved from the wrath of God and granted faith by the unmerited grace of God. No human effort contributes to our salvation in any way. God in His mercy caused us to be saved.
- e. ***Soli Deo Gloria* (glory to God alone):** Since everything in salvation is accomplished by God, everything in life exists not for us, but for God alone. Our highest duty is to make much of God in all we do.

5. **Premillennial Eschatology**

Since we believe that prophecy is to be interpreted in the same way as the rest of Scripture (within its own context, acknowledging the historical progression of revelation), we believe that we are still looking forward to a physical 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem.

If you do not hold a strong conviction to any of these five distinctive elements, you are still welcome to attend LHBC, and even become a member, provided that you do not cause division on any of these. Alternatively, we recommend finding a church where you will be more doctrinally at home.

DOCTRINAL BELIEFS AND TEACHING

1. **Statement of Faith:** this is a 2-page document on “what we believe.” All members of LHBC are to be in agreement on it. We consider this Statement of Faith to be essentials of the Christian faith.
2. **Doctrinal Statement:** This is a much more detailed document on “what we teach.” Although not all our members necessarily agree, it is what provides theological unity among our leaders and governs what is taught at LHBC. You might not personally share all the same doctrinal convictions, and yet you would be welcome to become a member at LHBC granted you agree not to cause division among the saints on the points where you have a different understanding of the relevant Scriptures.

ORGANISATIONAL DOCUMENTS AND CONSTITUTION

1. **Non-profit Company Memorandum of Incorporation:** Fairly standard MOI for the *legal* definition, integrity, and protection of LHBC. This includes clauses on the inability of the directors to receive dividends and the process of dissolution and the distribution of all assets to another like-minded ministry.
2. **Church Constitution:** This is an additional document of much greater length than the MOI directing all *internal* affairs. It goes beyond the minimum legal requirements for a church and governs our church affairs from a Biblical point of view. Topics included in the Constitution are the purpose of the church, membership, church meetings, church government, church officers, financial policies and the settling of disputes that cannot be resolved internally.

OUR PRACTICES

Our church ministries are primarily internal, not external in focus.

Eph 4:11-16	Equipping the saints to build up one another
Col 1:27-29	Initial outward element, but most effort exerted to grow in maturity
Mat 28:19-20	Initial outward focus with the extensive internal teaching focus

WORSHIP SERVICE

Except for the two ordinances that are scheduled, these essential parts of corporate worship characterise both our Sunday morning and evening meetings.

Worship

1 Pet 4:11	Purpose of all church activities is first and foremost worship of God
Joh 4:23-24	Worship is to be spiritual (a heart response, not external rituals) and governed by truth about God
1 Cor 10:31	All other activities at church are to be done as worship (not just the singing!)

Prayer

Acts 2:42	One of the primary church activities
1 Tim 2:8	Men in particular are called to lead in prayer

Bible Reading

Neh 8: 2-3, 8	Scripture reading is always to be the basis for preaching
1 Tim 4:13	In addition to the text that is preached, a public reading of Scripture is part of every service.

Preaching and Teaching

- Acts 2:42 Apostolic doctrine as recorded in the New Testament receives particular focus since it deals so directly with believers in a Church (not Israel) context.
- Acts 20:27 The whole Bible is accepted and taught as the Word of God. These teachings range from overview classes to verse-by-verse exposition. (Cf. Also 2 Tim 3:16-17)
- 1 Cor 1:21-24 The method (preaching) and the message (Gospel) are important if we want to witness the power of God.

Singing

- Col 3:16 Singing for the sake of praising God and reminding each other of what we believe. (Cf. Eph 5:19)

Fellowship

- Acts 2:42 One of the initial basic commitments
- 1 Pet 4:9-11 Expressions of, and motivations for, fellowship

Giving

- 2 Cor 8:1-8, 9:7 The significance and guidance regarding financial giving. (We have the money box at the back of the service and the banking details in the weekly bulletin.)

CHRISTIAN ORDINANCES

Communion

- 1 Cor 10:16-17 An expression of unity in Christian
- 1 Cor 11:26 A practice of remembrance until Jesus returns

Baptism

- Acts Baptism was a commanded part of the early church's practices
- 1 Cor 12:13 Spirit baptism is a spiritual reality for all believers; therefore its visible counterpart, water baptism, is a common part of a believer's worship.

OTHER MINISTRIES

Home Groups

- Acts 2:42-47 Home groups provide an opportunity for us to perform the more daily acts of service to one another. Home groups create an extra

opportunity for believers who are geographically close to each other to practice hospitality, teaching, prayers, and caring for one another's needs in a more personal way.

Counselling

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| 1 Thess 5:12-14 | Situation specific application of Biblical truth |
| Rom 15:14 | Task is for all believers |
| 1 Cor 1:4-9 | We believe that Salvation, the Holy Spirit's internal working, and the Holy Scriptures are sufficient for all matters of godly living and therefore consider Biblical Counselling to be superior to Psychology and all self-help therapies in solving personal, emotional, and psychological problems. (Cf. 2 Tim 3:16-17 and 2 Pet 1:3-8) |

Children's Sunday School

In keeping with the high value that our Lord Jesus placed on the ministry to children (Luk 18:16), we teach the memorable narrative lessons from Scripture to the young children of all who attend.

Recognising, though, that the parents have the responsibility of bringing up their children in the instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4; Deut 6:7), Sunday School is not obligatory. Children are expected to observe their parents' worship during the service. (Deut 6:20.)

Adult Sunday School

In addition to the main Sunday service, an additional hour of teaching is provided to increase our knowledge of God and His Word. This hour takes the format of lecture, rather than preaching, allowing for meaningful interaction. The topics range from things we simply need to know to topics of relevance for the time.

Men's and Women's

Ministries unique to the men and to the women of the church are in place to cultivate more of the Titus 2 kind of discipleship that ought to exist between the different ages of those of the same gender.

Youth

This ministry is aimed at bringing Biblical wisdom to 10-18 year olds as additional help to the parents in preparing children for life as an adult one day. Creating friendships among churched teenagers is also part of the purpose of this ministry.

EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

For the list of current outreach and missions ministries, visit: livinghopepmb.co.za/missions

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| Rom 10:15,17 | Sense of urgency to spread the Gospel to those around us (LHBC offers tracts, an evangelism class, and Bibles for any desiring help in teaching the Gospel to others.) |
| Matt 28:18-20 | Mandate to reach to the ends of the world |

Our mission aspirations:

- a. Promote personal ministries centred on reaching our communities with the Gospel and love of Christ
- b. Increase our prayer, financial, and encouragement support of our missionaries
- c. Strengthening church leaders throughout our province and country

The mark of a great church is not its seating capacity but its sending capacity.

OUR MEMBERSHIP

REASONS FOR FORMAL MEMBERSHIP

Membership aids earnestness among members to aid their elders in their God-appointed task of shepherding them

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| Heb 13:17-18 | Clear commands of submitting to elders in matters not otherwise dictated by Scripture |
| 1 Pet 5:2 | Practical oversight is as much part of faithful ministry as shepherding the souls of the congregation |

Membership helps those with an immature or half-hearted view of Church and Christian Living to overcome any resistance with Biblical excellence

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| Acts 20:28 | No earthly organisation is as worthy of a committed relationship as the local church. |
| John 13:35 | Elevating the commitment to other believers above all other commitments is one of the clearest statements of obedience and evangelism. |
| Heb 10:19-27 | Church loyalty is the context and means for assurance of faith, faithfulness to our confession, holy living, and Christian service. |

Membership commitment is an example of voluntary covenants common among the faithful

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| Neh 9:38 – 10:39 | Voluntary covenant regarding personal obedience and corporate worship
(see https://drbarrick.org/church-covenants-some-thoughts-and-meditations/ for more details regarding this covenant and its implications for church commitment.) |
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IX Marks Summary (Membership class: "03 Why Join a Church July 2012.docx")

Three things must be true of your relationship with a local church:

1. *Committed* relationship.
2. Committed to a *defined group of people*.
3. Give these people *permission* to speak hard words into your life.

Great Christians make a great Church

Joel James

(Quoted in sermon on Romans 12)

ROLE OF ELDERS

Primary Responsibilities

1. Administrative oversight over every ministry with relevant assistance from deacons. (1 Pet 5:2 and example from mercy ministry of Acts 6:1-7 and financial accountability of 2 Cor 8:20-23)
2. Prayer (Acts 6:4)
3. Ministry of the word through preaching (Acts 6:4) and counselling (Gal 6:1)
4. Training the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:11-13)
5. Shepherd as 'under-shepherds' (1 Pet 5:2-4) the spiritual needs of the congregation (Heb 13:17)

Although these responsibilities are eagerly accepted on behalf of all attendees at LHBC, members are first to receive these benefits, time and effort from the elders.

EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS

Attend faithfully

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| Heb 10:22-23 | Prepare both theologically and morally for Church (Cf. Matt 5:23-24 and 1 Cor 11:28-29) |
| Heb 10:24 | Attend purposefully to stir others to zealous worship and obedience |
| Heb 10:25 | The saints should be surprised when you are NOT there, not surprised that you showed up. |
| Heb 10:26 | Church attendance is one of the keys to endurance in the faith |

Give Consistently

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| Hag 2:8 | God doesn't <i>need</i> your money |
| Luk 16:10-11 | Your use of your money is a barometer of your spiritual reliability |
| 1 Cor 16:2 | Give consistently |
| 1 Cor 16:3-4 | Give to trusted stewards to distribute; do not self-fund ministries |
| 2 Cor 8:2 | Circumstances are not excuses. |

The legitimate poor should not be burdened but provided for (1 Tim 5:3, 9-10, 16), although they will be commended by God (Mark 12:41-44)

2 Cor 8:5

Giving money only is not enough

2 Cor 9:6-8

Give generously, determinedly, cheerfully, and trustingly
A note on tithing: In the OT two annual tithes (Lev 27:30 and Deut 12:10-18) and another tithe every third year (Deut 14:28) was required as part of the Law of Moses (total of 23% averaged per year). These tithes are paralleled in our country with the requirements of SARS.

The OT parallel to NT giving is that of the "Freewill Offering" (Ex 25:1-2; 35:21; Deut 16:10, 16-17). Therefore giving as an act of worship for the sake of God's Kingdom is the same in the OT and NT in terms of the freewill offering.

Submit Decisively

Some complementing instructions:

Heb 13:17

Obey and submit to your leaders

Acts 17:11

Receive teaching eagerly while still examining everything yourself

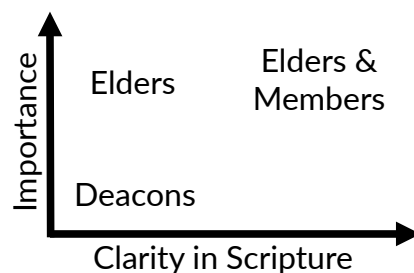
1 Cor 11:16

In matters of custom and tradition, submit to mature church practice

1 Cor 14:40

Some level of orderliness and decency must govern all individual acts of service

A practical guide in making, evaluating, and implementing decisions (adapted from IX Marks, Membership class, "MM Booklet ESV.pdf")



CHURCH DISCIPLINE

***See Article 5, Section 7 in the LHBC Constitution for a fuller write-up on how Church Discipline is practised at LHBC*

Value of Church Discipline

1. **Exalts the wisdom of giving and receiving correction** (Prov 27:5; Eccl 9:18; Heb 12:11-16; James 5:19-20)
2. **Maintains restoration as the focus of correction** (2 Cor 2:6-8; Gal 6:1)
3. **Keeps the distinction between true believers and false believers clear** (1 John 1:5-10). True believers are accountable to purity and repentance; False believers are publicly known as false.
4. **Clarifies the lines of division needed to maintain unity.** The only activities that warrant the church discipline process are:
 - a. Persistent unrepentant sin (1 Cor 5:11-13; 2 Thess 3:6)
 - b. Wilful rejection of sound doctrine (Rom 16:17-18; Gal 1:9; 1 Tim 1:19-20)
 - c. Division on matters other than a. or b. (Titus 3:10-11)
5. **Balances the need for privacy with the need for a larger call to repentance** (Cf. Matt 18:15 and 2 Cor 2:6)
6. **Reflects what Jesus would have done** (Matt 18:18-20; 2 Cor 2:10)

Key Passages

Matt 18:15-20	The process, possible outcomes, and Divine authority
1 Cor 5:1-13	An example (sin of immorality)
2 Thess 3:6-15	An example (sin of idleness) exposing the brotherly attitude in which this separation is to be done
2 Cor 2:5-11	Instruction regarding a previous discipline case which produced true repentance

Basic Process

1. **Individual conversation** (Matt 18:15) Confirm details of sin privately. If repentant, then restore, else move on once unrepentance has been established. (This step is skipped in the case of leaders committing a more public sin. Titus 3:10 and 1 Tim 5:19-20.)
2. **Small group confirmation** (Matt 18:16). Confirm details of sin and lack of initial repentance. If repentant, then restore, else move on once continued unrepentance has been established. The “two or three” are not necessarily witness of the original sin, but witnesses to the event of correction and repentance/non-repentance. Typically, this is where the elders of the church are involved (Cf. Gal 6:1)
3. **Church announcement** (Matt 18:17a). This is to call the entire church to help bear the burden of calling the offending brother to repentance. This step exposes the

church-wide danger of the unrepentant sinner (Heb 12:15) as well as the church-wide willingness to pursue purity and forgiveness (2 Cor 2:5-8)

4. **Heavenly verdict** (Matt 18:17b-20). Public announcement to the church to clarify that the claim to Christianity by the offending person is indeed false. Separation in worship must be made clear.
5. **Full restoration** (2 Cor 2:5-10). After step 4 it is possible that the person might come to true repentance and faith. Full restoration is then made with the Church and even with Christ.

ONE ANOTHER MINISTRY

Eph 4:14-16	Mutual responsibility (i.e. not the work of the pastor and elders)
1 Cor 12:4-7	Individual gifting does not mean individual growth, but mutual growth

Corporate Responsibilities: "One Another" verses

1. Do Church things together
 - a. Communion (1 Cor 11:33)
 - b. Restoration (2 Cor 13:11)
 - c. Service (Heb 10:24-25)
 - d. Greetings (1 Cor 16:20; 1 Pet 5:14; 2 Cor 13:12; Rom 15:7; 16:16)
 - e. Fellowship (1 John 1:7)
2. Care for one another (1 Cor 12:25; Col 3:13; Eph 4:2; Gal 6:2)
3. Be humble before one another
 - a. Be humble when you have the opportunity to be proud (1 Pet 5:5; Eph 5:21; Gal 5:26; Mark 9:34)
 - b. Be the least when you feel like you have a right to demand something from one another (1 Cor 6:7; Rom 14:13; Gal 5:13, 15; James 5:9)
 - c. Do good when you feel like doing evil to one another (1 Thess 5:15)
 - d. Live in harmony (Rom 12:16; 15:5; Mark 9:50)
 - e. Forgiving one another (Col 3:13; Eph 4:32)
4. Love one another (1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 1 Pet 1:22; 4:8; 1 Thess 3:12; 4:9; 2 John 5; 2 Thess 1:3; Titus 3:3; Matt 24:10; John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; Rom 12:10)
5. Serve one another (1 Pet 4:9-10)
6. Teach and Encourage one another (1 Thess 4:18; 5:11; Col 3:16; Eph 5:19; Rom 15:14; Heb 3:13; James 5:16. Wrong ways: Col 3:9; James 4:11)

Individual Gifting: Your spiritual gift

(All questions about the apostolic spiritual gifts that are no longer part of every local church, please come speak to any of the elders. For this class' purpose we are focussing on the spiritual gifting which the Holy Spirit has given to our church to practice.

- a. serving (Rom 12:7) / helping (1 Cor 12:28)
- b. teaching (Rom 12:7; Eph 4:11)

- c. exhortation / encouragement / counselling (Rom 12:8)
- d. generous giving (Rom 12:8)
- e. leading (Rom 12:8)
- f. mercy (Rom 12:8)
- g. shepherding (Eph 4:11)
- h. evangelism (Eph 4:11)
- i. administration (1 Cor 12:28)

Nowhere does Scripture explain how to discover or seek your gift. Simply be sensitive to all the "one another" needs which you notice at church, meet those needs, and when the Lord produces spiritual fruit from your practical service, then you have identified how the Holy Spirit has gifted you. Let all your activities at church be governed by 1 Cor 13, and you will be a faithful member of LHBC.

MEMBERSHIP AFFIRMATION

Based on what you learned from the Word of God in the membership classes...

- ... do you commit yourselves to the greater purpose of the Church: making disciples by proclaiming Jesus Christ and Him crucified for sinners?
- ... do you commit yourselves to serving in this local body of believers so that your time, resources and spiritual gifts will honour Christ, benefit others, and promote unity?
- ... do you commit yourselves to receive and give admonition with a spirit of gentleness following Jesus' pattern in Matthew 18?
- ... do you commit yourselves to make every effort to attend faithfully the worship services and church meetings of Living Hope Bible Church?

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Sign up for the Baptism Class if needed
2. Read "Doctrinal Statement" and "Constitution" (can be found online "About us" - "Beliefs")
3. Complete the Membership Form and "Statement of Faith" and give it to an elder
4. Schedule Elder-introduction meeting with that elder
5. At an Elder's meeting, the Elders will vote on their commitment to each applicant
6. At a congregational meeting, the current members will vote on their commitment to each applicant
7. A Sunday will be booked for the official welcoming of the new members