



## **CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

*Information for Prospective Members  
And  
Membership Application Form*

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# What is Membership?

To become a member of a church is to make a formal commitment to a visible, identifiable, local body of believers who have joined together for specific, divinely ordained purposes. These purposes include receiving instruction from God's Word (1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:2), serving and edifying one another through the proper use of spiritual gifts (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11), participating in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42), submitting oneself to the servant-leadership and watchful-care of Biblically-qualified pastors/elders (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) and proclaiming the gospel to the lost (Matthew 28:18-20).

On the whole, church membership is a formal relationship between a local church and a Christian that is characterized by the church's affirmation and oversight of a Christian's discipleship, and the Christian's submission to living out his or her discipleship in the care of the church. In short, it's about a church taking specific responsibility for a Christian, and a Christian for a church.

**We practice church membership at *Legacy Bible Church* because:**

*There is a Biblical basis for it -*

There's no proof-text in the Bible that teaches church membership, and it isn't explicitly commanded. At the same time, the idea of experiencing salvation (and growth in the Christian life) without belonging to a local church is foreign to the New Testament. When individuals repented and believed in Christ, they were "added" to the church (Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 16:5) - it seems that *someone* was keeping a numerical record of those who were being saved and thus joining the church.

Moreover, in the book of Acts, much of the terminology fits only with the concept of formal church membership. Phrases such as "the whole congregation" (6:5), "the church in Jerusalem" (8:1), "the disciples" in Jerusalem (9:26), "in every church" (14:23), "the whole church" (15:17), and "the elders of the church" in Ephesus (20:17), all suggest recognizable church membership with well-defined boundaries (also see 1 Corinthians 5:4; 14:23; and Hebrews 10:25).

*It helps pastors/elders know who they are responsible for -*

“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you *as those who must give an account*” (Hebrews 13:17). Whom will a pastor/elder give an account for, except the members of his own church?

Pastors/elders have to know who they are responsible for, so they can care well for the people they have been entrusted to shepherd.

*It keeps us accountable -*

Church membership places us under the watchful-care of Biblically-qualified pastors/elders. It’s a way of saying (to them, as well as to the other members), “I am here to stay. I want to help you grow in godliness. Will you help me to do the same?”

*It makes a powerful statement -*

Our radically-individualistic secular culture has often made its way into the church. As a result, many Christians choose to opt out of membership in a local church, finding it preferable to roam free as spiritual consumers on the internet while habitually “drifting” from one congregation to the next.

Joining a church formally as a member in a context like ours makes a powerful, counter-cultural statement - “My preferences aren’t primary, and my faith can’t be privatized. I’m committed to this group of people and they’re committed to me. I’m here to give, more than get.”

*It helps us become more Christ-like -*

It is easy to idealize community or to say we love the Church of God in a general sense. It takes courage to make promises to lay down our lives to serve, care for, and love a *specific* group of believers - believers who you see every Sunday; believers who you actually know; believers who get on your nerves.

Real community is *hard work*, and becoming a member of a church helps us come to terms with this reality, embrace it, and live in light of it.

When we live out our faith by practicing the “one-anothers” of the New Testament in the context of an actual, visible, tangible community of faith, we sharpen and

shape one another. We're "spurred on" in the faith. We grow. We learn to love. We become more like Jesus.

**A member of *Legacy Bible Church* is someone who has made a formal commitment to:**

**PROTECT THE UNITY** of *Legacy Bible Church*

- By acting in love toward others (John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:7)
- By refusing to gossip, slander, gripe, or complain (2 Corinthians 12:20, James 5:9)
- By resolving conflicts using Matthew 5:22-24, 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 6:1-11, Galatians 6:1, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 John 5:16
- By submitting to leadership as we all submit to one another (Hebrews 13:17, Ephesians 5:21)

**SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY** of *Legacy Bible Church*

- By praying for its spiritual health and growth (Philippians 1:9)
- By inviting non-Christians to attend (Luke 14:23)
- By warmly welcoming those who visit (Romans 15:7)
- By giving regularly and cheerfully as an act of worship (1 Corinthians 16:2, 2 Corinthians 8-9)

**SERVE THE MINISTRY** of *Legacy Bible Church*

- By discovering their gifts and using them with joy as an extension of grace (1 Peter 4:10, Ephesians 4:11-12)
- By fostering a servant's heart in serving God and others (Philippians 2:3-4)

**SUPPORT THE TESTIMONY** of *Legacy Bible Church*

- By attending faithfully (Hebrews 10:24-25)
- By growing in a godly life (1 Timothy 4:14-15, Philippians 1:27)

# Membership Process

1. Get baptized<sup>1</sup>
2. Sign the church covenant
3. Fill out the membership application form
4. Attend a membership class
5. Get interviewed by one of the elders

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<sup>1</sup> We recognize that there are godly men and women who hold to differing views on baptism. The two major positions on this issue have come to be known as *credobaptism*, which is the baptism of professing believers by immersion, and *paedobaptism*, which is a view of baptism as the symbol of the covenant, to be administered to infants as well as adults. In our estimation, as long as there is 1) the *application* of water and 2) the *invocation* of the Triune Name of God, the baptism is legitimate. For anyone interested in membership at *Legacy*, baptism is required. However, whether baptized as an infant by pouring or sprinkling or as an adult by immersion is, as far as we are concerned, a secondary issue, and as such, for each individual (*baptized*) person, membership will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Bottom line: we refuse to squabble about this in our congregation. “May the time soon arrive when water shall not quench love, but when all the churches militant shall form one army, with one object – that of extending the Redeemer’s Kingdom” – John Bunyan

# Our purpose

Our church is a gathered assembly of believers in Jesus Christ committed to and characterized by this purpose:

**“We exist for the worship of the living God and to see His Church reformed according to His Word, bearing witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the sake of future generations.”**

*We exist for the worship of the living God...*

“Let them glorify him when the people are gathered for worship. Let them praise him in the assembly of the elders.” - Psalm 107:32

“Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.” - Hebrews 10:25

*And to see His Church reformed according to His Word...*

“My foot stands on level ground; in the great assembly I will bless the Lord.” - Psalm 26:12

“I write so that you will know how one should act in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.” - 1 Timothy 3:15

*Bearing witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ...*

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!” - Isaiah 52:7

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” - Acts 1:8

*For the sake of future generations...*

“Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.” - Deuteronomy 7:9

“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” - Ephesians 3:20-21

## **Our Pillars**

Our church is a gathered assembly of believers in Jesus Christ committed to and characterized by the following three “pillars”:

### **LEGACY**

1. Christ is our legacy.

We want to leave a Christ-centred legacy, passing on the torch of faith to succeeding generations. We humbly yet boldly proclaim the good news of Christ - His incarnation, His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ascension, His intercession, and His vindication, when He comes again. His Person and Work are the beating heart of “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3). We preach it in our churches, teach it to our children, and tell it to our neighbours. What we received from our forebears, we pass down over the long-haul, leaving a legacy.

*Psalm 145:4 - “One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.”*

## **BIBLE**

### 2. The Bible is our authority

Our services are saturated with Scripture because God's Word creates, establishes, shapes, and grows God's people. As the Spirit of God works through the Word of God, the lost are saved, the saints are sanctified, the church is built up, and God's glory is magnified. In the midst of the constantly-changing whims of a culture that's marked by theological confusion and moral chaos, we uphold the authoritative truths of God's inerrant and inspired Word.

*2 Timothy 3:16 - "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."*

## **CHURCH**

### 3. The church is our family.

Believers have been meeting together for corporate worship on the first day of the week since Christ rose from the dead. This is our practice on the "Lord's Day," as the Apostle John refers to it in Revelation 1:10. We come together to read the Word, preach the Word, sing the Word, pray the Word, and see the truths of the Word displayed in the two sacraments of the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper. We do these things collectively, because we've been saved into a family of faith. We do these things joyfully, because the Lord has reconciled us to Himself and to one another. We do these things necessarily, because God wants us to, and because we need to. We come together regularly because our God is worthy, and because we are family.

*Ephesians 2:19 - "You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."*

# **Our Distinctives**

Our church is a gathered assembly of believers in Jesus Christ committed to and characterized by the following five distinctives:

## **WE ARE EVANGELICAL**

The term evangelical derives from the Greek word *euangelion* meaning “Gospel” or “good news.” This good news is that Jesus Christ the Son of God lived a sinless life, died for our sins, was raised from the dead, ascended to heaven, and now is reigning as King. Through His finished work on our behalf, He purchased the Church, redeeming the saints throughout the centuries. Therefore, as people of the evangel, that is, the Gospel, we are rightly called Evangelicals. Our heritage bears this name out as we celebrate the proclamation and the mission of the Evangelical Revivals of earlier centuries. While some talk as if we ought to jettison the term due to its being politicized in certain circles, we want to not only reclaim it, but apply it to all of life. The Gospel is not just the atonement of Christ, delivering of sinners, but also the enthronement of the risen Christ, and His reign over all the earth. His Kingdom is advancing, His glory is increasing, and His Church is being built, living stone by living stone. This has infinitely far-reaching implications.

## **WE ARE COUNTERCULTURAL**

When the Church accommodates itself to the world, our witness weakens. Becoming like the world to win the world is a fool’s strategy and a futile endeavour.

We ought to fight the temptation of thinking that our effectiveness on mission increases to the degree that we can impress the intellectual and cultural elites of our day. We ought to shun the approach which seeks to gain a seat at the proverbial table, even if it means compromise.

For the glory of God, supremacy of Christ, truthfulness of Scripture, and purity of the Church, we endeavour by God’s grace to hold the line. We will not bow to statism, pluralism, Marxism, feminism, transgenderism, or any of the other anti-Biblical isms that characterize our current cultural climate. We are driven not by cultural relevance, but by covenantal faithfulness. We seek to build communities marked by truth, love, and holy joy—where men and women flourish as image-

bearers of God, families grow strong in the light of Christ, and communities are blessed.

## **WE ARE REFORMATIONAL**

Tracing our roots to the recovery of biblical truth during the Protestant Reformation, we identify with its chief principles of the *Five Solas*, expressed in the following Latin slogans: *Sola Gratia* (Grace Alone), *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone), *Solus Christus* (Christ Alone), *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone), and *Soli Deo Gloria* (God's Glory Alone).

### *Sola Gratia* (Grace Alone)

We affirm that in salvation we are rescued from God's wrath by His grace alone. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life.

### *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone)

We affirm that justification is realized when we place our faith in Christ alone to save us from our sins. In justification Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice.

### *Solus Christus* (Christ Alone)

We affirm that our salvation is accomplished by the work of Christ on our behalf. His sinless life, substitutionary death, and bodily resurrection are alone sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to the Father. There is no other Saviour.

### *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone)

We affirm the inerrant Scripture to be the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behaviour must be measured.

### *Soli Deo Gloria* (God's Glory Alone)

We affirm that because our salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, God alone gets all the glory. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God, and for His glory alone.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, we will always endeavour to live in light of these truths... *Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as He is revealed in the Scriptures alone, to the glory of God alone.*

## **WE ARE CONFSSIONAL**

Our faith is not new, but ancient. We do not stand alone, but confess the Christian faith passed down throughout the whole history of the Church of Jesus Christ. Our word “creed” comes from the Latin word *credo*, “I believe.” A creed is typically a short statement of faith. The creeds of the early Church, including the Apostles’ Creed (developed during the first four centuries AD), the Nicene Creed (AD 325), and the Athanasian Creed (around AD 428), have been widely accepted across the ages by multiple church traditions. In them, the ancient Church responded to some of the great heresies of the Christian religion, and clarified confessional Christian orthodoxy. Our noun “confession” comes from the Latin verb *confiteor*, “to confess.” The greatest confessions came out of the Protestant Reformation. For those congregations and denominations that still believe God’s Word as it was understood in the ancient Church and in the Reformation, the creeds and confessions are the living voice of the Church’s understanding of God’s Word on the most important issues of Christian doctrine and living. They are never to be seen as a substitute for Scripture or as having authority over Scripture. Rather, they help Christians make sense of the Bible by highlighting what is important and summarizing its essential message. In an age of individualistic faith and skeletal creeds where doctrine is watered down to the lowest common denominator, the rich tradition of corporate creeds and confessions helps to keep us grounded in the Truth, and provides us with a vital link to the Church of ages past and the saints throughout the centuries.

## **WE ARE FAMILIAL**

The Church is a Family comprised of families, a Household comprised of households (Eph. 2:19, 1 Tim. 3:4-5,15). As such, in the overlap between the home and the local church, we exhort and encourage fathers as heads of their households to regularly lead their wives and children in family worship (Deut. 6:6-7, Eph. 6:4). Similarly, (as what happens at home leads into the service on Sundays), when we all gather for worship on the Lord’s Day to receive from our Heavenly Father, our desire is that *all* be present; the men alongside the women; the old alongside the *young*.

The New Testament assumes that children are in the worship service and addresses them directly in the letters that are to be read publicly during the corporate gathering: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20). The Old Testament gives us more than several examples of

whole families being present for public convocations during the early days of Israel's history (Exodus 35:1; Deuteronomy 31:11-13; Joshua 8:35).

We delight in all of the shuffles, squeaks, and noises that come with children in the assembly—they are a blessing, not a curse! (Matthew 19:14).

## **Our Values**

Our church is a gathered assembly of believers in Jesus Christ committed to and characterized by the following five values:

### **UNAPOLOGETIC PREACHING**

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. The public proclamation of God's Word is central to Christian worship. As such, we are strongly committed to preaching which unpacks, unfolds, explains, and applies the meaning of the text of Scripture... We proclaim the authority of God's Word and the exclusivity of Christ's Gospel, which brings transformation, not merely information. We believe the Spirit works through the Word to reform hearts, renew minds, and reshape lives, and therefore we do this without apology.

*“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” - 2 Timothy 4:2*

### **UNADORNED WORSHIP**

We believe that what we do in the church is to be pleasing to the Holy Spirit, and therefore, regulated by the Holy Scriptures. We are not free to worship God however we *feel* like worshipping Him, but only in line with how He says we *ought* to worship Him. We read the Word (1 Tim. 4:13), preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2), sing the Word (Col. 3:16), pray in accordance with the Word (Matt. 21:13), and see the truths of the Word displayed in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26). We come to worship on God's terms, not ours; governed by the Bible, not our preferences; doing what He wants, and aligning our desires in obedience, finding full joy in Christ.

*“The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.” - John 4:23*

## **UNCEASING PRAYER**

We believe firmly in the power of prayer, because we believe firmly in the power of the God to whom we pray. We can accomplish nothing on our own, but are completely dependent on God for everything... We acknowledge this dependence on our God by giving ourselves continually and wholeheartedly to prayer, and trusting He will direct and bless our work.

*“Pray without ceasing.” - 1 Thessalonians 5:17*

## **UNPRETENTIOUS FELLOWSHIP**

We want our communities to be marked by honesty, grace, forgiveness, humility, and harmony. Our desire is to foster church environments where we don't have to pretend to be more than we are. Yes, we challenge one another to walk in holiness, but we strive to do so knowing that we are all sinners in need of grace. We love one another in spite of our flaws, dealing gently and patiently with one another in our weaknesses... We acknowledge that we are all alike, stumbling, suffering sinners, and the ground is levelled at the foot of the cross. The righteousness we have, and victories we enjoy are ours through Christ, and we rejoice in seeing Christ in ourselves and others.

*“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” - Galatians 6:2*

## **UNAFRAID WITNESS**

The Holy Spirit gives us boldness to testify to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We proclaim, herald, profess, announce and declare that Christ lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death, and rose again in victory over the grave. All who trust in Him will be saved. We believe the Gospel is not just good news for individuals, but also for nations! As the Gospel spreads, it reshapes cultures, reforms communities, and renews lives. With boldness and compassion, we proclaim Christ, calling people to repent and believe as we scatter near (in our neighbourhoods and communities) and far (into unreached areas of the world), telling the good news to our friends, neighbours, co-workers, family members, and anybody and everybody who will give us a hearing.

*“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son*

*and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” - Matthew 28:18-20*

## **Church Documents: Introduction**

As the children of God, we aim by grace to submit ourselves wholeheartedly to God’s will, revealed in God’s Word. Both personally and collectively, therefore, we are governed by His Word.

To give durability to this belief, we have drawn up biblically-based directives for our lives together in three founding documents. Our Doctrinal Statement outlines from the Bible a summary of what we believe. Our Principles of Church Governance draw from Scripture as best we can practical guidelines for how the local church is to be structured. Our Covenant traces from the Word a picture of how we agree to live, in *light* of what we believe. These documents, taken together, abbreviate the Biblical doctrines that shape the life and ministry of our church.

# **Doctrinal Statement: Our Core Beliefs**

From the time of the Apostles all the way up until today, Christians have laid out doctrine (beliefs) in brief, definitive statements. As those who know God, we believe it necessary to set forth in a concise fashion the cornerstone truths of our church as guided by Scripture. Our Statement of Faith summarizes essential Christian beliefs, shows unity in Christ, and guards the church from error. Anyone pursuing membership must be able to affirm these beliefs.

## **THE SCRIPTURES**

We believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments to be the full record of God's self-disclosure to mankind. Different men, while writing according to their own styles and personalities, were supernaturally moved along by the Holy Spirit to record God's very words, inerrant in the original writings. Therefore, those applying themselves to study its literal, historical- grammatical context can accurately understand God's Word. Scripture is fully trustworthy as our final and sufficient authority for all of life (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

## **THE TRIUNE GOD**

We believe in the one true and living God, eternally existing in perfect unity as three equally and fully divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each member of the Godhead, while executing distinct but complementary roles in redemptive history, has precisely the same nature, attributes, and being, and is equally worthy of the same glory and honour and obedience (John 17:3; Matthew 28:19-20; John 1:1-4; Acts 5:3-4).

## **GOD THE FATHER**

We believe God the Father created all things for His own glory according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ. He upholds all things by the Word of His power and grace, exercising sovereign headship over all creation, providence, and redemption (Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:1-3).

## GOD THE SON

We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, moved by love in accordance with the will of the Father, took on human flesh. Conceived through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the virgin Mary. He, being fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life and sacrificially shed His blood and died on the cross in our place, accomplishing redemption for all who place their faith in Him. He arose visibly and bodily from the dead three days later and ascended into heaven, where, at the Father's right hand, He is now Head of His Body the Church, the only Saviour and Mediator between God and man, and the Supreme Judge who will return to earth in power and glory to consummate His redemptive mission (John 1:1, 14, 18; John 14:8-9; 1 Timothy 3:16; Acts 1:3, 9; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 John 2:1).

## GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ during this age. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He draws the unredeemed to repentance and faith, and at salvation imparts new spiritual life to the believer, bringing that person into union with Christ and the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit sanctifies, seals, fills, guides, instructs, comforts, equips, empowers, permanently indwells at salvation, and bestows spiritual gifts to the believer for Christ-like living and service (John 16:8; 13:15; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 1:22; 4:11-12; Romans 8:9-17; 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 12:4-5, 11-13; Galatians 5:25; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

## MANKIND

We believe that God created mankind—male and female—in His own image and likeness, free of sin, to glorify Himself and enjoy His fellowship. Tempted by Satan but in the sovereign plan of God, man freely chose to disobey God, bringing sin, death and condemnation to all mankind. All human beings therefore, are totally depraved sinners by nature and by choice. Alienated from God without defense or excuse and subject to God's righteous wrath, all of mankind is in desperate need of the Saviour (Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 3:10-19; Romans 1:18, 32).

## SALVATION

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, as the substitutionary atonement in our place, and that salvation is found in none other than Jesus Christ. Before creation, God chose those who would be saved and granted this unearned grace solely based on His sovereign good pleasure, though this sovereign choice does not in any way negate man's responsibility to respond to the Gospel. For each person that turns from sin in repentance and places his or her faith in Christ alone by grace alone, Christ's death on the cross is the sole and complete payment for their sins, fully satisfying God's righteous wrath. At salvation each person is made a new creation by the Holy Spirit, declared righteous before God, and secured as an adopted child of God forever. Genuine faith continues in obedience and love for Jesus Christ with a life eager to glorify God and persevere to the end (Romans 8:37-39; 2 Corinthians 5:17, 21; 1 John 2:4-6; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

## THE CHURCH

We believe that upon placing one's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, the believer is made part of the Body of Christ, the one universal Church, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. The Scriptures command believers to gather locally in order to devote themselves to worship, prayer, teaching of the Word, fellowship, the ordinances of baptism and communion, service to the local body through the development and use of talents and spiritual gifts, and outreach to the world to make disciples. Wherever God's people meet regularly in obedience to this command, there is the local expression of the Church under the watchful care of a plurality of elders. A church's members are to work together in love and unity, intent on the ultimate purpose of glorifying Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Acts 2:42-46; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:16).

## BAPTISM AND COMMUNION

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church, baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe in Christian baptism administered in water into the name of the Triune God. We believe in the Lord's Supper as instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

## MISSIONS

We believe it is the aim, duty, and privilege of every believer and local church fellowship to glorify God by responding as active participants in the Great Commission call of Jesus Christ to go and make disciples of all nations. We believe the primary focus and priority of this call is centered on efforts that establish, strengthen, and reproduce biblically-based churches, which will then plant churches that plant churches for future generations and God's glory (Matthew 28:18-20).

## THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

At death the soul separates from the body. Believers' souls pass into the conscious blissful presence of God until the resurrection when they will be reunited with their bodies to inherit their eternal reward. Unbelievers' souls pass into a state of conscious punishment until they are reunited with their bodies to face the final judgment (2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Luke 23:43; Luke 16: 24-26).

## THINGS TO COME

We believe in and expectantly await the glorious, visible and personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blessed hope of His return has vital bearing on the personal life, service, and mission of the believer. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost. The lost will be raised to judgment and consciously experience eternal wrath in the lake of fire. The saved will be raised to eternal joy in the new heaven and new earth in the manifested presence of God (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Acts 1:3, 9; Hebrews 7:25-26; Revelation 20:11-15; Revelation 21).

# Principles of Church Governance

Our Lord is very clear in His Word about how His church on earth ought to be organized and managed. First, Christ is the head of the church and its supreme authority (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18). In turn, under the headship of Christ, the church is to be governed by spiritual leadership consisting of two distinct offices.

The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are *elders* (also called bishops, overseers, pastors, or pastor-teachers; these terms are used interchangeably in the New Testament; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and *deacons*, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

Jesus Christ as the head of the church mediates His rule through the Word of God by the plurality of elders (or *pastors*) who govern the church. The elders within a local church are assisted by the deacons (Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 6:1-6).

Besides the elders and deacons, there are no other church leadership personnel mentioned anywhere in the New Testament. Christ is in charge. Elders serve under Christ as spiritual overseers of the congregation as a whole. Deacons serve alongside elders to support them as they lead. All officers serve humbly in submission to Christ for the good of the people of God...

*Considering these overarching truths, here are eight biblical principles of church governance that shape the life and ministry of our congregation —*

## AUTONOMY

Christ is Lord of all. He is the one true head of the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18). He is also King of kings – sovereign over every earthly power (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

As such, we believe that Church and State must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other.

To the extent that government authorities do not attempt to assume ecclesiastical authority or issue orders that forbid our obedience to God's law, their dictates are to be obeyed whether we agree with their rulings or not (i.e. Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 still bind the consciences of individual Christians. We are required to obey our civil authorities as powers that God Himself has ordained).

However, while civil government is invested with divine authority to rule the state, neither of those texts (nor any other) grants civic rulers jurisdiction over the church. God has established three institutions within human society: the family, the state, and the church. Each institution has an arena of authority with jurisdictional parameters that must be respected. A father's authority is confined to the realm of his own family. Church leaders' authority (which is delegated to them by Christ) is limited to church matters. And government is specifically responsible for the oversight and protection of civic peace and well-being within the boundaries of a nation or community. *God has not granted civic rulers authority over the doctrine, practice, or polity of the church.*

Put differently, it has never been the prerogative of civil government to regulate or restrict the worship of the local church. When, how, where, with whom, and how often the church worships is not subject to Caesar. Caesar himself is subject to God. Jesus upheld this ground-rule when He told Pilate, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11). And because Christ is the head of the church, ecclesiastical matters pertain to His Kingdom, not Caesar's. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17).

We uphold the crown rights of King Jesus over every aspect of church life and ministry.

## CONNECTIVITY

While it is certainly true, on the one hand, that the Church must be free (i.e. autonomous) from any unlawful interference from the State, on the other, no local church is an island unto itself. Rather, every local church ought to be integrally tied to other like-minded local churches for mutual accountability and support.

We see this, for instance, in the fact that the “church” (singular) in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1; 11:22; 15:4), most likely consisted of more than several congregations. The Jerusalem “church” (singular), which was thousands strong (Acts 2:41; 5:14; 21:20), met primarily in private dwellings (Acts 1:12-14; 2:46; 12:12; 19:9; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19). This necessarily leads to the conclusion that this singular body was comprised of more than a few local congregations. These congregations - with integral and even formal connections - collaborated regularly - with a view to decency, order, and general edification - on matters such as reporting on missionary activities (Acts 11:22), disbursing relief funds between congregations (Acts 11:30), and deliberating upon questions of doctrine and practice (Acts 15:2).

In short, the New Testament paints a picture of congregations with such close ties that these several congregations, (the believers in Jerusalem being a prime example), are sometimes even referred to as a single “church.”

This kind of intentional coalition-building between congregations, with elders from these varied congregations meeting every so often for deliberation, conference, and interchange of views, is something we not only heartily approve of, but practice here at *Legacy*. Our bonds with our partner churches are not only practically profitable for the strengthening of our respective congregations; they also testify to the ultimate reality of the unity of the Church on the whole (Jn. 17:22-23; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12).

Congregations, then, while maintaining independence from the State, ought not to be isolated from one another.

## SIMPLICITY

We believe that church government should be structured as simply as possible within scriptural parameters. Instead of opting for a complex bureaucracy, we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead us in accordance with the principles laid out in God’s Word.

Our congregation is governed by the **ELDERS** of the church, who have been given their authority by Christ. The evidence that demonstrates that Christ has conferred His authority upon these men is twofold: 1) These men will possess an *internal compulsion* that motivates them to want to serve in a pastoral capacity (1 Timothy 3:1) and 2) These men will receive *external confirmation* from other Biblically qualified elders who serve to substantiate the pastoral aspirations of these elders-to-be by saying, in essence, “yes, we do see that you possess the requisite character and pastoral giftings and yes, we do see that you are called to the ministry” (Titus 1:5). When *internal compulsion* meets *external confirmation*, we can be fairly certain that Christ is calling a man to serve as an elder.

Potential elders are identified and trained by current elders, and subsequently *affirmed* by the congregation, and *appointed* by the elders.

Under Christ, these elders are responsible for the overall spiritual oversight of the congregation as a whole (1 Peter 5:1-4). They are charged with the responsibility of shepherding the people “as those who will have to give an account” (Hebrews 13:17). This is a high and weighty calling that can’t be taken lightly.

As men entrusted with a mission to lead, teach, protect and love their church members the way shepherds care for the sheep in a flock, elders are responsible before God for helping God’s people grow up into greater and greater spiritual maturity (Ephesians 4:11-13).

In particular, the elders’ primary responsibilities include the exercise of general spiritual oversight in the following five areas:

**Doctrine** – Ensuring that the doctrine of the church is biblical; all doctrinal issues in the church will be settled by the elders (2 Timothy 2:15; Titus 1:9; Acts 20:28-31). This is why, for instance, one of the primary duties of an elder is *teaching* (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:12). Elders lead, feed, guide, and guard the sheep by giving instruction in sound doctrine, and protecting the local church from the corrupting influences of false teachings.

**Discipline** – Administering in love and humility the process of church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1-4; Titus 3:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:17-25; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 and Romans 16:17.

**Direction** – Ensuring that the direction of the church is consistent with our purpose, our pillars, our distinctives and our values.

**Discipleship** – Modelling godliness (1 Peter 5:3; Hebrews 13:7) and teaching the truth that accords with godliness (1 Timothy 6:3), elders tend the flock in such a way that believers develop from spiritual infancy to full-grown Christ-likeness. All believers are called to the task of making disciples, but elders bear an overall responsibility for helping people progress towards maturity in Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13; Colossians 1:28).

**Decisions** – Seeking the Lord’s wisdom to steer the church in a scriptural, God-honoring way by deciding on the best course of action in any given situation.

[Addendum:

Why don’t we vote at our church?

Scripture seems to encourage the *involvement* of church members in major congregational decisions. In the New Testament, for instance, we see this principle played out in Acts chapter 6, when men were selected for the distribution of food amongst the Hellenistic widows so the apostles could devote more of their time to prayer and preaching. Acts 6:5 says this; “The announcement found approval with *the whole congregation*; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.”

This passage indicates congregational *involvement*. It also clearly indicates that a choice was made. What the passage does *not* mention is that a vote was taken in order to make that choice. Nor was the action *initiated* by the congregation. That was done by the apostles (men who held their positions without any human vote having taken place).

Churches that operate according to a purely congregational governance model tend to *assume* a vote was the means to reaching the approval of the congregation in Acts 6, but this assumption does not hold up well under scrutiny. Congregational *involvement* is implied in this (and several other New Testament passages), but *voting*, per se, is never laid down as a concrete rule by which we *must* make decisions in our churches. In fact, when a vote is cast, the voter is sometimes choosing the lesser of two offensive options and will not be satisfied with any outcome. When the

church's vote is not unanimous, congregational voting may well create disharmony rather than unity. *Involvement* is wise. A *vote* is unnecessary.

In *our* church, we try to *involve* the congregation in major decisions including, for instance, the appointment of a new elder. Questions and concerns about the elder-candidate's suitability for the role are taken into account, though the final decision rests in the hands of the church's leaders (i.e. the elders).

This is because the biblical model for leadership within God's church involves qualified and tested leaders making decisions on behalf of the body. This does not take place without the body's *involvement*, but it *does* take place without granting equal input to those who have not been biblically qualified as elders (according to the elder qualifications established in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1). If equal input *is* given to those who have not been biblically qualified, the church may be easily led astray – the majority is often wrong.

In short, Scripture is patently quiet on the issue of voting (with only slight, inconclusive evidence to point to the possibility that it may have taken place on occasion). The practice of voting cannot be imposed as a rule, since it is nowhere commanded in Scripture. It was not a part of the cultures of the Old or the New Testament, and it is not required by Scripture. Church voting comes from Western tradition, not from Scripture.]

Under elders who are labouring in submission to Christ, the **DEACONS** weigh-in on decision-making alongside the elders, and care for the physical and material needs of the church.

The biblical role of deacons is to ensure that the practical and logistical needs of the church are being met so that the elders can devote themselves to teaching, praying, and leading (Acts 6:1-7).

Conclusion:

At our church, rigid and complex church organization is de-emphasized, and only the organization that is needed to run the church is instituted. Committees and sub-committees that vote on various matters so as to run the operations of the church as “representatively” as possible are essentially non-existent in our congregation. Though this may offend our Western democratic sensibilities, the clear teaching of Scripture demonstrates that the biblical norm for church

leadership is not a plethora of congregational committees but a plurality of God-ordained elders, assisted by godly deacons.

Christ is the Head of the church. The elders collectively lead the church in submission to Christ through His Word and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. The deacons are selected by and accountable to the elders. The congregation affirms Christ's appointed leaders (Acts 20:28). Simple as that.

Only by following this biblical pattern will the church maximize its fruitfulness to the glory of God.

## CONSISTENCY

We are consistent across the board in our approach to recruiting, training, and commissioning all prospective elders and deacons.

Our standardized process for leadership development at *Legacy* is as follows:

### **1. IDENTIFICATION**

Current elder(s) identify prospective candidates (either elder or deacon). These candidates should be spiritually exemplary men who aspire to serve in one of these two official "offices" of the church (1 Timothy 3:1).

### **2. INVITATION**

The candidate receives a formal letter of invitation into a training/candidacy process, at which point the candidate proceeds to read our foundational church documents to determine theological and ministerial compatibility (our purpose, pillars, distinctives, values, doctrinal statement, principles of church governance, and other doctrinal standards listed on our website).

### **3. INTERVIEW**

The candidate is interviewed by a current elder to determine suitability for candidacy.

### **4. INTRODUCTION**

Once the candidate has accepted the invitation, read our foundational documents, and sat down for an interview, the first thing we do is get him (or them) up on stage for an introduction so everyone in the congregation knows – this man (or these men) will be in a candidacy process working towards either eldership or deaconship.

## **5. INSTRUCTION**

The candidate then commences the official training/candidacy process, which includes both reading and practical ministry assignments over the course of a *minimum* period of 6 months.

## **6. INSTALLATION**

After a minimum period of six-months, during which time the congregation is able to get to know the candidate – get to know him personally, get to know how he leads, get to know how he serves, get to know his character and abilities – and *if* the candidate 1) successfully completes every prior stage, 2) decides to move forward and make it “official,” and 3) receives the support and full approval of all current elder(s), it’s almost time for installation. At this point, the congregation is notified and given two weeks to bring up any charges against the prospective elder or deacon, followed by the laying on of hands and installing the candidate into the “office” of either elder or deacon (1 Timothy 4:14).

## **SPIRITUALITY**

The similarities of the qualifications for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are striking. Besides the fact that an elder must be “able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2) and deacons are not required to do so, there are virtually no other qualification differences; the *main* difference between an elder and a deacon is a difference of calling, not character. That’s because the *primary* emphasis for biblical leaders in the local church is *always* character over competency; godliness over giftedness; spirituality over skill.

Church members should be able to see in their elders and deacons inspiring, albeit imperfect, examples of the character of Jesus.

Christ wants His church to be run by servant-leaders (i.e. elders) and leading-servants (i.e. deacons) whose Christ-like lives model faithfulness to the Word.

# MASCULINITY

We affirm the biblical teaching that elders and deacons must be men.

“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer [or *elder*], **he** desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. **He** must manage **his** own household well, with all dignity keeping **his** children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage **his** own household, how will **he** care for God’s church? **He** must not be a recent convert, or **he** may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, **he** must be well thought of by outsiders, so that **he** may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil” – 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

“Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the **husband** of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.” – 1 Timothy 3:8-13

We understand that male-only leadership in the church is a hotly contested issue in our culture today, and yet the Bible is extremely straight-forward: just as God calls men to be the heads of their households, so he calls faithful men to lead his church.

When we let the Bible speak authoritatively across the ages, three things are clear:

1. Women are esteemed co-labourers in the faith who share the Gospel in many contexts.
2. Men and women are both used by God in powerful ways.
3. God has ordained that only qualified men serve as elders and deacons.

We believe that women and men are created equal in the sight of God, equal as image bearers, equally sinful, equally redeemable, equal in Christ, equally morally responsible to God. Women and men are completely equal in dignity, value, and worth before God; that’s crystal clear (Genesis 1:26-27).

Be that as it may, created differences *do* exist within God's program. For the protection, provision, upbuilding, and well-being of women and children, God has called *men* to lead.

In the church, this means that women cannot hold the authoritative office of either elder or deacon.

This is not a matter of chauvinism. This is not an issue of men being superior to (or more gifted than) women. Rather, God restricts the offices of elder and deacon to men because that is how He has structured the church to function (and flourish).

On the one hand, we uphold the God-ordained and significant roles that women play in the church. At the same time, we will not bend the clear teachings of Scripture to fit the mold of recent feminist re-interpretations of passages that offend our cultural sensibilities. God gets to say how He wants to run His church, not us.

## PLURALITY

The consistent pattern throughout the New Testament is that each local body of believers is shepherded by a plurality of God-ordained elders. Simply stated, this is the only pattern for church leadership given in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul left Titus in Crete and instructed him to "appoint elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). James instructed his readers to "call for the elders of the church" to pray for those who were sick (James 5:14). When Paul and Barnabas were in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, they "appointed elders for them in every church" (Acts 14:23). The book of Acts indicates that there were "elders" at the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30; 15:2-4; 21:18). Again and again, reference is made to a plurality of elders in each of the various churches.

Much can be said for the benefits of leadership made up of a plurality of godly men. A plurality of godly elders, exercising their individual giftedness, squares with the Scripture's teaching that wisdom is found in a multitude of godly counselors (Proverbs 11:4; 12:15; 15:22; 19:20; 24:6). Their combined counsel and wisdom help to assure that decisions are not self-willed or self-serving to a single individual. If there is division among the elders in making decisions, all the elders should study, pray, and seek the will of God together until consensus is achieved. In this way, the unity and harmony that the Lord desires for His church will begin with those individuals he has appointed to shepherd His flock.

This structure of plurality, we believe, was designed by God to promote (among other things), mutual accountability, mutual pastoral care within the eldership, pastoral integrity, and mutual support in the ministry (for the purpose of increasing the likelihood of ministry longevity).

## HUMILITY

Christ is the Chief Shepherd, and elders are merely under-shepherds (1 Peter 5:4). At their best, elders model Jesus' character, teach Jesus' word, and lead the church by pointing it toward Jesus and his mission. Good elders never lose sight of the fact that they are still sheep themselves; works in progress who need the grace of God just the same as everybody else.

As such, the exercise of an elder's authority must be chiefly characterized by humility. This is the only way to model the example of Christ.

In Philippians 2:3–7 Paul says this;

*“Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”*

Likewise, elders lead from the bottom, not the top. They embrace the fact that in Jesus' countercultural Kingdom, the way up is always down and the way down is always up. Elders do not drive the people from behind like dictatorial bosses; they lead the people from the front to shelter the sheep from danger, laying down their lives to promote the wellbeing of the flock (John 10:11-13). They stoop to serve like lowly shepherds; they do not demand compliance as domineering bullies (Matthew 20:25-28; 1 Peter 5:3).

Similarly, on the eldership itself (and the same thing goes for those serving as deacons), the leaders strive by grace to create a team-culture that is characterized by mutual respect, affirmation, encouragement, service, selflessness and humble-love.

The leaders of Christ's church seek to foster genuine affection amongst themselves (Romans 12:9). They are devoted to one another in brotherly love, committed to honoring each other above themselves (Romans 12:10). They do their best to live

in harmony with each other (Romans 12:16). They think the best of one another, always giving each other the benefit of the doubt (1 Corinthians 13:7). They instruct one another, each person having a teachable spirit, knowing that everybody brings something valuable to the table (Romans 15:14). They serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13). They carry each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2), and bear with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2). They do not envy each other (Galatians 5:26), but instead understand that every person is an essential member of the team, with each one contributing different gifts for the building up of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). They tenderheartedly forgive each other (Ephesians 4:32). They submit to each other out of reverence for Christ, deferring to one another whenever possible (Ephesians 5:21). They are always honest with each other (Colossians 3:9). They don't slander each other (James 4:11) or grumble against each other (James 5:9). They pray for one another (James 5:16). They love one another deeply, even when they sin against each other (1 Peter 4:8).

Most of all, the leaders of Christ's church realize that the sustainability of this kind of humility is impossible apart from the matchless grace of God in Christ. Christ lived, died, rose, and sent the Spirit in order that those who govern and guide His church might do so in a way that exhibits maturity and promotes unity. "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

# Church Covenant

*Our church covenant is equal parts promise, summary of expectations, ethical statement, and biblical standard. We summarize how we promise to live together in the covenant. It forms the ethics, or the moral principles, of our worldview and holds out a biblical standard by which we live. Our acceptance of this document follows the practice of believers throughout the centuries who have pledged to God and one another to live out the Gospel in community...*

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give ourselves up to him, and having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully affirm this covenant with each other.

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

We will endeavour to bring up such as may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavour with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit and brought by grace into the family of God, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We will, when we go from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

Applicant signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# Membership Application Form

|                                                                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <b>First Name/Last Name:</b>                                                        |  |
| <b>Phone Number:</b>                                                                |  |
| <b>Email:</b>                                                                       |  |
| <b>Street Address/Postal Code:</b>                                                  |  |
| <b>Name of Spouse (if applicable):</b>                                              |  |
| <b>Names of children/dependents – list oldest to youngest (if applicable):</b>      |  |
| <b>Briefly describe your understanding of the Gospel (i.e. What is the Gospel?)</b> |  |

**Briefly describe your relationship with Jesus Christ (i.e. Are you trusting in Christ alone for salvation? Are you following Christ as His disciple?)**

**How long have you attended *Legacy Bible Church*?**

**Addendum:**

1. Church covenant and application form can be sent to [general@legacybiblechurch.ca](mailto:general@legacybiblechurch.ca) (or printed off and given to one of the elders)
2. To set up a time for a membership interview please contact Pastor Spencer – [spencer@legacybiblechurch.ca](mailto:spencer@legacybiblechurch.ca)