

We Believe

Article VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

Recap of Part 1 (4 Essential Concepts/ Beliefs)

There are Four Essential concepts or beliefs in the Congregational Church.

1. Regenerate Believers

Regenerate church membership is the most important distinctive in the Baptist Church.

2. Autonomy

The most important distinction concerning autonomy in the Baptist church is not that we are independent of others, but that we are solely dependent upon Christ.

3. Covenant Association

As Harrisburg Baptist Church we associate together as members:

- Through our church covenant, it for guides and directs us in our relationships and our lifestyle.
- Around doctrine as expressed in the Baptist Faith & Message.

4. Democracy

Democracy in the church is not about choosing what pleases or benefits the majority.

Democracy in the church is not about choosing to do what benefits the weakest.

Democracy in the church is practiced when the church votes and agrees to obey God by following Scripture as closely as possible in each situation.

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Recap of Pt. 2 (Roles & Responsibilities of Pastors and Deacons)

Pastors (Elders) are the leaders of the church who serve by praying, preaching, and equipping members for the work of ministry.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (CSB)

This saying is trustworthy: "If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work." ²An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not an excessive drinker, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy. ⁴He must manage his own household competently and have his children under control with all dignity. ⁵(If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God's church?) ⁶He must not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and incur the same condemnation as the devil. ⁷Furthermore, he must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil's trap.

Titus 1:5-9 (CSB)

⁵The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town. ⁶An elder must be blameless, the husband of one wife, with faithful children who are not accused of wildness or rebellion. ⁷As an overseer of God's household, he must be blameless, not arrogant, not hot-tempered, not an excessive drinker, not a bully, not greedy for money, ⁸but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, righteous, holy, self-controlled, ⁹holding to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it.

1. There are multiple terms used in Scripture that refer to same office and role in Scripture. Presbyteros (πρεσβύτερος) =’s elder, Episkopos (ἐπίσκοπος) =’s overseer or bishop, and Poimen (Ποιμήν) =’s shepherd or pastor.
2. The pastors/elders of the church are a plurality of men who lead and shepherd the church by carrying out the responsibilities outlined in Scripture.
3. Pastors/Elders lead the church primarily through praying and preaching. They shepherd the church by actively knowing, feeding, leading, retrieving, and protecting the members of the church. They oversee the church by keeping a close watch on themselves and the lives of the members.

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Deacons are the servants of the church who lead by caring for the physical and practical needs of the church.

1 Timothy 3:8–13 (CSB)

***8**Deacons, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not hypocritical, not drinking a lot of wine, not greedy for money, **9**holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. **10**They must also be tested first; if they prove blameless, then they can serve as deacons. **11**Wives, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, faithful in everything. **12**Deacons are to be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households competently. **13**For those who have served well as deacons acquire a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.*

Acts 6:1–7 (CSB)

*In those days, as the disciples were increasing in number, there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. **2**The Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, "It would not be right for us to give up preaching the word of God to wait on tables. **3**Brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty. **4**But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." **5**This proposal pleased the whole company. So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a convert from Antioch. **6**They had them stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. **7**So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.*

1. Deacons are faithful and mature followers of Christ and they are godly examples for the church to imitate.
2. In Scripture Deacons are not a board of decision makers or only focused on the widows of the church.
3. Deacons lead the church by serving and caring for the physical and practical needs of the church. In addition the deacons strive to preserve the unity of the church and support the ministry of the Word.
4. Deacons serve so that the word of God may increase and the church can make disciples

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Part Three: Membership and Church Health

Meaningful Membership

Two Truths About Church Membership

1. Church membership is _____

2. Church membership is _____

Church membership is based on _____ in _____.

“By calling someone a member of your church, you are saying that that individual has your church’s endorsement as a Christian.” - Mark Dever

Church membership should be the _____ of a living commitment, or it is worthless.

Additional Information Regarding Healthy Churches and Church Growth

For me there are three words that help communicate my philosophy of church growth:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Healthy churches grow by _____, _____, and _____ disciples

Healthy churches grow through _____ and _____ that are rooted in the Word, centered on Christ, and driven by the mission

Healthy churches are _____ in the Word

- 1. A church that is rooted in the Word is _____**
- 2. A church that is rooted in the Word is _____**
- 3. A church that is rooted in the Word is _____**
- 4. A church that is rooted in the Word _____**

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Healthy church growth requires healthy church _____

Healthy churches _____ themselves against Jesus and the Word rather than the previous year or other churches.

Healthy churches are driven by the _____

Healthy churches are _____ and _____

"You reproduce who you are, not who you want to be." Carey Nieuhwof