



ASHFIELD  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

# THE CONNECT COURSE



# Week 1: Connecting to God

Welcome! We're glad you've agreed to find out a bit more about us. The Connect Series is a 4 week series about connecting to God and to church. It is designed to help you understand who we are, and how you can fit in and play a part.

## Saved by God

**Romans 5:8-9** But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! (NIV)

1. What did God show us?

What has now happened to us by Jesus' sacrificial death ("his blood")?

Since we are declared right with God when we were his enemies, now that we are right with God, what will happen to us concerning God's wrath?

How can we be sure that we will be saved?

2. How does Jesus dying for us while we were **sinners** demonstrate God's love for us?

What does it mean to be a "sinner"?

What does the phrase "Christ died for us" mean?

3. Are **you** right with God?

How can **you** be sure that you will be saved?



**Ephesians 2:8-9** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. (NIV)

4. What has happened to us by grace?

Is salvation our own work?

What credit can we take for our salvation?



5. What have you been saved from?

What is the appropriate response to God's grace?

What does it mean to "trust God"?

Can you boast about your salvation? Why?



## Living God's Way

**Titus 2:11-14** For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. <sup>12</sup> It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, <sup>13</sup> while we wait for the blessed hope-the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ (NIV)

6. What has already appeared?

What has this brought?

What (or who) is yet to appear?

What should we say no to while we wait for the blessed hope?

What will we do instead?

How are we taught or motivated to do this?





7. What does it mean that the grace of God has brought salvation? How has this happened?



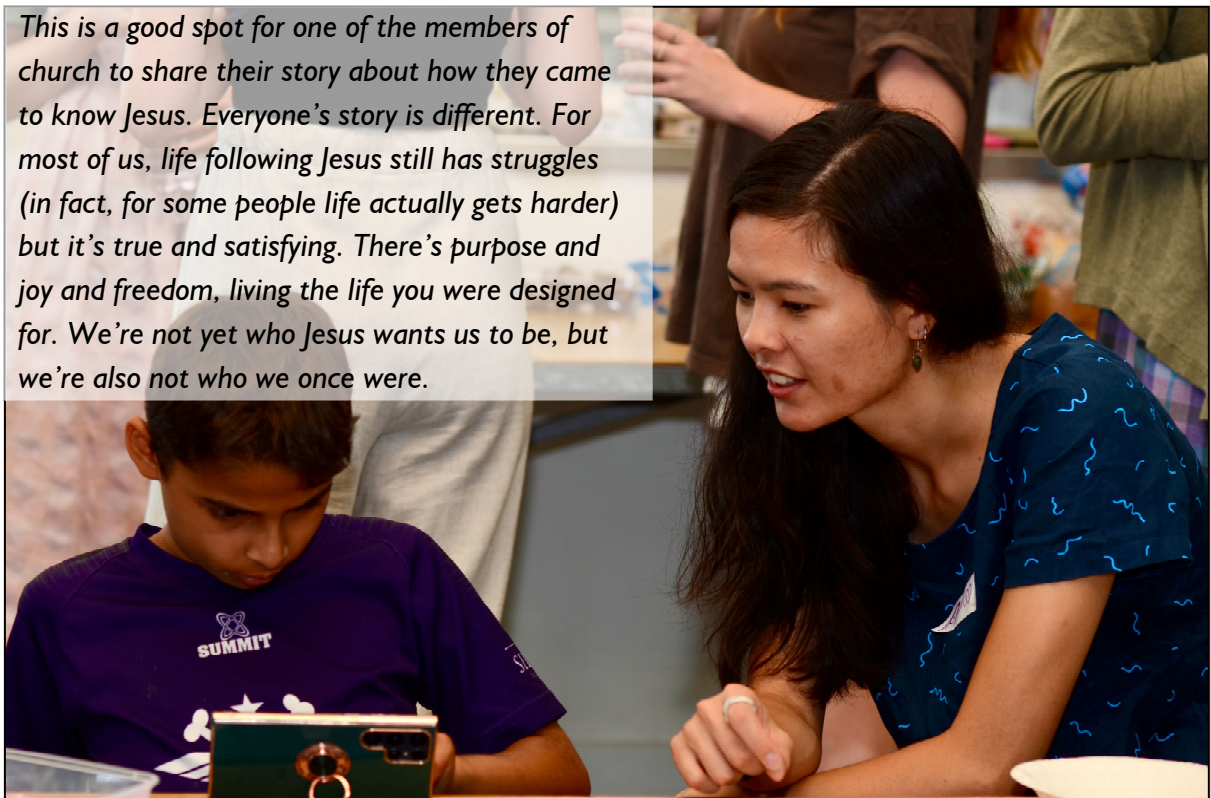
How, practically, does the grace of God teach us to live a certain way?

“Hope” in the Bible isn’t wishful thinking, but confident expectation. On what basis can you be confident as you wait for Jesus to appear?

How would you answer someone who said, “Once you’ve been saved, it doesn’t really matter how you live”?

Do good deeds and godly living come as a result of God’s grace, or in order to earn it? (Hint: look back at Ephesians 2:8-9)

*This is a good spot for one of the members of church to share their story about how they came to know Jesus. Everyone’s story is different. For most of us, life following Jesus still has struggles (in fact, for some people life actually gets harder) but it’s true and satisfying. There’s purpose and joy and freedom, living the life you were designed for. We’re not yet who Jesus wants us to be, but we’re also not who we once were.*





# Week 2: Connected To God

*Any questions from last week?*

## The Bible

*2 Timothy 3:15-17: ...the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NIV)*

1. Who is the ultimate author of the Bible?

List four ways the Christian can use the Bible



What is the ultimate purpose for the Christian of these activities?

2. What does it mean that the Bible is God-breathed?

How, then, should you use the Bible?



What will it look like for **you** to be thoroughly equipped for every good work?

## Prayer

*Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (NIV)*

3. What are we to be anxious about? What are we to pray about?

Does God promise to give us everything we ask for?  
What promise **does** he give us in v7?



4. What things concern you at the moment?

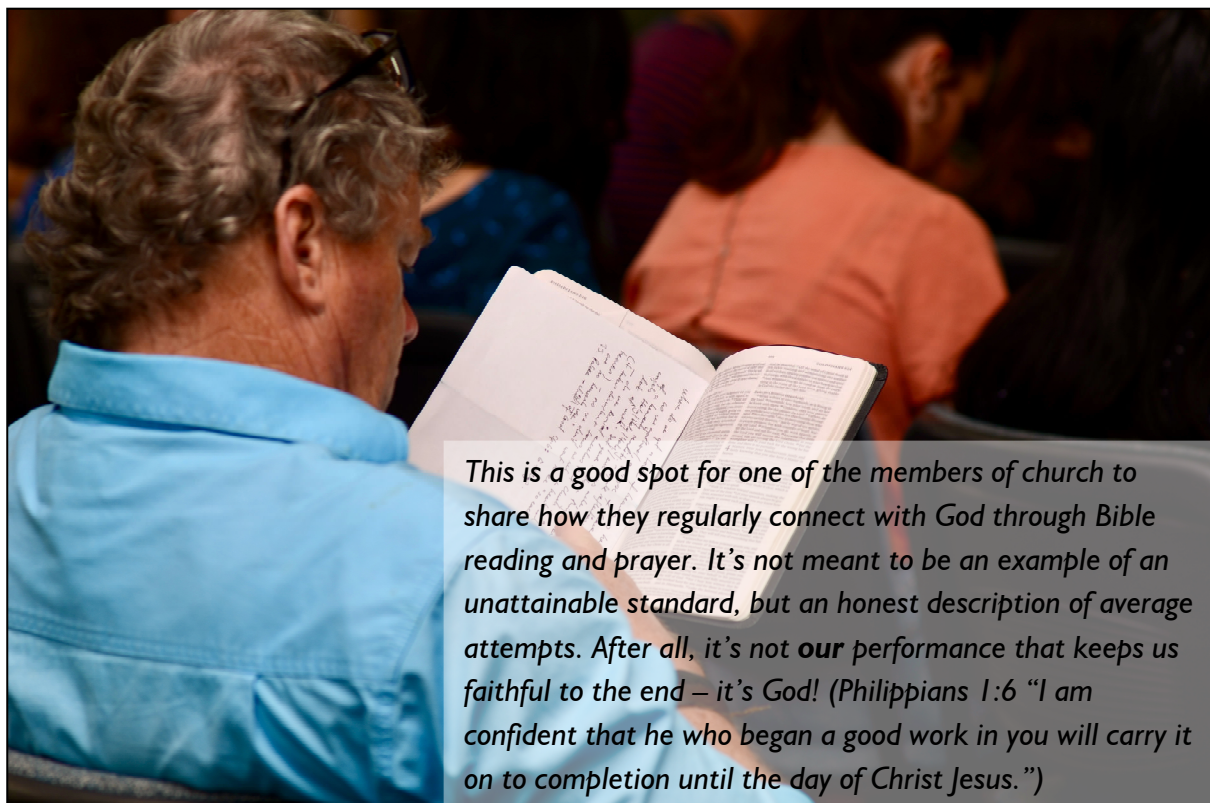


Have you told God?

Think back over this study. Are there other things you can thank God for?

What will it mean to have “the peace of God guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”?

How can this help when you are anxious or struggling as a Christian?



*This is a good spot for one of the members of church to share how they regularly connect with God through Bible reading and prayer. It's not meant to be an example of an unattainable standard, but an honest description of average attempts. After all, it's not **our** performance that keeps us faithful to the end – it's God! (Philippians 1:6 "I am confident that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.")*

# Personal Bible Reading & Prayer

Many Christians find it helpful to set a regular time aside to read their Bibles and pray. Here are some tips:

## **Select a special time and place**

Morning may be best. It shows the priority of meeting with God, committing the day to him. And your mind is probably less distracted.

## **Aim for a realistic length of time**

Start with 15 minutes and let it grow. Don't watch the clock. Be expectant – you're meeting with God. Aim for quality and not just quantity.

## **Some structure**

Relax, read, reflect, record, request

## **Pray Scripture**

Combine prayer and Bible reading. It helps give content to your prayers.

## **Keep a prayer diary**

Make separate lists of prayer points under major headings. Spread the points across your prayer during the week. Review the list each month. Praise God for answered prayer you identify.



It is useful to develop a **range** of ways of reading the Bible. Variety helps us to concentrate. Also, different parts of the Bible needs a different approach. For example, you can meditate on a Proverb, but meditating on a verse from the life of Jacob may be a waste of time – you really need to read the whole story. Here's a number of ideas and methods for reading the Bible – give them a try:

## **Repetition:**

There's no substitute for just reading the Bible over and over.

## **Marking the trail**

Read with a pencil in hand, writing notes in the margin, or if you prefer a notebook or journal. Keep a record of ideas, thoughts, or questions you might have. This helps you concentrate and dig deeper.

## **Year-plan**

Systematic reading of the whole Bible in a fixed period is really worthwhile. It helps you to be disciplined to be regular, and to read the more difficult bits you're tempted to jump over.

## **Studying a book for a year**

Try focusing in-depth on one book for a whole year. Read and re-read it. Get hold of a good commentary, and use it to work slowly through the book.

## **Intensive reading**

Try reading large slabs of the Bible in one sitting. For example, it takes about two hours to read through Mark. This is a great way to appreciate the big picture of the book. You'll notice certain themes, phrases and ideas being emphasised.

## **Audio**

Listen to an audio version on your personal music player while you do other things.



# Why go to church?

**Acts 2:42** *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

1. This verse describes what the first Christians did. What were their priorities?



Why are these things important?



**Hebrews 10:24-25** *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. <sup>25</sup> Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (NIV)*

2. What two things are we to spur one another on to?



What are we to keep doing (without giving up)?

What is to motivate us to meet together?

How does 'the day' affect your attitude to other Christians?



3. How do the different aspects of what we do in church help to achieve the goal of this verse?

# Week 3&4: Connecting with Church

Any questions from last week?

## Ashfield Presbyterian Church



### Our Vision:

Under God, we desire to be **a church through which God is transforming his people and his world** (Ephesians 2).

This will mean (Acts 2:42-47);

1. We are a church where God is loved and worshipped as King.
2. We are warm and inviting and connect newcomers into our community.
3. We joyfully give up what we have for others in the church.
4. We devote ourselves to fellowship, prayer and hospitality.
5. We are deliberately and daily shaped by God's Word.
6. All members are engaged and serving within the church.
7. We have an impact on the world around us and are growing through conversion.

**Ephesians 2:1-10** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,<sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient...<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,<sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved...<sup>10</sup> For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

I. **Read Ephesians 2:1-10.** What has God done for Christians?



**Ephesians 2:11-22** Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth... were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,<sup>15</sup> by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,<sup>16</sup> and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.<sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.<sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.<sup>21</sup> In him the whole

*building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.<sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

2. **Read Ephesians 2:11-22.** What are God's plans for human relationships (v11-18)?

What are God's plans for the church (v19-22)?

**Acts 2:42-47** *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.<sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.<sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common.<sup>45</sup> Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.<sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,<sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

1. **Read Acts 2:42-47.** Can you identify where each of the seven sub-points above matches up to this description of the early church?



## Our Mission: Growing Followers of Jesus

At Ashfield Presbyterian Church, we're, unashamedly, all about **growing followers of Jesus**. It's who we want to be, and what our mission is. (Matthew 28:18-20)

**Matthew 28:18-20** *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."<sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

2. **Read Matthew 28:18-20.** How does Jesus plan to transform the world through his followers?



How does Jesus encourage and equip us to do this?



# What is a Growing Follower?:

Growing disciples are those who;

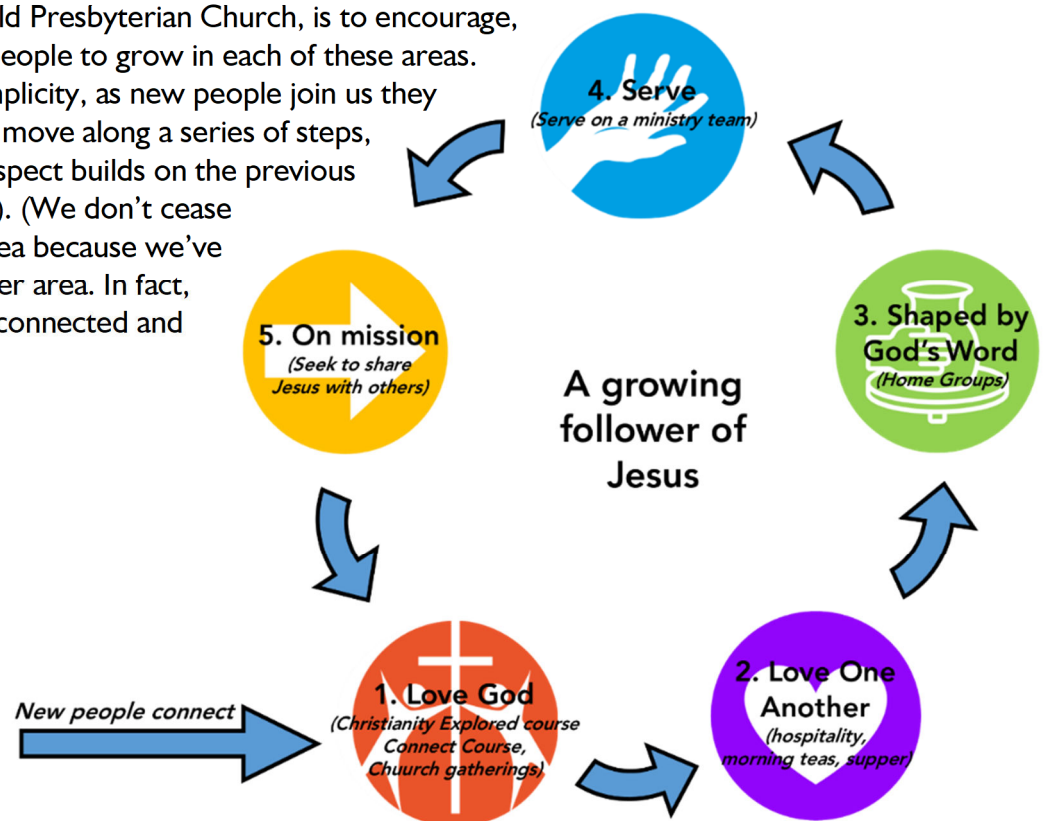
1. Love God (Mk 12:29-30)
2. Love one another (Mk 12:31)
3. Are shaped by God's Word (2 Tim 3:16-17)
4. Serve (Eph 4:12)
5. Are on mission (Col 4:5-6)



These are also a description of what a healthy church will look like. Each area influences the others. A church is not healthy if 3 or 4 of the areas are effective. They all need to be effective.

## Discipleship steps:

Our task, at Ashfield Presbyterian Church, is to encourage, enable and equip people to grow in each of these areas. For the sake of simplicity, as new people join us they are encouraged to move along a series of steps, where each new aspect builds on the previous ones (Eph 4:12-16). (We don't cease working on one area because we've moved onto another area. In fact, the areas are interconnected and interdependent.)



1. The first step to being a follower of Jesus is to **love God** (Mark 12:29-30). In the church context, you are encouraged to take this step in our *Christianity Explored* course, our church membership course *Connect* and in our regular Sunday gatherings.
2. An important part of our Sunday gatherings are morning tea and supper. We also strive to show hospitality to one another. These are opportunities for people to experience and show **love for one another** (Mark 12:31). This is the second step in being a follower of Jesus.



3. Once people are beginning to know and love others, the third step is being **shaped by God's Word** (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This happens, principally, in Home Groups (as well as in our Sunday gatherings). We meet mid-week, in one another's homes, to study the Bible, to pray for and care for one another.



1. The fourth step is to **serve** on a ministry team by using your gifts to build up the church – to encourage people to grow as followers of Jesus (Ephesians 4:12). There are many gifts, and many ways to serve the church.



2. The fifth step for growing followers is to be **on mission**: to be looking for opportunities to share Jesus with your friends, family and community (Colossians 4:5-6). This can happen by serving on a team that runs evangelistic courses or events, or individually as you seek to share Jesus with your friends, family and community.



## Home Groups

Our home groups meet to explore the Bible and learn together. But home groups are also about experiencing real community. They are the context for developing meaningful friendships around God's Word that encourage fellowship, prayer, mutual support, encouragement and accountability.

It's within a small group of people that there is so much more opportunity for people to 'get real' with each other and look out for one another in practical ways. Being in a home group means you can be there for others in the highs and lows of everyday life. They're like a big family.



They can also serve as a means of providing pastoral care for others in the church not connected with a Home Group. They are an excellent way of welcoming newcomers into the life of the church, and even of evangelising our friends as we include them in the genuine community of the group.

**Galatians 6:2** *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ*

What is the law of Christ? (Hint: look at Galatians 5:13-14)



What, practically, might it look like for a small group of people to carry each other's burdens?



Home groups run at a variety of times during the week, and for men, women, or mixed participants. Most run weekly, others fortnightly. At the end of this Connect course, we'll do our best to connect you to a home group that you're comfortable in.

## Ministry Teams

Some people think that it's the job of the paid ministers to look after people in a church, But that's not the way the Bible describes it! We're all ministers, (or servants)!

**Colossians 3:16** *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

Whose job is it to teach and admonish?



How, practically, can we let the word of Christ dwell in us richly?



**Ephesians 4:15-16** *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

Whose job is it to build up the body?



In what direction is the growth? What, practically, does this mean?



What things hold us together?

How are we to build up the body?

**Ephesians 4:11-13** *It was God who gave some to be ... pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*



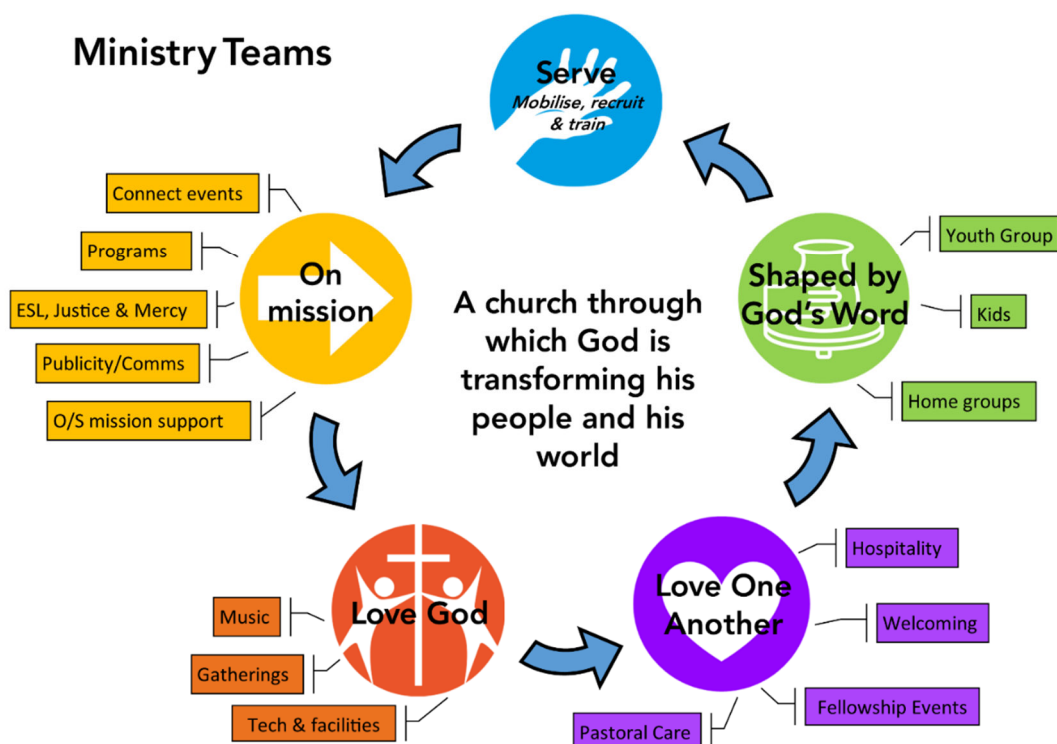
What is the job of the pastors and teachers?

What is the job of the rest of God's people? For what goal?



**Ministry teams** are groups of people responsible for part of one of the five discipleship steps. The goal is for everyone in the church to be in one or two ministry teams, helping people to move along the discipleship pathway, so they can grow as followers of Jesus.

**How can YOU help?** What are your gifts and talents? What are you passionate about?



#### DISCLAIMERS:

- It's important to remember that all we do is a **response to God's grace to us in Jesus**, not a means of earning his favour (Ephesians 2:8-10).
- We don't seek to 'do things' for God, but rather to live lives worthy of the calling we have received (Ephesians 4:1), doing it all for his glory (1 Corinthians 10:31).
- All growth is of God, but he also calls us **to do all we can** with the means he has given us (Matthew 25:14-30).
- We want to be organised and clear, not because we're 'corporate', but because **we love people**, and don't want to lose any who 'slip through the cracks' or 'leave through the back door'.
- Although generously using your gifts will benefit others, we want you to serve, principally, because **this is how God will mature you** in character, convictions and competency.

## Giving:

One of the ways you serve God's people, and respond to the grace God has shown you is to give of your money, time and talents. In the Old Testament God's people were to give a tenth of all their produce to God in response to his blessings. The tithe was for the priests and Levites and the poor and needy. The New Testament sets us free from fixed percentages, instead establishing principles of generosity, partnership, obligation, love and cheerfulness (2 Corinthians 8-9). If we understand the gospel, we will use our worldly wealth in the light of eternity (Lk 16:1-5) and seek the eternal treasures of God's kingdom rather than earthly riches (Mt 6:19-34). In thinking about how much to give the fundamental question to ponder is: how much have we received from God? How can we show a generous response that flows from God's generosity to us?

The easiest way to give is electronically. The church's bank account details are:

**Account Name:** Ashfield Presbyterian Church.  
**BSB number:** 032 060.  
**Account Number:** 120 342

## Church Structure

There are three other groups who lead and organise our members:

1. **Session:** This group consists of the elders and the minister, and is responsible for the leadership of church. In turn, a regional group of ministers and elders, called the presbytery, oversees the health of a number of churches.
2. **Women's Ministry Leadership Team:** This group of women, appointed by session, and commissioned, are responsible for organising ministry to women, and representing women to the session on leadership issues.
3. **Committee of Management:** This group, elected annually by the congregation, oversees the property and financial concerns of the church.



*This is a good spot for one of the members of church to share how they first connected with APC, what they appreciate about church, and how they are involved.*

# What is “Presbyterian”?

The name “Presbyterian” is taken from the Greek word for elder. We are a church whose leadership is based on elders. Each local Presbyterian church is lead by **a group of elders**, called the **session**. We believe that this practice of church leadership by elders is biblical. In the Old Testament, Israel appointed elders to lead the nation (Exodus 3:16). Paul and Barnabas continued this practice, appointing elders over each of the Gentile churches they established (Acts 14:23). Acts 20:17 tells us that there were a group of elders in the one church at Ephesus. (See also 1 Tim 4:14; 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14)



**Acts 20:27-31** *For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. <sup>28</sup>Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. <sup>29</sup>I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. <sup>30</sup>Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. <sup>31</sup>So be on your guard!*

What is involved in being an elder over the church?



## History

The denomination had its roots in the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the 1500's and Scotland in the 1600's, reacting against the teaching and misuse of power of the Roman Catholic church. When Scots settled in Australia in the nineteenth century, they brought 'Presbyterianism' with them. In 1901 the various state Presbyterian Churches united into a federal church. In 1977 'continuing' Presbyterians did not join the Uniting Church primarily because of concerns that the Uniting Church did not seem to have commitment to the authority of the Bible.

## Theology

Our attitude to the Bible is **Evangelical**. The Bible is God's Word to us. This means our teaching is focused on understanding the Bible – from the small detail, to the broad sweep of how the whole Bible fits together. We are committed to the gospel – the good news about salvation which is only found in Jesus. The gospel is the most important thing we can share with people.

For those who like labels, our theology is **Reformed** and **Calvinistic**. This means we focus on the sovereignty of God in all of life – especially our salvation.



# Membership, Baptism & The Lord's Supper

## What is Church Membership?

There are two types of membership in the Presbyterian denomination:

1. A **communicant member** has been baptised, comes to church regularly, and has been admitted to the membership of the church by the session when they are satisfied that he/she is a Christian. (People can also become communicant members by transferring from another Presbyterian church.) They are the only ones who can vote regarding elders and ministers – some of the most important decisions in the spiritual life of a congregation.
2. The other type of members are quaintly termed **adherent members**. The adherents are simply those people who regularly attend but are not communicants. Adherents may vote on all matters except electing elders and calling ministers.

Admission to communicant membership normally happens during a church service with a public profession of faith and baptism (if the new member hasn't been baptised before). Normally questions like these are asked and answered (with "I do"):

1. *Do you believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?*
2. *Do you repent of your sin, and with a humble and grateful heart put your trust in the mercy and grace of God and in Jesus Christ whose death takes away your sin?*
3. *Do you promise to share regularly with your fellow Christians in worship when they meet?*
4. *Do you promise to be faithful in reading the Bible, and in prayer?*
5. *Do you promise to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength and to give a God-honouring proportion of your time, talents and money for the Church's work in the world?*
6. *Do you promise to confess Christ before others, to serve him in your daily work, and to walk in his ways all the days of your life?*
7. *Do you acknowledge your dependence upon the Holy Spirit to equip you and to enable you to be faithful to this your confession?*
8. *Do you promise to submit to the authority of the Session as they exercise pastoral oversight of the congregation?*

What are members promising to do in relation to God?

What are members promising to do in relation to other members of the church?

What are members promising to do in relation to other people?

As well as responsibilities, what benefits of membership are mentioned in these promises?

# The Benefits and Responsibilities of Membership

Becoming a member of Ashfield Presbyterian Church expresses publicly your desire to associate with this particular group of God's people. It shows your commitment to Jesus, the head of the body, as well as to his body, the Church. This commitment also expresses a willingness to take on the responsibilities of membership. *1 John 4:19-20 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.*

Becoming a member makes you accountable to the other members of the church. It shows that you recognise the responsibility of the session to shepherd you. This involves caring for you, encouraging you, but perhaps also disciplining and correcting you should you stray.

## Baptism

Baptism is a public act of washing with water. The washing with water is a sign of what God has done in a person's life - cleansing from sin, and the beginning of a new life. It is an **outward** sign of what God does **inwardly** in those who put their trust in Jesus.



Formally, baptism as an adult also brings you into communicant membership of our church. The Session of elders approves all new members on the basis of seeing evidence for God's work in their lives.

**Read Acts 2:36-39.** What two things were the people commanded to do?

What two things are promised to them?

To whom do these promises apply?

**Acts 2:36-39** "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

**Read Romans 6:3-7.** To be baptised is a sign of being connected to Jesus by faith. In what way are we connected to Jesus' **death** – what part of us dies?

In what way are we connected to Jesus' **life**?

**Read Colossians 2:10-3:14.** While the Romans 6 passage talks about living a new life and no longer being a slave to sin, this passage goes into more detail about this new life.

What sort of new things should we desire? (3:1-2)

Why? (3:3-4)

What old things should we put to death? (3:5-11)

What new things should we be replacing them with (3:12-14)

**Romans 6:3-7** Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin- 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

**Colossians 2:10-3:14** "and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. ...12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead...

3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. 11 Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. NIV

These things don't come simply from our own strength. As we trust Jesus, he gives us his Spirit, who makes us a new person, giving us new desires and beginning his work in us to make us like himself. That's the foundation for our new life (2:10-12).

Baptism is a symbol of our dying to our old self, and living a new life for Christ.

Have YOU trusted Jesus with your life?

Have you experienced any of these changes in your life?

## Why does the Presbyterian Church Baptise Children?

Our denomination baptises infants because it believes it to be obedient to the overall theology of the Bible. At the heart of this practice is the idea of **God's covenant** with his people. It is this covenant, or promise, which both **circumcision** in the Old Testament and **baptism** in the New Testament point to.



In the Old Testament God gave a sign to his people to show that they belonged to his family, and that he would continue to do good to them. This sign was **circumcision** (Genesis 17:1-14). This sign showed God's commitment to His people, and their commitment to Him. In the New Testament, Jesus gives a **new** sign to show that a person belongs to God's family. It involved a symbolic washing with water, and was called **baptism**. These two signs (circumcision and baptism), therefore, point to the same thing - a relationship with God.

One characteristic of the Old Testament covenant was **its inclusion of the children**. Children were to be instructed in the obligations and benefits of the arrangement. The male children were to receive the sign of circumcision when they were only eight days old. Although there are some differences between the covenant of the Old Testament and that of the New Testament, they are one at their heart - both signifying God's intention to make the receiver part of his family.

The coming of Jesus did not suddenly exclude children from participation in God's covenant. They continue to be part of God's people (1 Cor 7:14). Christian parents have every reason to believe that God has included their children in God's family, and baptism is a sign of that. For this reason the Presbyterian Church has continued what it believes to be the biblical practice of treating children of believers as beneficiaries of the covenant. Therefore, children are baptised.

## What Baptism isn't:

It's perhaps also helpful to outline what baptism ISN'T.

- It ISN'T a naming ceremony in the way that the word "christening" is often used.
- It ISN'T the way a child is registered with the church as you would register a child birth with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.
- It ISN'T a guarantee of getting into heaven.
- It DOESN'T make a person a Christian.
- It ISN'T for everyone.

## Who is to be Baptised?

The New Testament refers to two groups of people being baptised.

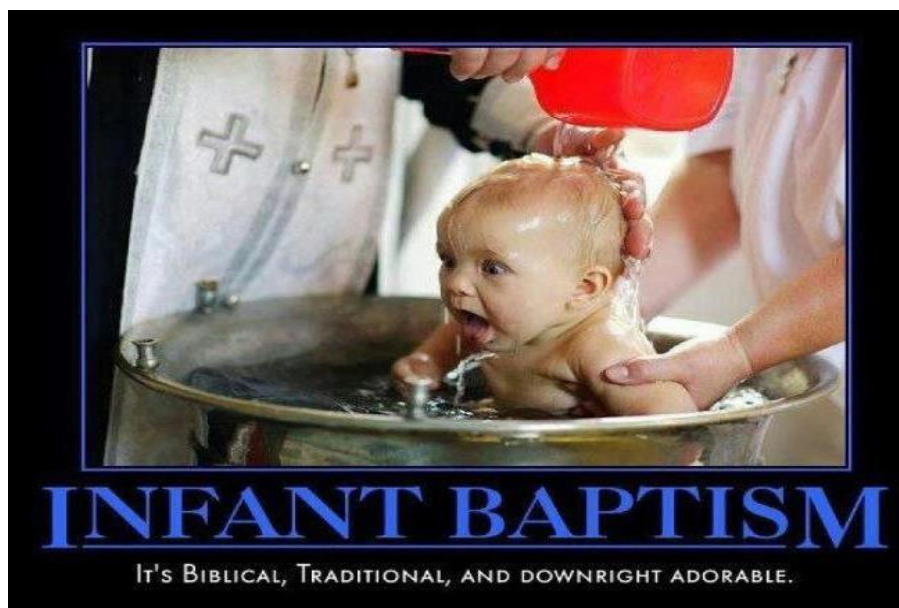
1. Those who became Christians as adults (see for instance Acts 2:41)
2. The families of those who became Christians - parents and children (see Acts 16:13-34)



Peter, one of Jesus' apostles, declares that since the **promise** of God's acceptance is for adults and for their children, then the **sign** of baptism is also for parents and their children. (Acts 2:38-39 NIV) "Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. {39} **the promise is for you and your children** and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call.""

For this reason the Presbyterian Church baptises two groups of people.

1. The children of Christian parents, because as such, they belong to the people of God.
2. Adults who become Christians





# The Lord's Supper

We celebrate The Lord's Supper, or Communion, on the second Sunday of alternate months at all three services. We welcome all those who love Jesus to join us. Communicant membership formally qualifies people to participate in communion.



Church members eat some bread and drink some grape juice (representing wine) together. This is in obedience to Jesus who, at the Last Supper, commanded his disciples to repeat the meal in remembrance of Jesus.

At the meal, Jesus broke bread and said, "This is my body" (Matthew 26:26). It is a symbol of his broken body that was lifted up on the cross as an acceptable sacrifice for our sin. Jesus offered the disciples the cup of wine, and said, "This is my blood." It represents his blood that brings forgiveness of sins.

**Matthew 26:26-28** While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." 27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

The Lord's Supper encourages us, and strengthens our faith in many ways:

## We look back

The Lord's Supper is a reminder of what Jesus did in the past, a symbol of our present relationship with him and a promise of what he will do in the future. The Lord's Supper **looks back** to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross (Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:26). We gratefully remember his sacrifice for us, and that our present life comes by his death.

**1 Cor 11:23-26** The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

## We look up

The Lord's Supper also pictures our present relationship with Jesus Christ. The crucifixion has a continuing significance to all who have taken up a cross to follow Jesus. We continue to participate in his death (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:20) because we participate in his life (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:13; 3:1).

With the Lord's Supper, we show that we *share* in Jesus Christ. We participate with him, commune with him, become united in him. (1 Cor. 10:16). The Lord's Supper helps us **look upward**, to Christ. The Lord's Supper reminds us that real life is found only in Jesus Christ, with him living in us, just as food and drink become one with us.

**1 Cor 10:16** Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

Knowing that we have Christ in us give us the strength and faith and power to live for him. The Lord's Supper helps us to know these things.

### **We look inward**

When we are aware that Jesus lives in us, we also pause to think what kind of home we are giving him. We allow him to change our lives so that we live the way he wants us to. The Lord's Supper helps us **look inward**, to examine ourselves because of the great meaning in this ceremony (1 Cor. 11:28).

*1 Cor 11:27-29 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.*

### **We look around**

As we examine ourselves, we need to **look around**, to other people, to see whether we are treating one another in the way that Jesus commanded.

If *you* are united with Christ and *I* am united with Christ, then we are united to each other, too. The Lord's Supper, by picturing our participation in Christ, also pictures our participation (other translations may say communion or sharing or fellowship) with each other (1 John 1:3, 7). The Lord's Supper pictures the fact that we are one body in Christ, one with each other, with responsibilities toward one another (1 Cor 10:17).

*1 Cor 10:17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*

### **We look forward**

The Lord's Supper also reminds us of the future, of Jesus' return. Jesus said he would not drink the fruit of the vine again until he came in the fullness of the kingdom (Matt. 26:29; Luke 22:18; Mark 14:25). Whenever we participate, we are reminded of Jesus' promise. Paul wrote that "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death *until he comes*" (1 Cor. 11:26). The Lord's Supper helps us **look forward**.

*1 Cor 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

Participating in the Lord's Supper, as we prayerfully and gratefully look back, upwards, inwards and around and forward, strengthens our souls to live for Jesus, just as physical food strengthens our bodies.

## **Notes and Questions:**