**WELCOME!**

We are excited to welcome you to our Lake Pointe Bible Church “Discovery Class.” The class and this manual are divided into 2 sections. The first might be called **“Christianity 101,”** about what we believe as a church. The second section is **“Lake Pointe 101,”** about the distinctives and practices of our church. This class will be helpful for anyone interested in learning the basic teachings of the Bible, and for someone interested in knowing more about how our church operates. While it is not assumed that everyone who takes this class will commit to becoming a member of Lake Pointe, this class *is* required of anyone who wants to apply for membership so you will understand what we believe, teach and expect of God’s people here. You are about to begin a challenging process that could lead to some very important commitments in your life.

**Should You Become A Member?**

Membership is a term used to describe the act of committing to serve Christ at a specific local church. While all Christians are part of the “Universal Church,” the Bible also asks Christians to bond and commit to a *local* church. As we will discuss in later sessions, God has asked people who have become believers in Jesus Christ to become part of a local church where you can serve and be known. A local church is instructed to not only *do* certain things, but to work together in certain ways, including ways in which we demonstrate love for each other.

While the New Testament doesn’t offer specific instructions about local church membership requirements, it is clear that the local churches in the New Testament did have *lists* of who was part of their body. (How else, for instance, would the church in Jerusalem, a city of a million people, have known which widows they had a responsibility to care for, as in Acts 6?) Keeping a church membership role has become a common practice in local churches throughout history.

Becoming a member of Lake Pointe Bible Church does not earn your salvation or get you to heaven. Instead, it is a practical tool to help the church in caring for, teaching, and disciplining people as God’s Word requires. If you make a commitment to Lake Pointe as your church then we have certain obligations to you and you have certain obligations to the other believers here. Knowing who is a member helps manage those commitments.

Who can become a member? A local church is to “mirror” the Universal Church. The Universal Church includes any person who is trusting Christ for their salvation. So any believer in Jesus can become a member of Lake Pointe. A person as young as 4 or 5 can trust Christ, but in a practical sense, we would like the person to be old enough to understand and complete this Discovery course. (We leave that up to the parents’ discretion). In addition, a member may not vote in a church matter until he or she is 16 years old.

**How Does The Process of Becoming A Member Work?**

1. Complete this Discovery Class.
2. Fill out a commitment sheet and sign the statement of agreement with the basic teachings of Lake Pointe Bible Church.
3. Complete a short interview with one of the elders of the church, where you give a short testimony of your faith in Christ.
4. Be recognized and welcomed by the church!

As you can see, this “Discovery” process is meaningful and important. At the same time it is one of great joy in the Lord as we go through a process of bonding together as believers united in Christ.

**What If I Decide Membership Is Not For Me?**

There may be some reason you are not able to complete the membership process at this time. This does not mean that we want you to leave! We genuinely appreciate all who attend Lake Pointe services and functions, whether you’re a member or not-- and even whether you’re a Christian or not. However, as you would expect, we will ask you not to participate in activities that are for members only--such as voting--and your ability to serve as a teacher or leader will be limited. If you’d like, feel free to discuss any questions you have with one of our elders, and be aware that this class will be offered again in the future.

Thanks to these people who helped write this manual: Mark Bartlett, Dean Johnson, Denis Root, Mickey Stevens, John Gerrard, Bob Brown, and John Jakcsy.

### A Brief History of Lake Pointe Bible ChurchOur church began as Lake Pointe Community Chapel, holding Sunday morning services at Farrand Elementary School in the Lake Pointe Village subdivision, on the north side of Plymouth, during the months of May and June of 1968.  Services were suspended during the summer months of that year, but resumed at Farrand in September.  In addition, Sunday evening services and prayer meetings were started in various homes. September also brought Howard (and Leone) Bosworth to Lake Pointe as the first full-time worker.  The ministry grew and in January, 1969 the current property on Schoolcraft Road was purchased and the building started with the assistance of a ministry named Christian Expansion. The building was completed and occupied in July, 1969 with the official dedication held in November of that year.Ross and Lillian Rainey and family moved here in July of 1970, and Ross began a period of full-time service that extended to December, 1985, when he left to become a traveling speaker. During an interim period from 1985 to 1988, elders and deacons took responsibility of all ministries.

### In August, 1988 Ken and Carol Belch and family moved here to begin a fruitful period of service that extended for 13 years.  Ken later moved to pastor a church in Belleville, MI.

### When the Plymouth Road Gospel Hall in Redford closed down, many of the members came to Lake Pointe. That church owned 13 acres of land at the corner of Beck Road and Warren Road in Canton, and that property came to Lake Pointe’s ownership for possible future expansion of ministries.  In December of 2001, Lake Pointe welcomed Dean and Crystal Johnson and their family to serve in the pastoral work at the church.

### In 2003 we clarified our church purpose to “*Make Disciples of Jesus Christ through worship, teaching, relationships and service*.” We also replaced our traditional Sunday night and Wednesday night “all church” meetings with small groups, where all our people can be encouraged and grow in a setting of 6 to 12 individuals.

## **Discovery** **Course Overview**

# Part One: Christianity 101 (What We *Believe*)

1. The Bible

2. The Triune God

3. Jesus Christ

4. The Holy Spirit

5. The Creation and Fall of Man

6. Salvation

7. Angels and Demons

8. The Church

9. The Future

# Part Two: Lake Pointe 101 (What We *Do*)

1. Lake Pointe’s Purpose as a Church

2. Expository Preaching & Teaching

3. The Lord’s Supper Service

4. Offerings

5. Our Worship Services

6. Roles of the Pastor, Elders and Deacons

7. Missionaries and Mission Trips

8. Small Groups

9. The Roles of Men and Women in the Church

# (What Is Expected of You)

10. Regular Attendance

11. Using Your Gifts and Talents in Ministry

12. Stewardship and Giving

13. Respect and Follow the Leadership of the Church

14. Love Each Other

**(What You Can Expect of Other Members)**

15. Unconditional Love and Acceptance

16. Special Support in Time of Need

17. Dedication to Equipping You as a Disciple of Christ

18. The Lake Pointe Bylaws

WHAT IS “THE GOSPEL”?

LAKE POINTE BIBLE CHURCH



**WHAT WE BELIEVE: THE BIBLE**

# Key Passages about the Doctrine of the Bible

* 2 Peter 1:19-21 (p.1734)
* 2 Timothy 3:14-17 (p.1697)

# Our Teaching Position

We believe that the Bible is the very Word of God and so is the sole ground of authority for the believer’s life. It is verbally inspired, that is, inspiration extends to every word of the original manuscripts. Because God is the author, scripture is without error. While the human authors of scripture were aware of writing God’s revelation, they did not do so in a mechanical fashion, but were guided and overseen by the Holy Spirit so that, employing their own personalities, they recorded exactly what God intended.

# How Do We Understand Scripture?

Some people treat scripture as simply a guide for religious reflection, and others believe that scripture can have many meanings depending on how God “speaks” to the reader. Still others believe that scripture contains myths and stories that are not accurate or historical. We do not believe any of these points of view are correct.

We believe that a *literal* method of interpreting scripture is consistent with God’s intent to clearly communicate to people through human authors. Therefore, the goal of interpretation is to understand what the author intended to communicate to his audience when he wrote. Once we understand that meaning, the truth encompassed in that message can be extracted and applied to our lives in a manner reflecting the authority of God to us.

There are many good translations of the Bible, but when we read Scripture in our public meetings we want everyone to be able to follow along, so we have chosen one main translation--the New International Version (NIV)-- in all of our group teaching & Bible study meetings.

**WHAT WE BELIEVE: THE TRIUNE GOD**

**Key passages about God**

* Deuteronomy 6:4 (p.258)
* Acts 17:24-29 (p.1579)
* 2 Corinthians 13:14 (p.1656)

# Our Teaching Position

We believe there is one God, creator of all things, and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The term “triunity” or more commonly “trinity” is used to describe the unity of God on one hand, and the separate Persons of the Godhead on the other hand. The word “trinity” is not in the Bible, but we *are* told that there is a Father, that Jesus is separate from the Father yet is God, and that the Holy Spirit is separate from the Father and the Son, yet is God. We believe that each person of the Godhead is the same in substance, but still distinct. They are separate “persons” who form a unified single God. As God, each is worthy of our worship and honor.

We believe in a great God. There is only one God, and He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. God is separate from His creation and is not just mixed in with it like “the force” of Star Wars fame. However, even though He is separate, He does not just sit back at a distance and watch creation run its own course. God is present all around us and is the sustainer and upholder of all things. Even though God is quite different from us, He loves people with a love that we can know and experience in our daily lives.

God the Father rules over creation, Israel and all believers in Jesus Christ. He is the author of divine decrees and divine election. Thus, God the Father is responsible for the entire plan of creation – where it has been and where it is going. We believe that God the Father has a plan for our lives and that He is working through the course of human events in ways that are not always obvious to bring about His plan.

**WHAT WE BELIEVE: JESUS CHRIST**

**Key passages about Jesus Christ**

* John 1:1-18 (p.1509)
* Acts 1:9-11 (p.1549)
* Romans 3:21-26 (p.1604)

# Our Teaching Position

We believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. Further, Jesus Christ arose bodily (not just “spiritually”) from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest and Advocate. We believe that Jesus, when he became man, did not stop being God but instead He voluntarily limited the use of His divine powers. Through His sinless life and His sacrificial death, He paid the penalty for our sin and satisfied the divine justice of God the Father.

Because Jesus rose from the dead, He is alive today in Heaven. He has promised us that He is coming back to the earth to rule over all creation, returning the world to the perfect state that it was in when first created. Because of these truths, if we are to have a relationship with God, it must be through the person of Jesus Christ--not through a priest, not through the church, not through Mohammed, not through meditating, and not through your good works. Jesus described himself as a “mediator” between God and man and is, therefore the ONLY way to God. There are not *many* roads that eventually lead to the same God—there is only one. Although this may sound exclusive, it is the teaching of Scripture. Anything or anyone that sets itself up as a “go between” or alternative way of getting to God usurps Jesus’ role and is despised by God the Father.

**WHAT WE BELIEVE: THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**Key passages about the Holy Spirit**

* John 16:7-11 (p.1538)
* 1 Corinthians 12:4-13 (p.1636)
* Ephesians 1:13-14 (p.1664)

# Our Teaching Position

We believe that the Holy Spirit is one of the Persons of the Godhead. He convicts people of their sin and—after they believe--works in the lives of people to change them into a faithful child of God. He does this by indwelling every believer in Jesus Christ, and His indwelling in their lives *seals*, or *secures* their salvation and relationship to God. Once an individual accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit resides in the person and begins the process of helping them to live a life pleasing to God, becoming more like Jesus Christ. This process is called *sanctification* and continues throughout a believer’s life. The person does not become completely perfect but does experience growth and transformation as a Christian so that they begin to act and react as Jesus would. This process of the Holy Spirit empowering the believer to make decisions of faith and obedience continues until they are ultimately transformed into the likeness of Christ at death.

The Holy Spirit also gives each believer gifts (abilities, talents) to be able to serve God through the church. These gifts represent God working through the Person of the Holy Spirit in a manner that will help other people become mature, strong believers within the church. This activity is called *edification*. The gifts of the Holy Spirit can express themselves in many ways, but God has instructed us that they should be used in an orderly way so that both believers and non-believers can see how God is working in the church.

Thus, the Holy Spirit indwells each believer and is active in the processes of salvation, sanctification and edification.

**WHAT WE BELIEVE: THE CREATION AND FALL OF MAN**

**Key Passages about Creation and People**

* Genesis 2 and 3 (p.2-5)
* Isaiah 59:2 (p.1061)
* Romans 3:10-23; (p.1603) 5:12; 6:23
* Ephesians 2:1-3 (p.1665)
* Colossians 1:16 (p.1676)

# Our Teaching Position

We believe that humans were created by a special, miraculous, direct act of God. We do not believe that everything around us evolved out of nothing--either naturally or through some sort of divine oversight. When God created man, He made man in His own *image*--that in some ways we are like God and therefore can have a relationship with Him. Since God created all life, we believe that life is special and that human life in particular is uniquely important to God. As His creation, we are all accountable to God for our lives.

We believe that God created humans so that we would glorify Him and that we would enjoy a relationship with Him on earth. However, men and women fell into sin by rejecting God’s authority. Now, mankind is sinful by nature and by choice. That is, we are born inherently rebelling against God and His ways, and then we live our lives choosing not to obey God or to love Him.

The result of man’s fall is that we have lost spiritual life and are instead spiritually dead in sin and rebellion against God. Not only have we suffered spiritual death, but physical death as well is a certainty for every human being as a consequence for our sin. In such a condition, man is described as completely unable to save himself--no matter how hard we might try to live a good life. Our human condition is hopeless before a holy God if we were to try to pursue a relationship with Him by our own efforts.

**WHAT WE BELIEVE: SALVATION**

**Key Passages about Salvation:**

* John 20:30-31 (p.1546)
* Acts 2:36-41 (p.1552)
* Romans 1:16-17, (p.1600) 3:23, 5:1, 6:23, 10:9-13
* Ephesians 2:8-9 (p.1665)

# Our Teaching Position

Every person on earth needs to be “saved” or rescued. We are said to be “dead in our trespasses and sins.” Because God is holy and we are sinners, we can’t be accepted before God or into his Heaven unless we have our sins wiped out and we experience spiritual rebirth. Salvation is not earned by reforming your life, by being moral, or by observing sacraments administered by a church. Salvation is a free gift offered by God to every person. This gift of salvation is accepted solely by faith in the death, burial and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus called men and women to repent from our rebellion against God--which is often manifest in our focus on satisfying our own desires--and to instead live lives that are sacrificially devoted to God and to others. This is the essence of love for God--the same kind of sacrificial love He showed for us in sending His own Son to die for our sins. The gift of salvation is free, but it is not cheap or easy. A person does not become a Christian by merely reciting a prayer or being baptized or by having some general beliefs about the existence of God. Becoming a Christian requires faith and submitting our lives to the complete authority of Jesus Christ--that we acknowledge Him as both savior and “owner” of our lives and we commit to live in obedience to Him. We do not teach that a believer can “lose” his salvation—though that doesn’t mean you can do whatever you want! A true believer will strive to live a life pleasing to Christ.

Jesus instructed us to be baptized once we have made a decision to believe in Him as our Lord and Savior. Baptism is a public declaration of our faith commitment to Christ. A believer that has committed to obey Christ will desire to be baptized in obedience to His commandment. While baptism is not required for salvation, it is an indication that an individual has truly decided to sacrifice control of his own life and to live in obedience to Jesus Christ.

**WHAT WE BELIEVE: ANGELS AND DEMONS**

**Key Passages about Angelic Beings**

* Psalm 91:11-12 (p.853)
* Isaiah 14:12-20 (p.992)
* Ephesians 6:11-18 (p.1670)
* Colossians 2:18 (p.1678)
* 2 Peter 2:4-12 (P.1734)
* Hebrews 1:14 (p.1705)
* Jude 6 (p.1745)
* Matthew 25:41 (p.1415)
* Revelation 20:2-10 (p.1769)

# Our Teaching Position

We believe in the existence and activity of angelic beings both good and evil. God created angels as a great host of sinless spirit-beings, most of whom kept their first state of holiness and presently worship God and serve His purposes. Select angels are ministering spirits and have an active ministry with humans. Angels should not be idolized or worshipped.

After the creation of angels, apparently there was a rebellion and some of the angels chose not to follow God. They left under the leadership of the angel Lucifer, now called Satan. These fallen angels are active in the affairs of mankind for the cause of evil. The Bible says that the final end of these fallen angels will be the lake of fire. We believe in the personality and the everlasting punishment of Satan and his host. They are opposed to the program of God in this world and they are to be resisted by the believer.

While Satan and his demons are a great evil, they are not as powerful as God. In the lives of believers their evil influences can be overcome through the indwelling Holy Spirit. In a time to come, they will be permanently overthrown by God and will no longer have the freedom to bring about evil.

**WHAT WE BELIEVE: THE CHURCH**

**Key passages about the Church:**

* Matthew 16:13-18 (p.1398)
* Acts 2: 42-47 (p.1552)
* Ephesians 4:11-16 (p.1667)
* John 17 (p.1539)

# Our Teaching Position

The church exists on two different levels. On the one hand there is the “Universal Church,” made up of all believers everywhere. Then there are local, visible groups of believers called “local churches.”

We believe the Universal Church is composed solely of those who have been spiritually reborn as a believer in Jesus Christ. The Church began at the day of Pentecost and has continued to the present time. It is a spiritual organization with Jesus Christ as the head and all believers making up the body. The Church is not the building, or a particular denomination, or even just one local gathering of people. Instead, there is only one true Church and it comprises people from all nations, backgrounds, ages and denominational traditions. The only requirement to be part of the Church is that you have committed yourself in faith to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

There are many different forms of church governance. In a later session you will learn about the form that we follow at Lake Pointe Bible Church. No matter what form of church organization used, ultimately all believers are subject to Jesus Christ as the head of the true Church.

Within a local church, such Lake Pointe, every member is a vital part of the whole. God has given each member spiritual gifts to be used for the benefit of others. When all members come together they form a whole functioning unit that works to strengthen and encourage each other and to worship God through the activities of the church. Your participation in the local church is part of your commitment to obey Christ since He has called us to “be one.”

**WHAT WE BELIEVE: THE FUTURE**

**Key Passages about the Future:**

* Luke 14:14 (p.1488)
* John 5:28-29 (p.1517)
* 1 Thessalonians 1:10, (p.1681) 4:13-18,(p.1683) 5:1-9 (p.1684)
* Revelation 20:11-22:21 (p.1769)

**Our Teaching Position**

This is a difficult area to understand because the Bible is less than clear on the *specifics* of the future. Our church does not take a specific stand on the timing of such things as the tribulation, rapture, and millennium.

At death the believer enters immediately into eternal, conscious fellowship with God, and the unbeliever into eternal, conscious separation from Him. The bodies of the dead will be raised—some to glory and some to condemnation.

We believe that for all humankind there is a life to come--a resurrection for both the *just* (those whom God has declared just because they have put their faith in Jesus) and the *unjust* (those who have rejected Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior), the former to judgment and an eternal life of joy with God, and the latter to the Great White Throne judgment and an eternal life of suffering and separation from God. After the Great White Throne judgment, a new heaven and a new earth will be created and the old ones will be destroyed.

There are two aspects to the coming judgment of God:

1. The final judgment of all mankind at the Great White throne of God, revealing the depth of sin and the fairness of divine justice in consigning unbelievers to continue their own rejection of God in eternal punishment.

2. The judgment of believers at the judgment seat of Christ, revealing the quantity and quality of works done in the body, not with reference to salvation, but for the purpose of bestowing rewards in his Kingdom.

So far we have covered what we as a church *believe* about certain doctrines of the Bible. Now let’s turn to “Lake Pointe 101” and discuss some of the distinctive things we *do* as a church…

**WHAT WE DO: LAKE POINTE’S PURPOSE OR MISSION**

**Key Verses on the Purpose of the Church:**

* Matthew 28:16-20 (p.1422)
* Acts 2:41-47 (p.1552)
* Romans 12:1-8 (p.1616)
* Ephesians 4:11-16 (p.1667)

Based on Christ’s parting command to his disciples, Lake Pointe’s mission or purpose statement is this: “*Building disciples of Jesus Christ through worship, teaching, fellowship and outreach*.” Our reason for existence is to win people to Christ and to help them grow into mature, active Christians who know, serve, and share Jesus Christ.

There are four elements or activities which we as a church utilize to help people grow as believers, and since the church is the “bride of Christ,” these four activities of the church are sometimes spelled out in an acrostic of the word “WIFE”:

W—Worship

 I—Instruction

 F—Fellowship

 E-Evangelism

So at Lake Pointe Bible Church we want to make sure that we have activities, meetings, events, etc., that provide time for (1) worshipping God together, (2) for teaching the Bible, (3) for growth through the “iron sharpening iron” relationships between Christians, and (4) for reaching out to those who still need salvation. We must not neglect any of these areas, and we must always review our budget and our schedule of services and activities to make sure that we are providing opportunities in each of these elements that we believe are crucial in helping people grow as disciples, or devoted followers, of Jesus Christ.

**Scripture and Expository Preaching & Teaching**

We believe that God works today primarily (some would say *exclusively*) through the Scriptures He has inspired. The Bible is unlike any other book ever written. God has instilled in it truth and power. As Hebrews 4:12 says, the word of God is *living* and *active*. It *penetrates* our hearts and minds. Probably everyone would say “I want God to work in my life!” That is a commendable prayer, but it is crucial to recognize that the *way* God works in people’s lives is through the *Scriptures*. It is the Word of God that will change people’s lives.

John 16:13 promises that the Holy Spirit would guide his followers into all truth. The emphasis is that He will *guide* us.God does not dump truth or Christian maturity directly on us. He guides us to and through his Scriptures. II Peter 1:20-21 indicates that when the Spirit of God wanted to deliver truth to people he did it through Scripture. If you want to grow and be strengthened, God will do that through Scripture.

In John 17:17 Jesus is praying for all Christians: “Sanctify them [change them, make them holy] by the truth. Your word is truth.” If you say “God I want to be changed. I want my thinking and my actions to be made holy, pure, devout, virtuous, faithful. How can I do that?” The answer comes back: “The Word. My Spirit works through *the Word*.” George Muller said “The vigor of our spiritual life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts.”

We must study the Bible correctly. II Timothy 2:15 challenges us to “correctly handle the word of truth.” What does that mean? It means you can’t make the words of Scripture mean whatever you want them to mean. We’re in danger of this every time we read the Bible. If we have a certain need or desire in our life, certain words or phrases stick out to us and if we’re not careful we can make a passage say what it was never really written to say. We always have to ask: What was the original author trying to say to the original readers? And only then can we ask how it applies to us today.

This is why here at Lake Pointe we try to practice what is called “expository preaching,” where the goal is to *expose* what is actually in a text, or passage of the Bible. Good preaching and teaching is explaining what the *text* says. The main point of a text ought to be the main point of the sermon, lesson, or Bible study.

Of course that’s easy to say. But some entertaining preachers are the worst offenders at actually preaching what a text was written for. Capable orators spin together stories and challenging phrases so that you feel like you’ve heard a great sermon, when all they’ve done is use the words of Scripture as a jumping off point for what they wanted to say. It is not the ability and giftedness of the preacher that has power to change your life--it is the very word of God, rightly and honestly studied.

At church when we pray “Spirit of God, fill this place. Do a work in us!” we’re actually saying “God, let your word be clearly proclaimed here, and let our hearts be tenderized so that we’ll respond to it.”

Practically, this emphasis will show up in Christians reading their Bible, using study tools or a study Bible, memorizing Scripture, being faithful in your church attendance so you can hear the word proclaimed, attending Sunday School (our time of most intensive Bible teaching), and taking

advantage of other opportunities like BSF, small groups, electronic media, books, etc.

**WHAT WE DO: THE LORD’S SUPPER SERVICE**

**Key Verses on the Lord’s Supper Service:**

* Matthew 26:26-28;(p.1416)
* Acts 2:42-47 (p.1552)
* 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 (p.1635)

At what is known as “the Last Supper,” Jesus introduced His followers to the practice of remembering Him through bread--which would represent His body--and the cup of wine--which would represent His blood. The early church continued the practice of worshipping the Lord this way when they met together in the temple courts and in homes.

The Apostle Paul, in his teaching in I Corinthians 11, gives specific instructions to Christians to remember the Lord in celebrating The Lord’s Supper. I Corinthians 11:26 mentions: “For as *often* as you eat this bread and drink this cup ….” This suggests to us that regular and frequent remembrance of the Lord by sharing communion is beneficial for our spiritual lives. I Corinthians 11 also emphasizes that the Lord’s Supper is to be taken by the Christians together, giving attention to one’s relationship to others in the church--that a person be *worthy* when he participates—because there is also an emphasis in communion on the unity of believers.

At Lake Pointe we have chosen to make regular remembrance of the Lord a central focal point of our church practice. We meet weekly, each Sunday at 8:45 a.m., to remember the Lord in taking the bread and the cup(s). In our Lord’s Supper service, one of our men starts the service by sharing a short introductory devotional; then follows a period of open worship, when any believer may suggest a hymn, read Scripture, offer a testimony, etc. Then, someone gives thanks for the loaf, representing the body of Christ, and another gives thanks for the cup(s) containing grape juice, representing the blood of Christ. Our service is “open,” meaning that any believer may take communion. Our goal remains the same as that of the early believers: to joyfully remember the Lord Jesus Christ and His death (and resurrection), until He comes again. We also offer the Lord’s Supper in the main service 6 times a year.

**WHAT WE DO: OFFERINGS**

**Key Verses about Offerings:**

* Philippians 4:18-19 (p.1675)
* Hebrews 13:15-16 (p.1719)

Financially giving to the Lord is an act of worship to God. Most churches take an offering during their Sunday morning service, which is an opportunity for Christians to worship by giving. At Lake Pointe, we have intentionally decided not to pass the plates for an offering in the 10 a.m. service. First-time visitors to our church on Sunday mornings might find it odd that we don’t take up public collections (except on rare occasions to meet some specific special need), or make public solicitations of funds.

There are several reasons for this. First, we feel that giving to provide for the needs and services of this church and its missionary outreaches is the exclusive privilege and responsibility of those who have committed their lives to Christ and are members of this local body of believers. We don’t want to appear to be soliciting outsiders to support our church ministries.

Second, we believe the Bible teaches that *giving* is one of the highest forms of worship. We *do* expect our members to give. An offering is taken every week at the conclusion of our Lord’s Supper service.

Third, we want our visitors to feel relaxed and unthreatened, and to understand that we are more interested in them, as individuals, and in their spiritual welfare than in their money. Many unchurched people claim that the reason they don’t go to church is because churches are only interested in getting their money. We don’t want this ever to be said of Lake Pointe Bible Church.

Fourth, we are aware of the possibility that an unsaved visitor might think that he is buying favor with God by putting some money in a collection plate.

For these reasons we have chosen not to take an offering in our main church service. Mounted on the wall in the back of the sanctuary is a box for offerings, and this box is emptied and counted every Sunday afternoon.

**WHAT WE DO: OUR WORSHIP SERVICES**

**Key passages on Worship:**

* Hebrews 10:24-25 (p.1714)
* I Corinthians 14:26-32 (p.1639)

The term “worship” comes from the Anglo-Saxon *weorthscipe*, or *worthship*, and means “to attribute worth” to something or someone. You could worship your money, you could worship your body, you could worship your boyfriend or girlfriend, you could worship nothing, or you could choose to worship God. And you can certainly worship God on your own, away from church, when you read your Bible or sing to Him or serve others in His name, etc. But as a church we also gather to worship together, and the importance of this corporate worship in the life of a believer cannot be overemphasized.

Scripture tells that there are many different ways to offer praise to God—music, testimonies, the preached word, prayers, and even dance. We want to be open to any gift of worship a member of Lake Pointe may bring. We will not limit ourselves only to those forms to which we are already comfortable.

However, there are some manifestations of worship which were used in the early church which we believe are no longer needed or appropriate—specifically, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and giving of new prophecies. Our position at Lake Pointe is that these worship expressions are no longer necessary since the Bible was completed. No new revelations from God--such as would come in tongues or prophecies--are necessary.

Sunday morning is our primary time for believers to gather to give God the worship He deserves, and to hear a word from Him. We also believe that such worship can be a powerful witness to unbelievers if God’s presence is felt and if the message is understandable. This is why we try to be “visitor-friendly,” providing pew Bibles, using Power Point, and always using understandable language in our sermons.

**WHAT WE DO: LEADERSHIP BY ELDERS**

**Key passages on Church Leadership:**

* Acts 20:17, 28 (p.1584)
* 1 Timothy 3:1-13 (p.1690)
* Ephesians 4:11-13 (p.1667)

From the early days of the church, God appointed men to give spiritual leadership and oversight to the local church. The Bible uses the terms “elder,” “overseer,” and “shepherd” or pastor. The terms are used interchangeably in the New Testament.

Qualifications for elders are detailed by Paul in Titus 1 and I Timothy 3. They include: being temperate; respectable; manages his family well; does not pursue dishonest gain; keeping hold of deep truths. In addition elders are required to be: able to teach; self-controlled; not a recent convert; having a good reputation with outsiders; not overbearing; upright and holy. These are indeed high callings, and significant responsibilities before God, and are not to be undertaken lightly. There is evidence in the NT and early church that the office of elder was always filled by men.

One of the gifts that Christ gives to an individual is ‘pastor’ (Ephesians 4:11) with the responsibility to prepare God’s people for works of service so that the church may be built up. We consider all of our elders to be “pastors.”

In our church we have a group of men who serve as elders, with overall responsibility for God’s work at Lake Pointe Bible Church. (We currently have 6 elders, but there is no set number required.) We believe that elders are *appointed* by God and *recognized* by the church as men having the scriptural qualifications to serve as elders. The full time “pastor” is one of the elders, and is accountable to the other elders.

In the early church, the twelve apostles also appointed seven men, known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom, to take on the practical responsibilities of caring for widows and their needs (Acts 6:1-4). The elders are to give their attention to prayer and the ministry of the word, and others are to be responsible for the administration of practical matters of the church. The word “deacon” means “servant.” At Lake Pointe, our “deacons” are considered to be the members of our various ministry teams that care for members, the upkeep of the building, and the church finances.



THE LAKE POINTE BIBLE CHURCH ELDERS



**WHAT WE DO: MISSIONARIES AND MISSIONS TRIPS**

Joshua Haynes

Jim Fike

Chad Walters

Dean Johnson

John Jakcsy

**Key passages on missions:**

* Matthew 28:19-20 (p.1423)
* Acts 1:8 (p.1549)
* Acts 13:2-3 (p.1570)

This area of our church work is overseen by The Missions Committee. Fifteen percent of offerings at Lake Pointe is placed in the “Missions Fund,” which is dispensed quarterly to the missionaries we financially support. Two guiding principles are important:

1. We give precedence to missionaries whose approach is what is known as “church planting.” That is, their work is to win people to Christ, gather them into a local body of believers, and to train and turn over leadership to the local, indigenous people. While other committed Christian workers perform valuable services overseas, we believe that our mission’s budget should be used to facilitate church planting.
2. We are committed to supporting *fewer* missionaries at a *higher* level of support. Because a missionary has responsibilities to communicate closely with his supporting churches, and to visit them while home on furlough, it is preferable for a missionary to have fewer churches who support him with larger amounts of money. This is why at Lake Pointe we currently support only 5 missionary families, but at fairly high percentages of their needed support.

At Lake Pointe we also believe strongly in short-term missions trips for our people. While they do perform valuable ministry, we believe that the greatest impact is in the life and passion for the Christian who goes on the short-term missions trip.

**WHAT WE DO: SMALL GROUPS**

**Key passages on small groups:**

* Acts 2:41-46 (p.1552)
* Romans 12:15 (p.1616)
* Hebrews 10:24-25 (p.1714)

At Lake Pointe we are very clear on what we’re trying to accomplish. We are all about helping people find Christ, and then helping them mature as Christians so they can live every day as a devoted disciple of his. That’s our goal: building disciples who know, serve, and share Jesus Christ.

Now our challenge as a church is this: What is the best way to accomplish that goal?

Acts 2:46 says that to help the Christians grow they participated in two types of meetings: a large, entire group assembly in the court of the temple, and in smaller, home gatherings for a more intimate setting. These meetings were so important they are mentioned in Scripture! And Acts 4:4, 5:14, and 5:42 describe how, as the church continued to grow in numbers, they kept this structure. Or perhaps it was *because* of this structure that they kept growing.

Author Dale Galloway wrote: “*The way to build a great church is to follow the master plan that was so effective in the early church. Meet in the house of God on Sunday to celebrate all together the resurrection power of Jesus. Then, throughout the week, meet house to house in small groups for heart to heart fellowship. This [is the] New Testament blueprint.”*

There are certain behaviors that the Bible says are normative for Christians:

--Meet together “to stir up one another to love and good works…encouraging one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

--“Teach, admonish, exhort, and pray for one another. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:15).

--“Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16).

How can we do these things in a large church meeting? We can’t. If the Sunday morning meeting is all you attend, you’re not taking advantage of all that God intended for you to live the victorious Christian life. The elders at Lake Pointe take serious their task of shepherding and providing care for our people, and they believe that care and growth best takes place by participating in both Sunday worship and a small group.

**WHAT WE DO: THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH**

**Key passages on gender roles:**

* Genesis 1:26-28 (p.2)
* 1 Corinthians 11:1-16;(p.1634) 14:34 (p.1639)
* Ephesians 5:22-33; (p.1669) Colossians 3:18-19 (p.1679)
* 1 Timothy 2:11-15 (p.1690)

The roles of men and women in the church have always been somewhat controversial, and many Bible-believing Christians have studied this subject and have come to different understandings of what God desires. Based on our best ability to discern God’s intention for us based on the Scripture verses referenced above, we have come to the following conclusions:

1. The entire Bible teaches a hierarchy of roles for the home and the church, which is discussed below. This teaching in the Bible is not merely a reflection of the culture at that time because the basis for this principle is grounded in the nature of creation, the events surrounding the original sins of Adam and Eve, the design of God’s law as it was given to Moses and as it was commonly applied in the original New Testament churches.
2. Galatians 3:28 affirms the equality of men and women. While the functioning of families and the church involve different *roles* for men and women, that distinction in no way implies superiority of either gender.
3. The New Testament uses the term “head” as a metaphor for the position of authority of Christ over the church and, in like manner, of man over the woman. This “headship” role is intended for men only. The difficult aspect of this teaching is in understanding what is intended by the concept of authority and as a corollary, what is *not* intended by this term. Our position is that the clearest passage on the subject is 1 Timothy 2:12 which describes this role as one of establishing authoritative teaching positions within the local church. This would include not only setting forth statements of what constitutes God’s truth as revealed in scripture, but also the exercising of guidance and discipline within the church setting to ensure that God’s intentions are properly carried out. The concept is not so broad so as to include any and every type of “leadership” when leadership means carrying out functions of running programs such as AWANA, organizing events, praying during services, etc.
4. Given these guiding principles, we don’t ask women to assume roles at Lake Pointe where authoritative teaching and discipline occur. Specifically, only men are permitted to be an elder, to preach from the platform a message that constitutes authoritative teaching, and to teach adult men regarding doctrinal issues in a class-type setting.

So far we have discussed the doctrines we *believe* as a church, and some distinctive practices we *do* as a church. Now let’s discuss some things that will be expected of you if you join yourself to Lake Pointe as a member…

**WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU: REGULAR CHURCH INVOLVEMENT**

**Key passages on church involvement:**

* Hebrews 10:24-25 (p.1714)
* Acts 2:41-47 (p.1552)
* Ephesians 4:11-16 (p.1667)

When you trust Jesus as your savior, you do it *individually*. That is, you *personally* have to admit you are a sinner and that you now accept Christ’s offer of salvation. But if you personally believe and serve Jesus, you are also part of a group called “the church.”

The church exists on two levels: First, there’s the *universal* church made up of all believers all around the world. (It’s also called the “invisible church” because you never see it. It never gets together in one place.) Then there’s also the *local* or *visible* church. Lake Pointe Bible Church is a local, visible church (and we’re actually a little larger than average, as the average church in the United States is just under 100.)

God expects every Christian to attach themselves to a local church of their choosing. This is where you will worship together, this is where you will be taught God’s word, this is where you will use your spiritual gifts, and this is where they will know you and how you’re doing spiritually.

For this to work you have to attend there regularly. Otherwise how will you learn the Bible? How will you stay healthy as a Christian without worshipping together? And how will people know how you’re doing? If you become a member of Lake Pointe Bible Church it will be expected that you’ll be here regularly to worship, fellowship, be taught, and to use your gifts in some ministry of the church. Christianity is a corporate matter, and the Christian life can be fully realized only in relation to others. Anything less is to rob yourself of everything God has intended to help you in your spiritual life.

**WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU:**

**USE YOUR GIFTS AND TALENTS IN MINISTRY**

**Key Passages on the giftedness of Every Christian:**

* I Peter 4:10-11 (p.1731)
* Romans 12:3-8 (p.1616)
* Ephesians 4:7-16 (p.1667)
* I Corinthians 12 (p.1636)

Some folks hold the idea that when you become a Christian you *go* to church. The truth is, as a Christian you *are* the church! Lake Pointe Bible Church is not the building at 42150 Schoolcraft Road, or the pastor, or the elders and deacons--it’s the people. That means that anything our church does—worship, visit the sick, teach children the Bible, reach our community—depends on you.

This is exactly how God planned it, and so He has given every Christian some gift or ability that the person is to use in some ministry of the church. I Peter 4:10 says “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”

The Bible is very clear that everyone hasn’t been given the *same* gift, but every Christian has been given *some* gift. Some will be gifted in caring for the church property, some in music, some in caring for our precious babies, some in running our audio/visual technology, some in teaching Bible studies, some in working with children or teens.

Unfortunately, far too many Christians only come to church services and sit, and have no ministry. This is entirely unscriptural, and at Lake Pointe Bible Church we are passionately dedicated to not letting this happen in our assembly. So please take very seriously this commitment, that if you become a member here, you will find your “niche” and consistently serve the Lord there.

**WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU: STEWARDSHIP AND GIVING**

**Key passages on giving:**

* Matt. 6:19-21 (p.1381) Luke 6:38 (p.1469)
* 1 Cor.16:1-2 (p.1642) 2 Corinthians 8&9 (p.1650)

The Bible has a lot to say about the importance of giving. Giving is at the very core of God’s dealings with man. “For God so loved the world that he *gave* his one and only son” (John 3:16). Under the old covenant the Jewish people were commanded to give back to God “burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes” (1/10th of their income), “special gifts, free will offerings, the firstborns of their herds and flocks and the first fruits of their harvests.” This was, basically, a system of taxation to provide a livelihood for the priests and for the widows, orphans and foreigners in their midst. In addition to this, they were commanded to give generously “without a grudging heart” to meet the needs of the poor. Failure to do this was a sin, but obedient compliance was rewarded with God’s approval, spiritual blessing and material prosperity (Deut.26:12-15, Mal.3:6-12). On top of all this were voluntary gifts: “special gifts and free will offerings” (Deut.26:1-11) which were offered as acts of worship to God from hearts full of love and gratitude. They were taught “not to appear before the Lord empty-handed” (Deut. 16:16b-17). It has been estimated that all of these requirements comprised approximately 20% of their income.

Although there is no specific instruction in the New Testament about tithing, per se, there is a wealth of teaching on the whole subject of giving and our *personal responsibility* in the expansion of God’s Kingdom. Giving is an essential part of this wonderful adventure of faith that we call the Christian life. Common misunderstandings of this subject restrict the growth of the Lord’s work, inhibit our own spiritual maturity, and robs us of much joy and blessing. The Corinthian church excelled in faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness and love... but was lacking in the grace of giving. (2 Cor.8:7). At Lake Pointe we believe not so much in “tithing”, (the strict adherence to a certain percentage) but the principle of giving regularly, methodically, thoughtfully, in proportion to the way the Lord has blessed us, as an act of service and as an expression of worship and gratitude to God. Some do aim for the 10% figure as a workable goal. Keep in mind these truths:

1. *God* is the supreme giver (Matt.7:9-11, James 1:17-18)

2. We are all just *stewards* (trustees) of what God has given us (I Chronicles 29:10-16).

3. We are accountable to the Lord for how we manage our lives and finances.

4. Giving provides us an opportunity to participate in the work of expanding God’s Kingdom. 5. Giving is one of the “fruits” God looks for in our lives (Phil. 4:17).

6. Giving is one way of demonstrating our love and commitment to Jesus Christ.

7. God cares about our giving.

8. God promises to reward our faithfulness in giving (Mt.6:1-4. Lk.6:38; Prov. 3:9-10, 11:24).

**WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU:**

**RESPECT AND FOLLOW THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH**

**Key passages on following church leadership:**

* I Thessalonians 5:12-13 (p.1684)
* Hebrews 13:17 (p.1719)

Throughout history God has appointed human leaders to guide and oversee His people. These leaders were never perfect people, but they were to do their best to seek God’s will and to lead His people in doing it.

The New Testament (in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1) lists characteristics required of God for the leaders of a local church, called elders. God, working through the church’s people, selects the individuals who will give guidance and oversight to the body.

Again, while these elders are not perfect, Scripture calls for members of the church to respect them and follow their leadership. Consider I Thessalonians 5:12: “*Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work*.” And Hebrews 13:17, “*Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you*.”

In this difficult, sinful world, it is to the Christian’s advantage to have godly men over them who seek to assist their spiritual lives and to guide the activities of the church.

**WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU:**

**LOVE EACH OTHER**

**Key passages on Christians Loving Each Other:**

* John 13:34, 35 (p.1535)
* 1 John 3:16-19 (p.1740)
* 1 John 4:19-21 (p.1741)
* 1 Peter 4:8-10 (p.1731)

A characteristic of the early church was the intense love members had for each other. It led them to sell property, give of their finances, open their homes and demonstrate a genuine, warm affection for one another. We want to be like that at Lake Pointe Bible Church. This was not a love based on some need to fulfill *themselves,* nor a love that fluctuated with their *emotions*. It was a love like God’s love, which characterizes itself by *giving*. This is a love that is given by God to every believer (Romans 5:5) and is produced by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 1:7). So, this love we are to have for each other is *given* by God the Father, *demonstrated* by God the Son (1 John. 3:15) and *produced* in the believer’s life by God the Holy Spirit.

Loving others was commanded by Jesus (Matt 22:37-39) and is a distinguishing feature of Christians (John. 13:36). It can’t be simply a theological concept. Love must be a practical daily practice of each believer (I Thess.4:9-10) where he or she applies love in *real situations* in their home, family, at work, and in the church. As we rub shoulders with others at Lake Pointe Bible Church there will be times when people become offended, hurt or angry. Only the salve of love can heal situations and relationships (I Peter 4:8). As we see the needs of others in our own church and in the church throughout the world, we must be willing to love in real, material ways (I John 3:15-19).

No one can say that he or she has arrived when it comes to love, because Scripture encourages us that “*love may abound still more and more*” (Phil. 3:12) and to “*excel still more*” at love (I Thess. 4:9-11). At Lake Pointe Bible Church we want to seek new and practical ways to apply this love, through things like opening our homes to eat meals together, being quick to forgive and slow to criticize, helping on church work days, and praying for each other.

 **WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU:**

**RESOLVE CONFLICT**

**Key passages on Christians Resolving Conflict:**

* **Matthew 18:15-35**
* **Colossians 3:12-15**
* **Ephesians 4:1-5**
* **Ephesians 4:22-5:2**

As a church lives relationally and shares deeply in each other’s lives, it will encounter tension among relationships in the body. The church is made up of many different people from various walks of life, opinions, traditions, interpretations of Scripture, political views—the list could go on. While the uniting of so many different people in one body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one faith makes the church beautiful (Ephesians 4:4-6), we understand that our members will not agree on everything. This occasionally leads to conflict, since in our humanness, we all struggle with sin and are imperfect in our relationships. Unfortunately, conflict within the church is often handled poorly, but it is our responsibility to do our best to respond biblically when it happens.

The heart of Christian conflict resolution reflects the love of Christ and a pursuit of unity. Paul wrote to the early church urging them to be humble, gentle, patient, and to bear with one another in love, so that they may keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3). When conflict arises between you and a brother or sister, there are two biblical paths you can take. The first is to evaluate whether or not it is a time to look over an offense or difference, covering it in love and forgiveness (Proverbs 19:11). This is true of circumstances where the issue is small, and where you are able to live at peace without harboring bitterness. In other cases, the issue should be addressed. Jesus’ teaching on this states that you should go first to the offender directly and gently point out the fault between the two of you. If they will not listen, then bring another believer with you. If they still will not listen, the two of you may bring the issue to the church elders (Matthew 18:15-17). It is important that you follow Jesus’ design for resolving conflict; likewise, do not be surprised if a brother or sister does the same.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are characteristics of followers of Jesus that help preserve the unity of the body. In dealing with people, Jesus calls His followers to a radical kind of forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35). As Christians, we must have a posture towards forgiving and not be full of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander and malice, instead we must be kind and compassionate, forgiving one another as Christ forgave us (Ephesians 4:31-32 and Colossians 3:12-15).

It may come to pass that you feel a conflict, whether relational or in regard to doctrine or practice, is cause for you to depart from fellowship. As the concern develops, we ask that you seek counsel with the elders of Lake Pointe Bible Church as the issue progresses rather than when it is too late to reconcile the problem. The elders are called to shepherd the flock and to oversee its spiritual care (1 Peter 5:1-3). They want to hear from you and to help resolve and disciple through problems that arise. If after this you are unable to reconcile a serious conflict within the church and want to remove your membership, we ask that you clearly communicate this desire and discuss it with an elder. This closure is important for both you and for the church body.

So far in this manual we have covered what doctrines our church *believes*, what practices our church *does*, and what will be expected of *you* as a member. Now let’s turn our attention to what you can expect of *other* Lake Pointe Bible Church members…

**WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM OTHER LAKE POINTE MEMBERS:**

 **SPECIAL SUPPORT IN TIME OF NEED**

**Key Passages on Christians supporting each other:**

* Galatians 6:9-10 (p.1663)
* Ephesians 2:19, 22 (p.1666)
* Acts 6:1-7 (p.1557)

The Scriptures teach us that when we trust Jesus Christ and become part of Christ’s church we are united not to an “organization” but rather become part of a *family*—what the Bible calls “God’s household.”

As a family we are called upon to have unconditional love for one another, especially at the most difficult of times. There is to be a mutual caring for each other as demonstrated by the early church in the book of Acts where they cared for the needy and the widows of the church.

Lake Pointe Bible Church maintains a “Mercy Fund” to help individuals in critical times. The fund is overseen by the Mercy Team. Also, the Sunshine Team is a group that exists to help when there is a new birth, a sickness or other need in a family by providing meals and encouragement. They also care for the elderly and shut-ins. Those who have received this assistance have testified how much it has meant and how they appreciated the meals, visits, flowers, etc.

Many individual members who are able to do so also help others in the church privately and quietly. We are told to help each other with the heavy burdens that weigh us down. The Apostle Paul tells us pointedly that if we have an *opportunity* to help another member of God’s family then we should not hesitate to *do so*. We do not feel this is the job for only the elders, deacons, or the paid staff, but all of our people.

**WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM OTHER LAKE POINTE MEMBERS:**

**DEDICATION TO EQUIPPING YOU AS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST**

**Key passages on how the church will help you become more like Christ:**

* Colossians 1:9-12 (p.1676)
* Colossians 2:6-7 (p.1677)
* Colossians 3:12-17 (p.1679)

Discipleship is often thought of as an *individual* effort involving prayer, meditation, Bible study, fasting, etc. whereby a person becomes more and more like Jesus Christ. We as individuals sometimes like the image of “bearing our cross for Jesus.” But while these disciplines are very important in our lives, they are not all that is involved in becoming a disciple of Jesus.

Being a disciple of Jesus was never intended to be a “solo” effort. Being a disciple is just as much about becoming part of a *community* of believers, like a family, as it is about having a personal relationship with God. Consider these “one another” expectations of the family of believers:

* Disciples are to edify one another (1 Cor. 12; Ephesians 4)
* Disciples are to submit to one another out of love (Eph. 5:18-6:9)
* Disciples are to protect one another from sin (James 5:16)
* Disciples are to bear one another’s burdens (Romans 15:1)
* Disciples are to declare one Lord to the world in partnership (Phil. 2:1-11)

Accordingly, at Lake Pointe Bible Church we seek to function as a church in a manner that will help us become stronger in our faith *together*. We do this through:

1. Teaching that will help you better understand God’s word.
2. Collective worship that will encourage your faith.
3. Opportunities to use your spiritual gifts to strengthen yourself and others.
4. Times to build friendships so that we can better share life’s joys and burdens.

As a member of Lake Pointe Bible Church, you can expect to see the church function in this manner because that is how God intends it to work. We are not perfect, and at times we will struggle, but the statements above summarize the intentions and desires of the elders and the people of Lake Pointe Bible Church.

**A WORD ABOUT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

In August of 2021, Pastor Josh Haynes was getting ready to become a new Lake Pointe church elder when he read this passage from Hebrews 13:17: ***“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”***

Josh asked the existing church elders, “*Who will I be responsible for*?” Josh pointed out, correctly, that if he became an elder for this church, when he gets to Heaven he will have to “*give an account*” for the spiritual lives of people here. So Josh raised the question: Who exactly will he be responsible for? Who exactly will he have to “*give an account*” for?

Let’s consider some possibilities.

1. Will he have to give an account for a person who has visited here, say, *one time*? Maybe they live locally, or maybe they’re your relative who came to church with you. Will Josh (and of course I mean all the elders) have to give an account for that person’s spiritual life? I think we would agree that the answer is no.

2. Will Josh (i.e. the elders) be responsible for a person who visits here occasionally, say 6 times a year?

The elders (and in fact all of us) should encourage that person to be more consistently involved, but I don’t think we’d say the elders will give an account for someone who visits 6 times a year. There was a young man who used to come to Lake Pointe a few times a year. He told us that he didn’t have a regular church, he just enjoyed going around to a lot of different church. We told him that while we understood the attraction, it would be better if he chose one church to to be a regular part of.

3. Will Josh/elders be responsible for the spiritual life of a person who *attends* here fairly regularly, and has had the Gospel explained to them, but is choosing not to repent and accept the finished work of Christ for their salvation? Maybe they come here because the people are nice, they enjoy the encouraging music, etc. Will the elders have to give an account for the spiritual life of someone who was invited to trust Christ, but chose not to? Will the leadership be responsible for how that person progresses as a disciple of Jesus? No, obviously not, because they’re not a disciple of Jesus.

4. Are the elders responsible for a person who professes faith in Jesus and comes to our services and events pretty regularly, but has *told us* they will not put themselves under the spiritual authority of this church? There have been times when a church has tried to get involved in the life of such a person, but that person sued their church for “meddling” in their life.

What I hope you are seeing is that there has to be a *time* and some *process* by which a Christian *tells us* that they are joining themselves to this local church, and they are putting themselves under the spiritual direction of this local church. There has to be a time and process, whereby a person says “*Yes, I am a believer in Jesus Christ, and I desire to place myself under the spiritual guidance/support/authority of this local church*.” That process is…church membership.

A LIST

The leadership of a church has to have some kind of a list so they know who they are responsible for.

BIBLICAL SUPPORT

You see this throughout the NT. Let me give you just a couple examples,

--In Acts 2, the Jerusalem church held a big outreach event in the city.

Then it tells how many people believed, were baptized and were “added to the church” that day. They had a numbered list of how many people were part of the church.

--In Acts 6 it says the Jerusalem church realized they weren’t doing a very good job caring for the widows of the church. So they appointed a group of 7 men from the church to be sure their widows were cared for. How did they know which widows they were responsible for? Jerusalem was a city of several hundred thousand people. It would have had thousands of widows. They had a list of widows in the church-- widows for whom they would give an account.

--I Corinthians 5 tells about a young man who claimed to be a Christian, but he was having sex with his stepmother. The leaders of the church knew about it but they weren’t doing anything to stop it! Paul writes and says, “*You’ve got to confront that young man about his behavior*. *If he doesn’t repent and stop, you’ve got to put him out of your fellowship because it will hurt your whole church*.” Paul says “*I’m not talking about judging non-Christians. God will take care of that. I’m talking about someone who claims to trust Christ and is a part of your fellowship. If they continue this gross immorality, you’ve got to put them out of your fellowship.”* You cannot expel someone from your membership unless they were part of your membership in the first place. BTW, it doesn’t say anything about confronting or expelling the stepmother. So it seems that she was not a member of that church.

DON’T TRUST THE ELDERS?

You may be thinking, “*I’m not sure I trust the elders of this church to get involved in my business*.” If that’s the case, you need to leave this church and find a church where you do trust the leadership to get involved in your business. If you are a believer in Jesus, you need to obey Scripture and put yourself under the spiritual authority of godly leaders.

THE PROCESS

Here’s how you become a member of Lake Pointe Bible Church:

1. Complete the Discovery Class.

2. Fill out the membership application paper.

3. Meet with an elder, who will hear your testimony of your faith in Christ and answer any questions you have.

After that we introduce you on a Sunday morning as a new member.

We sometimes hear from a person, “Oh, I didn’t know I wasn’t a member. I took the Discovery Class so I thought I was a member.” You must complete each of the 3 steps above. That’s how you tell us you want to commit to and be under the spiritual authority of Lake Pointe.

CONCLUSION

To answer Pastor Josh’s original question…The elders are responsible for the spiritual lives of the people on the membership list, the ones who have indicated to us that they desire to be under the spiritual authority of this church.

**BYLAWS**

**Lake Pointe Bible Church**

As part of a commitment to church membership you may make at Lake Pointe Bible Church, we will ask you to affirm your agreement with, and support of, the Bylaws of our church. Therefore we are setting out below the background to, and key principles of, our bylaws as a church. The full text of our bylaws (13 pages) is available for your review on our church web site ([www.LakePointeBible.org](http://www.LakePointeBible.org)) and a hard copy is on file in our church office. We encourage you to review the full text before you affirm your agreement and support.

**Background**

As a church we approved an updated set of bylaws at our annual church meeting in March, 2005. These bylaws are intended to:

a) Document our legal / business basis as a non-profit ecclesiastical corporation under the laws of the State of Michigan; and

b) Summarize our ‘operating / constitutional’ practices as a local church.

**Key Principles**

Our bylaws are comprised of 16 articles encompassing the following legal / business and operating / constitutional matters:

**Legal / Business**

* Name and Location of Offices (Article 1)
* Purpose and Incorporation (Article 2)
* Corporate Membership (Article 4)
* Corporate Governance (Article 6)
* Financial Policy (Article 10)
* Charitable Funds Administration (Article 11)
* Other Financial Matters (Article 12)
* Prohibited Activities (Article 13)
* Indemnification (Article 14)
* Dissolution (Article 15)
* Amendments & Inspection (Article 16)

**Operating / Constitutional**:

* Statement of Faith (Article 3)
* Church Membership (Article 5)
* Church Governance – Elders & Deacons Article 7)
* Pastors (Article 8)
* Settlement of Disputes (Article 9)

*January 1, 2007*

Lake Pointe Bible Church

**MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #’s:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Family or other information: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Please give a brief testimony—how and when you became a Christian.

Have you attended church before?

If so, where?

If so, why did you leave that church?

What do you feel are your spiritual gifts or talents?

What areas of ministry do you hope to become part of?

**MY MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENT**

Congratulations! You have completed Lake Pointe’s Discovery course. Thank you for your dedication and time commitment necessary to complete this process. Now is the time for an important personal decision, one that should not be taken lightly. At the same time, it is a decision that is cause for great celebration as we unite together in Christ to participate in building His church!

In signing below, I attest to the following statements:

* I am trusting Jesus Christ as my Savior and have dedicated my life to living as His disciple.
* I desire to fellowship with the believers at Lake Pointe Bible Church.

I understand that as part of my worship of God I am to use my gifts and talents in activities of the church. Thus, by becoming a member, I commit to:

* Regular attendance at meetings of the church.
* Involvement in some ministry of the church.
* Respect the leadership of the church as spiritual leaders appointed by God.
* Regular financial support of the church consistent with New Testament principles.
* Commitment to love my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in a manner that glorifies God.
* Basic agreement with the bylaws and teaching positions of the church.

By signing below, I pledge that to the best of my abilities and knowledge, I agree with and dedicate myself to the above statements.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name Date