



CITY *Hill*

A Christ Centered, Gospel Advancing,
City Impacting Church



added

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This booklet is designed to provide you with a comprehensive understanding of who we are, what we believe, where we came from and where we're going, and most importantly, how you can play a part.

Who we are

Our journey began in 2005 when 60 people started meeting together in the city as Gateway Church under the leadership of Clive Cernik. In 2010 Steve Oliver moved from South Africa to take over from Clive as he returned home to the UK.

By 2012 we had become a church of 500 people and felt led by God to multiply to two congregations and Gateway Creek and Gateway South were formed.

In 2015 Gateway Creek became a fully independent church, under the leadership of Fusi Mokoena and team, and began to embrace a new vision to be a city impacting church.

At the start of 2017 Gateway Creek became City Hill Church in response to this vision.

Regions Beyond

City Hill is part of a family of churches called 'Regions Beyond' who work together under the leadership of Steve Oliver, supporting and encouraging one another, sharing resources, and creating opportunities for leadership development and ministry. We carry a vision to plant community-impacting churches around the world, currently working into Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Americas and Europe. Characterised by dynamic New Testament leadership, a functioning body of released people, raising the next generation, enabling the poor, relational and prophetically driven.

Our Vision

A Christ centered, gospel advancing, city impacting church.

Gospel

- We want to see a worshipping, growing community, in love with Jesus
- A worship center characterised by the presence of God
- A preaching center preaching the word without compromise
- See consumers transformed into contributors
- Sacrificial lifestyle
- Shift from me centered meetings to missional meetings
- Maintain a culture of excellence
- All members are hosts and not just attendees

Community

- We want to see a caring, serving and loving community
- Alternative community
- A transforming community
- A witnessing community (both in word and deed)
- Enjoying together times with other churches
- Social events within our church
- Citigroups and other Christ-centered communities

City and Culture

- We want to see an impacting and evangelistic community
- A city within a city - A city on a hill cannot be hidden
- A church you can't ignore
- Engaging with the culture to redeem the culture
- Social justice, advocacy and mercy
- Speaking into brokenness - the gospel has the power to heal our city
- A lay launching community - market place gospel
- Learn and teach about public square - how to be a Christian in the public square
- Contextualisation - how the gospel can reach people from different walks of life without compromising the message
- Tapping into the world of the arts

Movement

- We want each member to recognise themselves as part of a larger movement of God within the wider community
- Recognise you are part of a movement (the bigger picture)
- Expansion and multiplication of communities
- Partner with churches in the nations
- Plant churches in the UAE and in the nations

Our Values

Word: We believe in the written word of God - the Bible. God's written word has authority over the spoken word (prophecy, wisdom, advice etc). We also believe God does speak to us in many other ways, including prophecy.

The Spirit of God: We believe God has given the Holy Spirit to believers and to the church to empower us to serve and love, and also to receive more revelation about God, the church and the world.

Worship: We believe in a worshipping community. Our worship is not limited to our Friday morning gatherings as we also worship in other mid-week meetings. We believe worship is an attitude and lifestyle.

Discipleship: We believe a disciple is someone who has made the big decision to follow Christ and to live his life for him. In City Hill we believe in telling people about Jesus and also helping them on the journey.

Grace: We believe God through Christ saves us from sin, self and eternal separation with Himself. It is by grace we have been saved through faith. We did nothing to deserve God's saving grace. We also believe we are to extend this grace to others.

Prayer: We believe prayer should be right at the heart of everything we do. This shows our total dependency on God. We believe we can do nothing without Him.

Gospel: We believe the gospel of Jesus has the power to save and transform individuals and communities. We ought to receive the gospel, embody it and proclaim it.

Baptism: We believe in the believer's baptism. We believe there is such power in every act Jesus instructed us to do, and baptism is one such act.

Community: We believe the church is a community of God here on Earth. It is a community within the wider community. It is a place whereby the love of God is to be demonstrated and received. It is a caring and sharing community.

Eldership team: We believe in elder-led church. God has anointed people to shepherd His church and to envision it.

Servant-leadership: We believe leaders are to love and serve the people. Jesus himself washed His disciples' feet. Such acts of service help us with our perspective on leadership.

The poor: We believe the church has a mandate from the Bible to embrace those who are materially and spiritually poor.

The local church: We believe in the cosmic/universal church, but we also believe in the local church. We believe every Christ-follower is to be plugged in to a local church to worship, serve, give and grow.

The city: We believe God loves our city. We do not see the city as a necessary evil. In fact, the gospel message we proclaim has the power to shape our city.

Welcome: We are a church that welcomes people from different walks of life.

Unity and diversity: We believe the church consists of people from different cultures and nations with a single goal, that is, to glorify Jesus. We are united together by Jesus. Through Christ's finished work on the cross we have now become one new humanity.

Biblical family life: The church is a family and it is our conviction that the biblical family model is to be embraced and lived out by all members of the church, including children, parents and singles.

Gospel advance: We believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news to individuals, communities and nations. God has given the church the mandate to take this news to the world.

Actions we especially value

Serving: Jesus Himself did not come to be served but to serve. Therefore, we don't just serve to get the job done, but to imitate Christ and develop godly maturity. Truly, serving is a fundamental characteristic of the Christian life. At City Hill we are all contributors understanding that - "We are joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, as each part does its share".

Hospitality: Hospitality refers to words, actions and attitudes of love and acceptance towards others. All City Hill members practice hospitality by: (a) regarding the Friday venue as our personal living room at home where we help others feel welcome, and (b) by opening our homes (or coffee shops!) to others. The point is, to get on the front foot in friend-making.

Generosity with money: Serving God and His mission through the Church through giving our money is a massive theme in Scripture. We will talk more about this later, and we elaborate in greater detail on our philosophy of giving.

Our Style

Authentic: What you see is what you get. Honest. Gritty. Non-criinge. Non-'religious'.

Vibrant: Like our Dubai culture.

Excellent: Jesus was excellent. Dubai people respect excellence. Let's be excellent.

Warm: A warm sense of brotherhood, and genuine concern for each other.

Informal but organised: Efficient and excellent, but with an informal, non-corporate vibe.

Conversational but authoritative: Leadership is confidently expressed in a warm, conversational tone.

Humble but confident: Knowing we are called by God makes us both humble and confident.

Humorous: Laughter is good for the soul and helps relational connection. Wit, banter and leg-pulling.

Non-judgemental: As grace-recipients, we are non-condemnatory. We welcome people from all walks of life.

Our Leadership

City Hill is led by a leadership team. They oversee the church in terms of doctrine, direction and discipline, seeking the way that God would have the church grow and develop and taking responsibility for this. They are not the only leaders. There are lots of leaders in the church community, with all kinds of gifts.

Who's who?

Jesus is the head of the Church. This means we prayerfully look to Him for direction and leadership style. Then, City Hill has a Leadership Team, led by Fusi Mokoena, which governs our church and which develops pastoral teams and serving teams.

We also receive external support, advice and accountability from apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor/teachers from within the Regions Beyond movement and beyond.

Departments and serving teams

We have various departments and serving teams that function within the church. They are responsible for making everything happen, both on a Friday morning and throughout the week. Here's a list of our current teams:

Events	Hospitality
Worship and sound	Citigroups
Youth	Welcome
Prayer ministry	Ushering
Production	Administration
Projection	Information
Citikids	Transportation
First aid	Finance
Added	

Citigroups

'Diverse communities that impact a diverse city'

A Citigroup is a community of people that meet together on a regular basis in our city. Citigroups are environments that are both life-giving and life-sharing with the common vision to transform our city by advancing the gospel.

Citigroups are where we do family throughout the week and where people become connected in to the life of the church. We have many different types of Citigroups that meet all over the city. For more information please approach our Information Desk on a Friday morning.

What we believe

When thinking about theology and membership, it is helpful to think of three categories:

Vital doctrines

These are essential, non-negotiable Bible truths that all City Hill members must believe, for example: Jesus will return, we should each be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Less-essential doctrines

These are other less-essential theologies where there is room for diversity of respected interpretations of Scripture, for example: When and how Jesus will return, when and how you get filled with the Holy Spirit.

To feel comfortable at City Hill you would probably want to agree with 80%+ of our interpretations.

Personal preferences

These are not even doctrines. They are subjective opinions about how things should be done. They are not right or wrong but more about personal style or taste, for example: Length of meeting and style of worship.

Here's what we believe on the following topics:

God

God is the creator and ruler of the universe. There is only one God and he eternally exists in three persons - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – the Trinity.

Things we especially value about God

His gospel: The gospel is the good news about Jesus' life, death and resurrection and the resulting benefits that come our way. We preach the gospel as the power to get saved and live saved.

His sovereignty: Although our choices and actions really matter, understanding that our sovereign Father is actively ruling and reigning now over all things produces believers and churches that are humble yet confident, worshipful yet hard-working, and purposeful but not driven.

His grace: Newcomers often remark on the atmosphere of friendliness and acceptance. Here's how it works - God accepts us undeservedly and unconditionally. And, Jesus said that we should love each other as He has loved us. This means that we accept one another undeservedly and unconditionally – not on the basis of performance, but on the basis of grace. We are a secure and free community of people.

His word and His Spirit: New Testament church-life throbbed with both rich theology and the life of the Spirit. To this end, our Friday meetings involve preaching from the Bible, Spirit-led worship, and opportunities for using the gifts of the Spirit. We also have occasions for people to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Remember, just word you dry up. Just Spirit you blow up. Word and Spirit you grow up.

The Trinity

Perhaps the most obviously Christian of all doctrines, we believe that there is one God, infinite, eternal, all-powerful, holy, loving and true who exists in three distinct persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person is co-existent, co-equal and co-eternal. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit, yet each is truly God. This doctrine is foundational to all of Christianity. (Deuteronomy 6:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 3:16,17)

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God (John 5:18), begotten not made (Hebrews 1:5-6), who is the Word made flesh (John 1:1-3). He was incarnated as a man, by being conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. He is both fully God (Colossians 2:9) and fully man and is perfect in every way. While being sinless, He has chosen to identify Himself with sinful humanity that it might be redeemed. Through Him all things were made, but He Himself is before all things, and in Him, all things hold together. He is the ultimate revelation of the Father, the true image of the invisible God. He offered Himself up for death on a cruel Roman cross as a substitute for those who would believe in Him. By rising from the dead, Jesus demonstrated that His sacrifice was accepted by the Father. He has now ascended into heaven, never to die again, from where He rules as Lord of all, interceding for His people especially, who eagerly await His return.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity (Genesis 1:2) and comes to reveal to the world the Father and the Son (John 16:15). He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8-11). Through the preaching of the gospel (Romans 10:17), the Spirit comes and makes people who were dead in their sin alive to God (Ephesians 2:4-5). He does this by uniting a new believer to Jesus, thus making a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). It is in this new person that the Holy Spirit then dwells (1 Corinthians 3:16). The Spirit leads the people of God to understand God's word (1 Corinthians 2:13); bear spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22-23) and become more and more like Jesus in character. Believers are to continue asking God to fill them with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), to be empowered to live a godly life and equip them with supernatural gifts, both "normal" ones and more overtly miraculous ones (1 Corinthians 12 & 14; Romans 12; 1 Peter 4:10-11). All of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are in operation today.

Man

God made man, both male and female, in His own image, as the pinnacle of creation (Genesis 1:26, 27). Man was created to fellowship with God in a unique way. However, after being tempted by Satan, man rebelled against God and became estranged from his maker and subject to divine wrath. Incapable of returning to God without miraculous intervention on the part of God, man is ruined by sin, which affects all of him - mind, will and emotions (Romans 3:23). Unregenerate man lives under the dominion of sin and Satan, and is hostile to God (Ephesians 2:1-3,12). However, all people, whether regenerate or not, still bear the imprint of their maker, and are therefore capable of glorious achievements in business, art, literature, politics, education and every sphere of life.

The world

We believe that the world is in a mess because of what man has done. However, God's plan is to put the world right, through the man Jesus. He calls us to be involved, to bring hope and healing to a broken world, restoring it to what it was meant to be.

The Bible

The Bible, made up of 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books, is the fully inspired word of God (2 Peter 1:21). This book is God's revelation of Himself to mankind (1 Corinthians 14:37). Because it is God's revelation, it is free of error and our only authoritative guide for all of faith and life. Scripture is not to be added to or taken away from. All believers should diligently study and apply the Bible to their lives (2 Timothy 3:16).

It was written by human authors, under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living.

We believe all the words in Scripture are God's words. The Bible claims this for itself. We believe the Bible is true, therefore all the words in Scripture are completely true and without error in any part.

We believe God's words are the ultimate standard of truth. We believe the Bible is essential for Spiritual growth, spiritual victory and spiritual defence.

The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God refers to the reality of God's reign in all areas of society, not just within the "four walls" of the church. The church is part of the Kingdom, and within the Kingdom all callings are sacred and we are all in "full-time" Christian work, being salt, light and yeast in the workplace. To this end, we are committed to empowering believers to influence the city (Dubai) with Kingdom values in whatever sector of society they find themselves in.

The Church

The church is a family: The Bible uses terms like 'household' for the church. The church is a spiritual family. In fact, your spiritual family is going to outlast your physical family. We believe God expects every believer to be a member of a church family.

The church is a body: The body is not only unified, is it also made up of many members. Think about the parts noted in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 - The hand, the ear, the eye, the nose.

Each of these parts have a function. The foot is to walk, the hand is to grasp, the ear is to hear, the eye is to see, the nose is to smell. We who are the church members are supposed to function in the church. The concept of an inactive church member is an oxymoron. Biblically, no such member really exists.

The Bible evokes some metaphors to better explain and define the church. These metaphors help us to understand not only how to define the church but also her relationship with God.

God's purpose to bring His rule on earth: God's purpose is to bring all things under the Lordship of Christ, including man (Ephesians 1). The Bible also tells us that creation is waiting for man to be restored back to God. The way in which God has purposed for this to happen is through a company of Christ-followers. The church

proclaims, and advances the rule of Christ on earth, thus calling people to believe in God and enter into an eternal relationship with God.

What does it mean for you?

- Know your identity and your function
- Give yourself to Kingdom work
- Exalt as well as honour Christ in everything

God's bride: The Bible calls Jesus the bridegroom and the church is the bride. Christ chose the church to be His bride, He loves her freely and unconditionally. Jesus gave Himself up for the church and is now on a mission of sanctifying her, having cleansed her by the washing of water through the Word (Ephesians 5). What the church anticipates in the future is the marriage ceremony of the lamb (Revelations 19:6-9), whereby Christ and the church will finally consummate this marriage. This metaphor leave us wanting to know more about this special day, however, we don't have any further details. The key for us it to understand the depth of our relationship with Jesus and thereby live in the fullness of this truth.

What does it mean for you?

- Cherish the church and take her seriously
- Pursue righteousness
- Give yourself to the word of God
- Be filled with the Holy Spirit

God's family: The church consists of people who are different and yet very similar. The Bible calls it family. In a family, there is unity and commonality. Family members share some features, genes and attributes. They also share a similar background, stories and values. But we also know that every member of the family is different in attitude, social skills and understanding from all the rest. Even identical twins are not exactly the same. Different family members also assume different responsibilities in the family. And so it is with the church.

We are all children of God, which makes Jesus our older brother. We all have one Spirit. But we are not clones. Each one is different. We have different skills, gifts, talents and yet are one family. We have

different roles in the family of God, based on what the Holy Spirit has apportioned for us. The church has leaders, teachers, prophets and those of many more gifts and we are encouraged to function in the gifts God gives us (Romans 12:7-8).

What does it mean for you?

- You are loved by God and by your family members
- You are not at work, you are at home
- Embrace the values of the family
- Express your love

God's gathered and scattered community: The local church is a community of Christ-followers that gather in one place to worship God, grow together and reach their sphere of influence for Jesus. But we also know from our definition of church, that it is not only limited to one gathered community at a particular location. The church also consists of those Christ-following communities scattered on the face of the Earth. Which means there is a small nucleus church and a universal church. We believe Jesus loves the local church in the same way as he loves the universal church. City Hill fits the category of the local church, it is also part of God's universal community.

What does it mean for you?

- Be an active not a passive member
- Be plugged in to the life of City Hill
- Join a Citigroup
- Embrace the vision and calling of City Hill
- See City Hill as part of the greater universal church

God's missionary agency: Although in our explanation of church, we tend to use the word 'gathered', we do not for that reason suggest it is the only activity the church is supposed to do. There is a commission and a mandate given to this gathered community. The church is to go into all the world and form more Christ-centered communities. We see how, in the book of Acts, God was able to gather many communities but we are also told how most of these communities were able to send people out to form more communities like them. This is because we are representatives of Christ on the Earth. The church is a body of believers entrusted with the message

of Christ, to make Christ-followers in every city, town and village around the world.

What does it mean for you?

- Participate in City Hill's mission
- Partner with City Hill on a mission
- Pray for City Hill's God-given mission

Christ's body: Another metaphor the Bible uses is that of the body. It sees the church as Christ's body here on earth. It is believed that Jesus is the head and we are the body. Just as the head leads the body - Jesus leads the church and he has also allowed each member of the body to participate in enabling health and functionality of the body. It is one body that consists of many parts, like the human body. These parts of the body are represented by individuals who together make up the body. If the members are not functioning well, the body gets affected. We also learn that each member is valuable in the body of Christ which means, members that might look weaker than others are indispensable in the body (1 Corinthians 12).

What does it mean for you?

- Play your part in the body
- The body needs you
- Serve and get served
- Support other members of the body
- Be connected to the head

The community: The church is not just a group of individuals living lives in isolation whilst committed to meeting together for selfish reasons. Rather, we are a community, which means we live in one another's worlds. We share lives together and we also support and encourage one another.

Priesthood of all believers: As part of the church, Christians...

Worship together: To worship means to give someone their due, and because God is so worthy of all honour and praise, to worship Him is to give glory to Him. In one sense everything we do as Christians is worship, however Christians have always met together to praise God. It is important to remember that this is our purpose. In

our times of corporate worship, the preaching should be biblical and the singing should be offered with thanksgiving. Jesus is our Lord and so we agree with Paul's urging in Romans 12:1 - *In view of God's mercy, to offer ourselves as living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.* This is our spiritual act of worship.

Pray together: In our personal relationship with God we speak to Him in private as Jesus taught us. But we also gather together with the believers to pray. When we see Christians praying in the New Testament they are normally doing it together. Even the prayer that Jesus gave us as an example for our prayers assumes that we will be praying together; it begins with 'Our Father'. Since it is God who works in people's lives, it is important to pray for Him to work among us.

Learn together: God has given us his word in the Bible, so that we may know all that needs to be known about Himself, about ourselves and about the world we live in. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring revelation when we read the Bible. It is our privilege to read the Bible ourselves, but God has called and equipped some people to be teachers of others. He also uses others, either preachers, or our Citigroups, to help us learn more.

Serve together: Christians sometimes value church life for what it can give to them. There is more to Christianity and the church than that. Our shared life within the church gives us the opportunity to serve. Each part of the body has its own special contribution to the welfare and work of the whole. Some of the service is given within the church, some is to others outside and some is done as we live out the good news in our lives at home, work and in our city.

Diversity

We are committed to building a diverse church that includes many different cultures, languages and age groups. This is not about being politically correct. Rather, it stems from our theological conviction that God is more glorified by diversity than by uniformity because it reveals His Lordship over all things - *With your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation* (Revelation 5:9).

Mission

We don't limit the mission to 'mission trips'. We believe the whole church is a missions department. We train every person to be missional. Our jobs are missionary assignments. Our homes are mission stations. Our money is mission ammunition. Our meetings are mission moments.

We are currently involved with a number of nations around the world and we believe God has called us to go into different nations of the world to preach the gospel, to make disciples, as well as to plant churches.

Leadership

How do we try to lead?

In keeping with the leadership example of Jesus and Paul, we seek to be gentle, humble and approachable, leading in a down-to-earth manner, with servant hearts, through example and with God's authority (Hebrews 13:7-24).

How do we try to follow?

In turn, we encourage followers to follow by emulating our example; honouring the reality that we must give account to God, obeying us (within the bounds of God's word and conscience), helping us enjoy our leadership, and by praying for us (Hebrews 13:7-24).

The gospel

The gospel is the exceedingly magnificent news that God has sent His Son to live a perfect life on behalf of sinful people who never could, and then die the death they deserved to die (John 3:16). The story of the person of Jesus is therefore the gospel. God, being perfectly holy, demanded justice for sin and couldn't "just forgive" anyone without His holiness being corrupted. Therefore, from eternity past, the members of the Trinity planned amongst themselves to act in great love toward humanity by the Father sending His only Son to

bear His just wrath for sin so that those who put their trust in the Son by the power of the Spirit may be acquitted of their rebellion. At the cross we see the perfect mix of God's love, mercy, holiness and judgement and to the believer, this is an awe-inspiring sight (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Because even one sin cannot go unpunished by God, we learn in the gospel that no amount of good works could ever make up for our accumulated sin. Therefore, we can only be saved by grace through trusting in Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf, and all religious systems or world-views that suggest we can be made right with God through doing good works, are both unbiblical and irrational (Ephesians 2:8-10). The gospel both destroys any pride (since it is a gift of grace) and gives us great confidence (since God is the one who has done the work for us).

We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1; 38-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; 1 Peter 1:5). While we cannot earn a right standing with God by doing good works, a life of righteousness and good works is the only appropriate response for someone who has believed the gospel (Galatians 5:13). So while the gospel is good news to be believed, a holy lifestyle is an outworking and implication of believing the gospel (James 1:22-26).

Salvation/conversion requires the following:

Recognise your state

Ephesians 2:1-3 summarises brilliantly the state we were in before salvation – *You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

Something has to happen

Ephesians 2:4-7 goes on to explain what God did for us in Christ Jesus to bring us into His kingdom - *But God, being rich in mercy,*

because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Salvation is the work of God alone in Christ Jesus. We did nothing to save ourselves, in fact we had no power to do so. God single-handedly, by his grace, through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross and in his resurrection, saved us.

Here is a simple process of salvation/conversion to help you understand:

Scripture puts repentance and faith together as different aspects of the one act of coming to Christ for salvation. It is not that a person first turns from sin and next trusts in Christ, or trusts in Christ and then turns from sin, but rather that both occur at the same time. When we turn to Christ for our salvation from our sin, we are simultaneously turning away from the sins that we are asking Christ to save us from. Which means, repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin or two different aspects of the one event of conversion. This means, we cannot have genuine faith in Christ without repentance, neither can true repentance from our sin happen without faith in Christ. Conversion also means accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord of our lives. Again, it's worth noting that, we cannot accept Jesus just as Saviour, he is to be both Lord and Saviour. Salvation involves repenting from sin and putting our faith in Christ Jesus. It also means accepting Him as Lord and Saviour of our lives.

True faith includes knowledge of who Christ is and what He has done and personal trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

True repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.

Christian, Christ-follower, Believer, Disciple

Christian: The Bible uses the term Christian: Acts 11:26. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. The reason for this was because these people were followers of Christ (the anointed one of God) and the name Christian seemed fitting.

Christ-follower: In some circles, people would prefer to be called Christ-followers. This is no different to Christian. The phrase just simply means those who follow Christ - His teachings, His principles and His commands.

Believer: This means people who believe in Jesus. That He is the Son of God, that He died and rose again, that He paid a penalty for their sin, and that He is Lord and Saviour of the world. Again, these can also be called Christians, or Christ-followers.

Disciple: This is a very common term in the Bible. It simply means a student. Jesus had 12 disciples He taught day and night for about 3 years, He also taught many others. We also see in Matthew 28:19 how He sends His disciples to make other disciples around the world. This means those who come to believe in Jesus through His disciples' mission and ministry are also called disciples of Jesus Christ. Again, these are Christians, Christ-followers or believers.

Therefore, we can conclude from Acts 2:47 - *God added to the church/community (their number) daily those who were being saved*, that people who became Christians or followers of Jesus were added to an existing community of believers, which means those who followed Christ. This also means that being added to a church community is crucial, and that salvation is a pre-requisite to this whole process.

Baptism

Mode - The practice of baptism in the New Testament was carried out in one way, the person being baptised was immersed, or put completely under the water, and then brought back up again. Baptism by immersion is therefore the mode of baptism or the way in which baptism was carried out.

The Greek word 'baptizo' means to immerse/plunge/submerge something in water.

Passages on water baptism:

Matthew 28:19 The great commission

Acts 8:35-38 Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 16:32-33 The Philippian jailer

The New Testament passages about baptism suggest that it was administered only to those who gave a believable profession of faith. Acts 2:41 - *Those who received his words were baptised.* Acts 8:12 - *when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women.*

It is very clear from Scripture that salvation comes before baptism. That is, you first believe the good news and only then can you be baptised. Baptism is not salvation.

Meaning – baptism as a symbol

Romans 6:3-6 *Don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death: in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

The essential thing symbolised in baptism is death and resurrection as well as cleansing from sin. Water in Scripture is an evident symbol of washing and cleansing. So, it seems quite clear from Scripture

that water baptism is a symbol that you have died with Christ and are raised from the dead with Him. It also symbolised the cleansing of sin through the finished work of Christ on the cross. It is also worth mentioning that Scripture commands us to baptise in the triune God - that is, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

When you are baptised, symbolically you die with Christ (Jesus died on the cross) and you are raised with him (resurrection) into new life (new creation); the old has gone and the new has come. You are cleansed. Therefore these are some of the things you are declaring through this symbolic act:

- You identify with Christ, in his death and resurrection
- You are now part of a new community of God – you are publicly saying to all present “I am now making a statement, that I am a new creation” (symbolically)
- You are making a statement to the principalities and powers “You have no power over me anymore, I am no longer yours, I belong to Christ” (symbolically)
- Like the Israelites, coming out of slavery into new life, once slaves to sin, but now slaves to righteousness.

Further clarity on water baptism

Is it for anyone?

Yes and no. Yes, it's for anyone who believes in Christ. No, it's not for those who don't believe; you have to believe in Jesus as the Son of God.

How do we baptise people in City Hill (practically)?

Fusi stands with the person wanting to be baptised in some water that is deep enough that they could be fully submersed (often a swimming pool).

We would first ask the following questions so we know they are Christ-followers:

Do you believe Jesus is your Lord and Saviour?

Do you believe He died for you?

If it is a 'yes' for both questions, then we would baptise, by briefly laying the person back to be fully submersed in water. The person

being baptised would hold their nose, and their head is only under the water for about one second.

Please be aware you will be doing this before witnesses and before God. Your witnesses could include family members, the church family as well as friends.

Do we baptise infants?

No. The Bible makes it very clear that you respond to the gospel and you are baptised. Nowhere in the Bible do we see a baby baptised. Even Jesus was mature and about to start his vocation/ministry when he got baptised.

Do I become a Christian when I get baptised?

No, you believe first and then you get baptised. Baptism does not make you a believer, we baptise believers.

What about sprinkling?

The word Baptism means immersion.

John 3:23 – John needed plenty of water in order to baptise.

Does that mean we dip/immerse you 3 times, since it's in the triune God?

No, we believe God is one-in-three persons. So, once is enough.

Do we re-baptise?

In order to be baptised according to Scripture, you would first believe in Christ and then be baptised. If you were sprinkled with water during a christening ceremony, you were too young to have a knowing relationship with God or to make a confession of faith. We would recommend you be baptised again as a Christ-follower able to make a confession of faith and be fully submerged in water.

If you have been baptised according to Scripture, but have had a period of your life where you were not walking with God and you want to recommit to a relationship with Him then you do not need to be re-baptised.

What if I got baptised at my previous church?

We don't need to re-baptise you here in City Hill.

What if I have sinned?

Baptism does not cleanse you from your sin; Jesus does and has done it already on the cross. Repent and confess your sins to Him and receive His forgiveness. God's grace is sufficient, do not let sin stop you from taking this powerful step in your faith journey.

What if I got baptised before I became a believer?

I would recommend you get baptised again, because you were not a believer in Christ then.

Holy Spirit

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is not 'it', but 'He'. The Bible never refers to Him as 'it'. So we must learn to follow Scripture.

"The Spirit is not lightly called the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Christ has put a human face on the Spirit as well. Not only has the coming of the Christ changed everything for Paul, so too has the coming of the Spirit. In dealing with the Spirit, we are dealing with none other than the personal presence of God."

- Gordon Fee (Paul, the Spirit and the People of God. Pg25.)

The Holy Spirit is God. God is the Holy Spirit, and those who worship Him ought to worship in spirit and in truth. We believe God eternally exists in three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person is fully God and there is only one God. The Holy Spirit is the third member of the trinity or Godhead. But that does not mean He comes last or that He is less than the Father or the Son. Do remember there's only one God. In the New Testament the Bible talks about the Holy Spirit filling people as well as baptising them.

To be filled and to be baptised:

Two passages to compare:

1. 1 Corinthians 12:13 does not talk about Holy Spirit baptism
2. Acts 1:5 talks about Holy Spirit baptism

1 Corinthians 12 does not talk about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We don't believe that what Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 12:13 is the same as what is happening in Acts 1 and 2. Paul says in 1 Corinthians *"For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free."* The context shows that he is referring to a work of the sovereign Spirit who unites all believers to Christ. This is virtually the same as the work of conversion. When you are born again and put your faith in Christ, the Spirit of God unites you to Christ so that you are part of his body and a fellow heir with him to eternal life. Paul seems to use the phrase *'baptised into one body'* to denote you have been added to the body of Christ, which is the church.

Whereas, Acts 1:5 talks about baptism with the Holy Spirit, not the same as water baptism (John's baptism according to Luke). Acts 1:5 is also followed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:1-19: Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the fulfilment of Joel 2, and also, Acts 2:1-19 is the fulfilment of Acts 1:5.

Passages on baptism in the Holy Spirit:

Acts 1:5

- You will be clothed with or you will receive power
- You will be Jesus' witnesses

Acts 2:1-19

- The believers spoke in tongues - that is, other languages
- Tongues of fire rested on them
- Prophecy, see visions, dream dreams

Acts 19 Filled with the Holy Spirit

- They Spoke in tongues - not another human language – a heavenly language
- They prophesied

Acts 10:44-46 Filled with the Holy Spirit

- They were speaking in tongues
- They were magnifying God in worship

Other passages: Acts 11:16 – the Holy Spirit falls upon the Gentiles.

What do we see from these passages?

- Baptism in the Holy Spirit happens to those who are believers in Christ Jesus. They believed and were filled or baptised.
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit does not have to happen before or after baptism in water. The Bible does not provide any order between these two.
- When you are baptised/filled with the Holy Spirit you receive power from on high.
- When you are baptised/filled with the Holy Spirit you are empowered to witness about Jesus.
- Many people who are baptised with the Holy Spirit speak in tongues (a heavenly language) ref. Acts 19
- When the Spirit comes upon us, we receive spiritual gifts to serve God e.g. prophecy.

Further clarity on baptism in the Holy Spirit:

Baptism in the Holy Spirit and conversion/salvation:

Conversion comes before baptism in the Holy Spirit. Acts 19 – The disciples (believers) were baptised with the Holy Spirit.

Conversion is the work of the Spirit – 1 Corinthians 12:13. It is the Holy Spirit who brings revelation and conviction of sin thereby helping us recognise our need for the gospel.

Can I be filled with the Holy Spirit during my conversion?

The answer to this question is yes. Many people have had that experience but not everyone.

What baptism with the Holy Spirit is not:

It's not being born again: Acts 19:2 *Did you receive the Spirit when you believed?* Paul speaking to the disciples in Ephesus. Which means they were already converted.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit is not the same as water baptism. The Bible is very clear that the two are not one and the same thing.

How often can a believer be filled with the Holy Spirit?

As often as possible. *Keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit* (Ephesians 5:18). That does not really mean you go on being

baptised with the Holy Spirit, it simply means you will continue to receive the power needed from God through the outpouring of the Spirit in order to do the things of God.

Can I be filled with the Holy Spirit and not speak in tongues?

Yes, not everyone speaks in tongues. However, we are told in the Bible to eagerly desire spiritual gifts. Do ask God to give you the gift of tongues.

What other evidence is there of the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Worship, love, patience, self-control etc.

Spiritual gifts

Here in City Hill, we believe every Christian is gifted to play a unique part and valued role in the Church. We are convinced that God has given each one of us a gift or gifts to do this. These gifts are given through and by God the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts are not our talents of skills. They are the grace of God at work in our lives. Through these Gifts God empowers us to serve, equip and strengthen his body and to extend his rule on earth.

We would like you to begin a journey of discovering and exploring what gifts God has given you. We believe that in your Citigroup you shall have with you people who are able to help you on this journey of discovery.

Below are some of the spiritual gifts:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| Administration | Interpretation of tongues |
| Hospitality | Wisdom |
| Apostleship | Knowledge |
| Discernment | Leadership |
| Evangelism | Mercy |
| Exhortation | Miracles |
| Faith | Pastor/ Shepherd |
| Prophecy | Serving/ Minister |
| Giving | Teaching |
| Healing | |

We believe gifts are given to us but not for us. Apart from the gift of tongues that Paul says you can use to edify yourself, all the other gifts are meant to bless others and not self. Which means we ought to exercise these God-given gifts to bless others.

Money

What does the Bible teach about giving?

Giving away money is a huge theme in Scripture. It is ultimately an issue of worship; you cannot serve both God and money. The Bible speaks of the benefits of giving and warns of the perils of not giving. A helpful passage is 2 Corinthians 8:7 – *But just as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness, and your love for us – see also that you excel in this grace of giving.*

As good as contributions in other areas might be, they don't excuse lack of excellence in giving - our giving should be excellent. But notice he says the key is to understand how grace relates to giving.

People often ask if we have to tithe today, similar to what happened in the Old Testament. The answer is "Of course not. We now have a motivation to give way more." While those in the Old Testament had experienced God's grace, they had little idea of the lengths God would go to in saving His people. Now that we see that God didn't even spare His very best – His own Son – and the radical nature of God's grace has become abundantly clear, we are now far more motivated and empowered to give radically and sacrificially.

So, in terms of "How much should I give?" the answer is that it would probably be strange to give less now that we know what God has done for us in Jesus!

How do we apply these principles to church membership?

Church membership can only be meaningful if we agree on some application of biblical principles to church life. For example, we apply the biblical imperative of meeting together as attending Friday and Citigroup meetings.

Similarly with giving, it is helpful to have a shared application for membership. Our application is for each member to give in the zone of 10% gross income per month. This figure is not lifted from the “tithes” of the Old Testament, rather it has come from a combination of biblical principles:

- Giving generously in view of the gift of Jesus to us.
- Giving proportionally. Setting a baseline amount (e.g. 10%) assists in helping us be consistent and disciplined in giving.
- Giving being both bearable yet sacrificial.
- Leadership wisdom and application. Experience shows that each member giving around 10% gross income to the church is what it takes for us to do the mission of God well and sustainably, without either lack or excess.

This amount might seem a lot to those who have not done this before, and it might take a while to work up to giving this amount. Conversely, it might seem a little to those who have been in this kind of habit for years, and who may well give more. Either way, our heart is “how much can I get away with giving” not “how much can I get away with keeping.”

Application: We want all our members to embrace our philosophy of giving wholeheartedly in order to stay free from the love of money, and to finance the mission of God through the church.

How do I get added?

In one sense, what we know today as ‘church membership’ is not biblical. We have no record of first-century Christians deciding to become involved in one particular assembly of Christians rather than another. From what we can tell, there was no ‘church shopping’ because there was only one church in a community.

But we are also told in Acts 2:47 that the Lord *added* to their number daily those who were being saved. Here we see how people who

made a commitment to be disciples of Jesus (Christians) were later added to an already existing community of believers. This community is later called the church. The term 'church membership' was later introduced to make sense of that particular act of being added to a community of Christ-followers.

Church membership has developed in an attempt to help us grasp hold of each other in responsibility and in love. By identifying ourselves with a particular church, we let the leaders/elders and other members of that local church know we intend to be committed in attendance, giving, prayer and service, which in turn increases others' expectations of us in these areas.

We also assure the church community of our commitment to Christ in serving with them, and we call for their commitment to serve us in love and encourage us in our discipleship.

Why Membership?

Biblical reason: Jesus Christ is committed to his church - *Christ loved the church, and He gave his life for it/her* - Ephesians 5:25

- **It is stated in the Bible:** *Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about 3,000 were **added** to their number... and the Lord **added** to their number daily* (Acts 2:41,47). The biblical pattern is people get saved, then added to a local church.
- **It is implied in the Bible:** The Bible describes local church life as warm and personal, and the prominent "body" metaphor for the church assumes functioning, meaningful membership.
- **Leaders and followers:** The Bible cautions church leaders that they will be held to account for how they lead, and equally followers are instructed to obey their leaders. Both presuppose meaningful church membership.
- **New Testament structure:** The epistles are written to local churches assuming all believers would be members of local churches and therefore hear these epistles.
- **New Testament discipline:** In cases of on-going un-repentance Paul instructed the churches to expel members from the church.

Cultural reason: It is an antidote to our society. We live in an age where very few want to be committed to anything, such as a job,

marriage, etc. This attitude has even produced a generation of “church shoppers and hoppers”. Membership swims against the current of 21st century “consumer culture”. It is an unselfish decision. Commitment always builds character.

Practical reason: It defines who can be counted on.

Personal reason: It produces spiritual growth. The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. You cannot be accountable when you are not committed to any specific church family.

“Individuals who have never experienced the joy and delight of belonging to a loving and vital Christian body have missed one of the thrills of the Christian life. Mere ‘church-going’ was never in God’s plan for you. He wants you very closely knit with a group of dear friends with whom you can share your life.” - Terry Virgo

We are excited that you have made the decision to become a member of City Hill. Our prayer is that this will be the beginning of an exciting journey together as we seek to fulfil God’s purposes together. Becoming a member in City Hill is not about taking a membership class and you are done. It means that you commit to embracing the people and the vision of City Hill.

Members of the church have made a commitment to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and serve within His church. This membership course is a prerequisite for serving in City Hill.

Each of us will express our membership in unique ways due to our individual passions and gifts, but here are the main things that we all do:

Together through Citigroups

Citigroups are communities of around 8 to 20 people where we can feel a sense of belonging and be on mission as a team of friends. City Hill members are attached to a Citigroup to ensure pastoral care and healthy connection.

Together through Friday meetings

In today's individualistic and independent culture where many things compete for our time and energy, it is important to reaffirm the importance of meeting together as a church on Fridays. We gather on Fridays to imitate Christ and the early church, to mature and grow, and to provide a powerful context for unbelievers to come to faith.

Together through ministry teams

Jesus came to serve, rather than to be served and the Bible heralds serving as a sign of spiritual maturity. To this end, every member should be a part of some kind of ministry team. Many teams serve on a Friday (welcome team, kids work team, set-up teams etc.) and others are teams that serve in other ways and at other times.

Together through financial giving

We want all our members to embrace our philosophy of giving wholeheartedly in order to stay free from the love of money, and to finance the mission of God through the church.

Other membership FAQs

Can I become a member if I am not a believer?

Many unbelievers become part of the City Hill community, enjoying the friendship, vibe and teaching whilst they take time to explore the claims and teachings of Christ. Crossing the line of faith is the moment that you become part of "the body of Christ" which is the worldwide church consisting of all believers. This step needs to be taken before crossing the line of membership to the local church. Why not do that now? Or if you need more time, please remain fully part of our City Hill community whilst you consider becoming a Christian.

Can I be part of two churches?

Common sense and experience says "no". Being a part of more than one church can become complicated and breed a sense of comparison or competition. Some people may attend different churches in the belief they cannot find one that "meets all their needs", however it is important to remember as Christians we should think more about what we can give rather than receive from a church

body. We each have spiritual gifts which we should actively use to serve and minister to one another, and both you and the church benefit the most from your faithful commitment to one church body.

What if I am moving from another church?

If you're joining City Hill involves leaving another church where you were a member, it is important that you are leaving for good reasons, and that you honour and communicate well with both churches.

How do I leave City Hill?

When you joined us, you allowed us the privilege of sharing in that decision, and ideally a decision to leave us would be made with similar consultation, and a warm and brotherly spirit. Therefore, if you begin to sense that you should leave (for whatever reason), please talk to your pastor/leader as soon as you reach that point. Please try to avoid making the decision and then informing us afterwards, as this isn't particularly brotherly or honouring.

What next?

We are in Dubai, one of the 7 emirates of the United Arab Emirates. The UAE has a population of 9.8 million, with Dubai's population ranging somewhere in the region of 2.5 million. It receives 14.5 million visitors each year. It is a city where over 200 nationalities reside.

Dubai is such a strategic city for the advance of the gospel. In 1800, only 3% of the world's population lived in cities, by 2006, 50% did and by 2030 65% will. In the book of Acts, we find how Paul travels from city to city to spread the gospel. By 300AD half the citizens of that region were Christians. We also know that most of Paul's letters were written to cities.

Cities tend to be places where culture is formed. It is believed that culture flows from cities, as cities go, there goes culture. Many of the spheres of influence emanate from the city – politics, law, technology, arts and entertainment etc. The river of influence tends to flow from cities to towns and villages. Which means, the way to transform culture is to transform cities.

The biblical story begins with a garden and ends with a city. Which means cities are not only important in the now, but our future is also an urban future. We believe Dubai is on God's agenda as a strategic city, out of which many cities, towns and villages will be transformed. As City Hill, we are so privileged that God has placed us here to impact this city and to reach the nations. We would like to call on you to partner with us on this journey as we seek to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ in this city and around the world.

Group Work

- Please take turns to share with your group how you became a Christian. (If you haven't committed to Jesus yet, do feel free to also share, and should you feel after that explanation that you would like to do so, let the group leader know.)
- Have you been baptised in water? Give a brief testimony of your water baptism.
- If you haven't been baptised with water, would you like to? Please talk to your group leader.
- Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit?

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City Hill
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