

# This is our church...



You might be here for the first time or the hundredth time. Sometimes people come reluctantly or willingly. You might be curious, skeptical or indifferent about Christ Jesus. Before my father became a Christian, he thought that churches were simply another club for people who were a little religiously minded to join. Our hope is that this booklet will at least help you to understand what to expect in our church.

## 1. What we believe...

Everyone has beliefs about life and God, and what we believe is very important. In common with other Christians we believe;

- That there is one God who created the world, including ourselves. As our creator, God has the right and the desire to rule our lives.
- God is invisible, yet we can know Him. God's Word, the Bible, tells us about God, ourselves and our world. The Bible itself says that it is "God-breathed" and so it is true (inerrant) and sufficient for us to know God.
- God created all humans in His image – that is a powerful truth! We were created to know and honour Him and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Him. As part of being created in His image all people know something of right and wrong, justice and mercy – it is written on our hearts.
- However, when Adam sinned by disobeying God, God's image was tainted and our sense of right and wrong was distorted. Sin is disobedience to God. We can sin unknowingly, or more terribly, we can sin deliberately. God's standard is complete purity, yet we know that every thought they have thought, every word

they have said and every action that they have *not* been pure. Our problem is not simply that we *do* sin, it is that our natures are now sinful. We have inherited Adam's sinful nature and so now we also bend towards sin and need God's forgiveness.

- God is holy (morally pure). Sin separates us from God and in the end, because God is just, He will hold us to account for every impure thought, word, action and motive that we have had. God's just judgment on sin is death. Ultimately, this means eternal death. Hell is terribly sad, yet if God is just, then it is perfectly just.
- God's law, which is written on our hearts and in His Word, works like a spotlight on our lives showing up our grubbiness and our need for a Saviour. Yet, in doing this it also drives us to Christ Jesus as Savior.
- Christ Jesus is God the Son. He was with God at creation and is God, yet He became a human being (*incarnate*). He knew tiredness, hunger, thirst and pain as we do. Yet, He lived a sinless life – something we could never do. He freely died on the cross in order to pay the death penalty that we deserve to pay. God calls us to repent – that is to turn away from our sinful past - and believe this good news.
- We are made right with God (justified) by God's grace through faith in Christ. That means we cannot work our way to God by being good or doing good things. If we believe that, then we could never know for sure if we were ever good enough! A Christian is someone who has turned to God in repentance and faith. Christ's resurrection from the dead- his physical, bodily resurrection- is the assurance that God's promises are true. In short, God's judgment is by works, but His salvation is by grace.
- All Christians have the Holy Spirit within them. It is the Holy Spirit who makes us alive so that we trust in Christ alone for salvation. He also gives us skills and gifts to help build up others.
- When we have come to faith in Christ, we then seek to live lives that honour Him and become more like Him. This means loving God and loving our neighbor. And so, how we live flows out of what we believe about God.

Every local Presbyterian Church is shepherded by a group of elders (the word "Presbyterian" comes from the Greek word for "elder"). Their task is to spiritually care for people. We also have others who care for people's welfare.

Sometimes labels can be helpful, and as a Presbyterian Church we are *evangelical* and *reformed*. By evangelical we don't mean cultural evangelicalism, but simply that we hold to the Bible as God's Word, the centrality of Christ's atoning work on the cross, the need for conversion by the Holy Spirit, and that the gospel is to be seen in how we live.

As a reformed church we believe that the Westminster Confession of Faith (written in 1646) is an accurate summary of the Bible's teachings. You can look this up on the internet easily enough.

## 2. What we do when we meet together on Sunday...

When we meet together we won't try to entertain you – and we don't come to church to have our needs met as consumers. There are three reasons we meet together as Christians on Sunday. First, to worship God. Above all this is our motive in meeting together! Second, to hear from His Word. Third, to encourage one another. Some of the things that we will do together on a Sunday or that are distinctive to our church include;

- **Singing** – we sing to thank and praise God for His grace to us. We sing to remind ourselves of the truths of the gospel and to encourage one another. Our church tends to sing a mixture of old and new songs. Usually we will sing three or four songs together. Most importantly, the words we sing must be true and our hearts sincere before God.
- **Prayer** – we will pray several times during a church service. Prayer is coming before God with heart-felt praise and praying for things according to His will. We confess our sins and thank God for His kindness to us. We urgently and earnestly ask for God's blessing and strengthening. We pray in Jesus' name because He is our Saviour.
- **Sunday School (or Kings Kids)** – children are part of the Kingdom of God and at our church the children worship with us, joining in singing, prayer and listening to the Bible being read. When it is time for the sermon, parents can let their children go to out to Sunday School where they will learn from God's Word at their level of understanding.
- **Preaching** – when we listen to God's Word faithfully preached we are worshipping Him! We try not to bring our own agenda to what we read. Generally, we preach through books of the Bible bit by bit, believing that every part of God's Word speaks to us and that it must shape us in every part of our lives.
- **The Lord's Supper** – at our church we celebrate the Lord's Supper every three months. The Bible says that before we take the Lord's Supper we must examine ourselves. This means first and foremost that we must truly be Christians! The Lord's Supper is like preaching the gospel in a physical way. We remember Jesus' death and resurrection, and that we are joining with other Christians.
- **Membership** – some churches have no formal membership, but Presbyterians believe that membership into a local church family is strongly implied in the New Testament. Membership is for professing Christians who are baptised. It is not saying that you are a Presbyterian, but that you are a Christian – you have

repented and trust in Christ – and you are committing yourself (and family) to a local church, as we see in the New Testament.

- **Baptism** – Jesus commanded baptism as a sign that points to what He has achieved in His death and resurrection- and that we are united to Him. Baptism is for professing Christians and their children. It does not make a person, either an adult or an infant, a Christian. Outward water cannot produce inner life. Baptism is usually done by pouring water on a person's head or by immersing them totally in water, e.g. in a pool.

Whilst we worship God together on Sundays, it is also true that every part of our lives should worship Him. Christianity is always about our relationship to God and never outward religion. God dislikes such superficiality.

### **How we try to live...**

Sometimes you hear Christians quip, "If you find the perfect church, don't join it... why ruin it!" Our church is made up of people who love the Lord, yet we experience all the brokenness that this world has. Only in heaven will there be perfection! Yet, because we trust God, we now seek to obey Him. Our heartfelt desire is that He would be glorified in everything we do. We desire to be faithful to Him, because we know that His faithfulness to us has meant our salvation.

This is our prayer;

*"Father God, you are a holy and good God.*

*The universe is Yours and it declares Your glory.*

*Lord, we are sorry for our pride and we understand that we have not loved You.*

*We are sorry when we do, say and think sinful things – and when we do not do right things. We are sorry when our motives are selfish. O God, forgive us.*

*Thank you for Jesus Christ who died on the Cross.*

*Thank you that He took our punishment. Let us see our sin, but let us see too*

*Your grace and we will be changed people. Thank you that when we are forgiven by You, we are forgiven for eternity – at the cross it was paid for.*

*We now want to live as you created us to live.*

*Holy Spirit give us strength moment by moment.*

*Father, we look to You today and we trust you for tomorrow. And we pray you will be glorified in every part of our lives.*

*In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen."*