

# EMBASSY CHURCH ELDER PAPERS

*As of October 12, 2022*

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## **Embassy Church Statement on Alcohol Consumption**

Scripture makes two points that are clear about the consumption of alcohol:

1) The enjoyment of alcohol is permitted throughout the Old (Genesis 14:18, Deuteronomy 14:26, Job 1:13, Daniel 10:3, Psalm 4:7) and New Testaments, though it should be noted that wine in the Biblical periods was less concentrated than the of wine today. As the best endorsement/examples of this point, Jesus made water become wine as his first miracle (John 2:1-11) and offered it to His disciples at the last supper (Matthew 26:17-30). He also partook frequently enough to be criticized by the religious leaders (Luke 7:34)

2) It universally condemns drunkenness (Luke 21:34, 36, Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:19-21), warns of its harmful effects and shows its damaging consequences (Genesis 9:20-27, 19:30-38; Ester 1:9-22; Daniel 5, Proverbs 23:29-35). Sins associated with drunkenness include violence (Proverbs 4:17); adultery (Revelation 17:2); mockery and brawling (Proverbs 20:1); poverty (Proverbs 21:17); murder (2 Samuel 11:13), sloth (Joel 1:5); and depression (Luke 21:34). In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he required the church to separate from those who claim to be a Christian yet persist in a drunken state (5:11).

Based on these two points, we believe that Christians may drink in moderation, but may not sin by drinking immoderately.

While drinking is permissible, we must remember that our life is to be lived as a sacrifice (Romans 12:1) with a body that is the temple of the holy spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Sober, uninhibited judgment is required to discern the will of God (Romans 12:2), pray effectively (1 Peter 4:7) and think on things above (Colossians 3:2). We must be self-controlled (Galatians 5:22-23, 1 Corinthians 9:27) and not be enslaved by anything (1 Corinthians 6:12). Given that alcohol has the ability to cloud our minds and frequently results in addiction, we should weigh our decision carefully. Ultimately, our highest aim is to glorify God even to the small details of life of what we eat and drink (1 Corinthians 10:31).

If we look at the impact of alcohol in society, we recognize the dangers it brings. Billions of dollars are spent annually by manufacturers to influence people to overconsume resulting in serious societal problems. Alcohol is a significant contributor to death and disease and plays a part in a material portion of car accidents, murders, birth defects and divorces. Excessive drinking also weakens the immune system and contributes to liver, heart and pancreatic conditions resulting in shortened lifespans and excess healthcare spending.

Based on the Biblical warnings against excessive drinking, encouragements toward self-control and the reality of the danger seen through the impact on society, the Elders condemn drunkenness and strongly recommend limiting consumption, but do not require abstinence a condition of membership. The church should not declare something to be sin which has not been so declared by God. For those who choose to partake, discretion is needed because the line that defines drunkenness is unclear and varies from person to person. Though the choice is ultimately a matter of each individual's conscience, the freedom should not be utilized/exercised in such a

way as to hinder others who struggle with an addiction (Romans 14:21). For those who enjoy alcohol with biblical moderation, we recommend using discernment when providing hospitality for others who may have conscience or addiction issues.

With regard to Elders, Scriptures strongly discourages, and at times forbids, drinking by leaders of the people including priests and kings. God commanded Levites to abstain from wine or intoxicating drink when they were ministering in the presence of the Lord (Leviticus 10:8-11) and Nazirites vowed to refrain altogether (Numbers 6:30). Proverbs suggests that kings should avoid drinking wine that they might not "forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted." (31:4-5). As Elders, we agree to either abstain from alcohol altogether or to demonstrate self-control by maintaining moderate consumption in accordance to the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:3 recognizing that we are to lead by example and that our decisions will have a significant impact on our members' choices (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9, Hebrews 13:7).

## **Divorce & Remarriage**

### Guidelines for Elders of Embassy Church

1. A believer and unbeliever should not marry (1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14-15).
2. Divorce may be permitted if there is sexual sin or desertion by an unbeliever (1 Cor. 7:15; Matthew 19:9). The words "may be permitted" were used for 2 reasons:
  - a. Forgiveness and reconciliation between sinning spouses is preferable to separation or divorce. Therefore, church members should meet with their elders to help them determine when it is appropriate to separate or divorce.
  - b. It is possible that the deserted partner engaged in a wrong behavior that drove the spouse away so that repentance would be called for rather than divorce.

"Sexual sin" = A violation of the unity and intimacy of marriage normally by adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, etc...

"Desertion" = An unbelieving spouse leaves or sends away the Christian spouse, for a considerable period of time, without intent to resume relating together as husband and wife. Perpetual abuse (physical, emotional, verbal, sexual) or no longer caring for material needs may be considered functional desertion and grounds for divorce.

3. Remarriage:
  - a. Is permissible for a widow/widower pursuing marriage with another believer (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39)
  - b. Is permissible for a faithful/innocent spouse after serious efforts have been made toward reconciliation and as long as the divorce was on biblical grounds (Guideline # 2).

"Faithful/innocent spouse" = the spouse sinned against by sexual sin or desertion. This in no way suggests that there may not be grievous sins of both spouses in the marriage.
  - c. Is not permissible for the unfaithful/guilty spouse. Those who sinfully divorce their spouse should "remain unmarried or be reconciled to their spouse" (1 Cor. 7:10-11). The only time such a person could remarry is if the faithful/innocent spouse remarries, dies, or whenever we conclude that reconciliation is no longer possible.

4. If a second marriage ends in death or divorce, the widow or widower in this case is not permitted to return to the first spouse in marriage (Deut. 24:1-4).

5. The "one-woman man" in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 refers to present faithfulness of an elder candidate to his wife. As such, an elder candidate with a divorce in his past - yet is qualified to serve as an elder in every other respect - is not necessarily disqualified simply due to his divorced status. This holds true regardless of whether the man was a Christian at the time of the divorce, whether the divorce was on biblical grounds, or whether he was the guilty party.

6. In conclusion, we will not take into membership anyone in unrepentant sin (in regard to divorce or any other matter). Furthermore, any current member who pursues divorce or remarriage on any other grounds will be subject to church discipline.

## Why Do We Require Believer's Baptism For Membership?

A Position Paper by the Elders of Embassy Church

September 20, 2022

1. Baptism is a biblical doctrine and not fundamentally a debate about extra-biblical church traditions (e.g. lighting a unity candle during a Christian wedding).
2. Jesus commands his followers to make disciples by baptizing them.
  - “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**)
  - The primary verb is “make disciples” and the three verb participles (“going, baptizing, and teaching”) explain how to obey the command, “disciple all the nations.”
  - Since baptism is commanded, it is a matter of obedience or disobedience. A person either has been baptized or has not been baptized.
3. Since it is possible that some “baptism” views and practices are unbiblical, then it is necessary for a local church to define what constitutes a biblical baptism.

Some examples of unbiblical views of baptisms may include:

- a. Every time we go swimming or take a bath/shower we are not being baptized.
- b. Telling someone that getting baptized is optional, it is a personal preference, or it is simply a conscience issue.
- c. Declaring that someone is not saved or forgiven of their sins until they are baptized.
- d. A mere external water ritual that declares someone is saved simply because they had dirt removed from their body without any appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
  - “Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (**1 Peter 3:21**)
- e. As the deaths of Felix Mantz and hundreds of early anabaptists can testify, drowning someone and calling it “baptism” is unbiblical and a cruel evil.
- f. A person baptizing their self in their swimming pool or bath tub.
- g. A child baptizing a toy or a Christian dunking their Christian friend while playing in a swimming pool.

4. Local churches must biblically answer the following three questions as they define what constitutes a biblical baptism.

**(1) What is baptism? — Baptism is both a church’s act and a believer’s act.**

- a. Baptism is a church’s act of affirming that someone is a disciple.

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” **(Matthew 16:18-19)**

“If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” **(Matthew 18:17-20)**

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them" **(Matthew 28:18).**

In sum, Jesus authorized local assemblies (gatherings of at least 2 or 3 in his name - Matt. 18:20) to make use of the key of the kingdom to add or remove church members. Therefore, when a local church affirms the faith of disciple and baptizes them, the church is using the keys of the kingdom as earthly representatives of Christ’s heavenly authority.

- b. Baptism is a church’s act of proclaiming and portraying that a disciple is united to Christ’s death and resurrection.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” **(Romans 6:3-4)**

“for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” **(Galatians 3:26-27)**

- c. Baptism is also a believer’s act of obedience that demonstrates their faith in Christ and their repentance of sin. This act declares that they are united to Christ and his church, which also marks them off from the world.

“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them,

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (**Acts 2:37-38**)

“In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses” (**Colossians 2:11-13**)

**(2) Who should be doing baptisms and who should be baptized? — True churches and true Christians.**

- a. A biblical church that preaches the true gospel has the authority to baptize Christians.

In order for a church to possess the keys of the kingdom, they must rightly profess that Jesus is the Christ like Peter did in Matthew 16. Those who gather and agree in Jesus’ name are true churches.

There are various religious groups that have some kind of water ritual or “baptism” that is not associated with the gospel of Christ. (e.g. prosperity church, Roman Catholic Church, Mormon church, Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc...)

Also, a one-off gathering of a few Christian friends at a park or swimming pool is not a true church.

- b. Only Christians should be baptized and all Christians should be baptized.

The body of Christ is not an “intentionally mixed assembly,” that is, the church is not made up of Christians and non-Christians. All the members of the body of Christ possess the Holy Spirit through their faith and repentance.

Baptizing a non-Christian, even if they are child of Christian church member, adds an unregenerate person into the body of Christ. Infant baptism does not reflect the Bible’s teaching about the church or the meaning of baptism.

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” (**1 Corinthians 12:12-13**)



**(3) How should baptism be performed? — In the name of the triune God by Immersion**

- a. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

See above passages, especially Matthew 28:18-20

- b. With water (typically immersion)

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. **(Acts 8:35-39)**

“John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized” **(John 3:23)**

5. People who have been baptized as infants will be denied membership not because they lack the substance of a credible profession of faith, but they lack the biblical form of our faith.

By way of analogy, a person may have money in their bank account, but they cannot purchase groceries without their debit card and pin number that authenticates their identity. A person may have truly purchased a plane ticket but without a boarding pass they will not get through security. An American citizen may be a genuine citizen but they must present their passport to enter an Embassy.

Not defiantly, but unintentionally a paedobaptist is refusing to obey Christ’s command to authenticate their faith to a local church and the rest of the world. Jesus appointed baptism as the appointed means for this end.

## **Frequently Asked Questions About Baptism**

### **What is baptism?**

It is a water ritual that is given to the church by Jesus in order to bring people into the New Covenant. This initiating rite symbolizes a person's death to sin and resurrection to a new life. Baptism depicts the reality of salvation and does not create these realities.

### **Why should we get baptized?**

It is ordained and commanded by our Lord, Jesus Christ. The way Jesus instructs us to make disciples is by baptizing new believers into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teach them to obey all that he commanded (Matthew 28:18-20)

### **Who should be baptized?**

Someone whom the church can affirm has a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ. The church should only baptize those who display evidence of being born again by the Holy Spirit. The body of Christ should never add new members to Christ's body until those members "drink of the one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

### **How old should someone be before they are baptized?**

Someone should be old enough to demonstrate repentance and faith. They should also be old enough to become a member of the church. There are not any specific age minimums given in Scripture. Also, there are not any indications that the "household baptisms" in the book of Acts included children. Children who wish to be baptized should meet with their parents to discuss the matter and then the elders. Parents should also meet with the elders so that collectively the elders, the parents, and the entire church is in agreement. Any child who is baptized would need to be willing to submit to the authority of their parents and the church.

### **Who should perform the baptism?**

Baptism is given to the church and we are to baptize one another into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. We do not baptize ourselves or others apart from a true local church. A true church is one that possess the keys of the kingdom. In order to possess the keys of the church, a gathering must collectively profess what it means that Jesus is the Christ (Matthew 16:18-20; 18:17-20). In other words, a true church is one that rightly preaches and believes in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Normally elders would perform the act of baptizing since they are the appointed representatives of the church, but other members may also join in the act of baptism.

### **Where should a baptism take place?**

In a gathering of a true church. The church must have at least two or three members (Matthew 18:17-20). The presence of the people is more important than the location of the baptism.

### **What mode should be performed? (Immersion? Sprinkling? Pouring?)**

It seems best and most consistent to fully immerse someone, but the word used in the New Testament simply means to wash or dip. Therefore, the practice of Embassy Church will be to fully immerse, but the other modes of baptism by other churches should be accepted if all other aspects of the baptism were done in a biblical manner.

### **Is the New Covenant community an assembly mixed with regenerate and unregenerate members?**

The New Covenant community may unknowingly have unregenerate members in its midst (Hebrews 10:26-27; 1 John 2:19). Therefore, it is accurate to say that many visible churches on earth will be mixed communities. However, we should never willingly and knowingly add unregenerate members into our communicant covenant community. The New Covenant is a community of people who have God's laws written on their hearts, each member knows the Lord, and has their sins forgiven (Hebrews 8:8-13). Furthermore, one of the objectives of the church is to maintain membership purity by removing any known unregenerate members through church discipline. (See 1 Corinthians 5:1-13)

### **Should children who have been born into a Christian family be baptized?**

Since infants are born unregenerate, the church should not baptize infants and add them into the church because of a so-called continuity between the Abrahamic covenant sign of circumcision and the New Covenant sign of baptism.

In the same way that the land promised to Abraham and his family is a promise that functions as a "type" and the land promise is fulfilled by a bigger and better land, namely, the whole earth. So too is circumcision is a "type" that is developed throughout the Old Testament and is fulfilled by a greater reality in the New Testament. That greater reality is not the practice of infant baptism. Instead the fulfillment of Abrahamic circumcision is the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration, which is also sometimes called "internal circumcision of the heart."

See the biblical development of circumcision through the following passages: Genesis 17:11-14; 19:23; Exodus 6:12, 30; Leviticus 26:41; Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 6:10; 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:27; Romans 2:28-29; 1 Corinthians 7:18-19; Philippians 3:3; Colossians 2:11-12.

### **Should we accept into membership those who have been baptized as infants?**

Those who have been baptized as infants in the past should recognize the lack of biblical support for calling their infant baptism a biblical baptism and pursue a biblical baptism in order to obey Christ's command.

### **Since baptism is a secondary issue and it is not a "gospel issue" shouldn't we maintain unity in our church only on issues related to the gospel?**

Since Embassy is a congregational church, all members must agree upon two doctrine categories:

- 1) Doctrines that are essential to the gospel (Trinity, Scripture, Justification, etc...)
- 2) Doctrines that are essential to being a church together (Church authority, leadership, membership, ordinances, etc...)

Being a congregational church means that Jesus has given the entire church community the ultimate authority of the church, the keys of the kingdom. Those keys are exercised when the members of the church defend sound doctrine and execute discipline. It is the congregation's responsibility to appoint officers who will lead and assist in these two tasks. As a result, the doctrines of the gospel and the church should reflect the convictions of the members. If the church adds enough members into the church with differing views on the gospel or the church, then those members could collectively change or remove the church's doctrines.

**Embassy Church**  
Statement on the Baptism of Children  
April 2015

We, the elders of Embassy Church, pray that our children, by the grace of God, will come to know Him as Lord and Savior at an early age. We acknowledge that children can be converted when they are old enough to understand the gravity of their sin before a just and holy God, repent of it and place their faith in Jesus as Savior to restore their broken relationship with their Creator (Mark 1:15, 1 John 1:9). For their faith to be true, it must be more than a decision someone makes to “accept Jesus into their heart” or merely acknowledging the existence of God (James 2:19, Matthew 7:21-24) and attempting to live a moral life. Also, neither sorrow over sin nor interest in spiritual things alone is sufficient evidence of a regenerate heart or the work of the Spirit (Acts 8:9-25; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Hebrews 12:17). Genuine conversion is a work of the Spirit, rooted in a fear of God and driven by a love for Him that manifests itself in obedience and good works (Proverbs 1:7, Proverbs 20:11, John 14:15, 23; Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 2:10, Titus 2:14). These external fruits are a sign of the Spirit’s internal regeneration.

Upon true conversion, we recognize that believers are commanded to be baptized as an act of obedience (Acts 2:38). Baptism does not in any way contribute to salvation, but rather serves as a symbol of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection (1 Corinthians 1:17, Romans 6:3-5). In the book of Acts, adult baptism usually occurred shortly after a profession of faith (Acts 8:26-40). Scripture does not provide any explicit references to children being baptized though it is possible that some were included as part of the households that were converted (Acts 16:33). If we look past the apostolic period for additional guidance, the early church of the later first and second century performed baptisms after a several month period of catechesis.

Baptism identifies a person as a part of the universal, invisible church, and is a prerequisite to membership in a local, visible church. Membership places that person under the leadership of the elders and makes him or her subject to church discipline. Baptism also serves as the entryway to participate in communion, which is a serious step as those who take it in an unworthy manner are subject to God’s judgment (1 Corinthians 11:29). A persistent resistance to obeying the command to be baptized may be a sign that someone is unregenerate.

We therefore have three intersecting points – children can be converted at a young age, baptism should follow true conversion and baptism is a serious undertaking associated with church membership and communion. If we were like God, and could perfectly know the validity of a child’s conversion, then there would be no question about whether one is eligible for baptism. Unfortunately, we see through the glass dimly and struggle to discern whether a testimony of faith is rooted in good soil such that it is true and enduring or bad soil and will wither away with time and testing (James 1:3, 1 Peter 1:6-7, Matthew 24:13, Luke 8:4-21). Given the immaturity and general malleability of children (1 Corinthians 13:11) combined with the difficulty of judging the genuineness of conversion, we urge caution regarding baptizing children at a young age. If it is done at too early, it may provide false assurance of salvation or subject a child to church discipline that he is not spiritually prepared to respond to. However, waiting too long to baptize children may discourage those who are truly converted and also give the impression that the church only consists of adults.

We believe that baptism should take place after the credibility of one's conversion becomes naturally evident to the church community. This normally occurs when a child's faith endures through time and testing. While it is difficult to set a certain number of years which are required for baptism, it is appropriate to consider the candidate's maturity. With the consent and encouragement of Christian parents who are members, we will carefully consider requests from children who desire to pursue baptism and membership in the normal course set out by the church on a case-by-case basis. An elder will meet with the parents for an initial meeting and we will also seek to stay in close contact in order to mentor, counsel, and advise parents as they seek to lead their children in spiritual things. Over a period of time, the child will be led by his or her parents through a study recommended by the elders that clarifies the Gospel. At the conclusion of this study, the child will meet for an interview (or even a series of interviews) with his or her parents and one or more elders of the church. The purpose of these meetings is to discern, as well as we can, if the child understands and has personally and genuinely embraced the Gospel. If the elders are convinced that a child has given evidence of a genuine conversion, the child will be baptized and accepted into the fellowship and discipline of the church, and into all the rights and privileges of church membership. Regardless of the decision, children are to submit to the authority of their parents and parents are to submit to the authority of the church. Before requesting a meeting with the elders, we encourage parents to look for evidence of true conversion including the following signs:

- A growing affection and need for Jesus and the Gospel
- A greater awareness and conviction of sin and remorse because of it
- An increasing knowledge of the faith and desire to practice spiritual disciplines such as Bible study and prayer
- An increasing kindness and selflessness toward others
- An increasing desire to obey parents and other authorities
- Standing firm in obedience to God in the face of temptation, opposition or persecution

In the event of young persons from non-Christian families coming to the church for an extended period of time, professing faith and giving evidence of the reality thereof, requests for baptism and membership would be considered without the involvement of the parents. While all the previous comments on the nature of immaturity still pertain, the fact that such a young person would be doing so despite indifference, or even opposition from their parents would or could be evidence for the reality of their conversion.

In summary, we long to see our children saved by Jesus and then encouraged in their faith, and we want to do everything possible not to discourage them in their love for Jesus in any way. However, baptism and its implications to participation in the Lord's Supper and church membership is not a trivial matter to be undertaken lightly. The Bible doesn't give us any definite, unambiguous command or example about whether to baptize young children who profess faith. What it does seem clear about, however, is that we as a church have the responsibility to discern that professions of faith are credible. Discerning credibility is not an easy task, so we urge patience and understanding with each other as we seek the best decision for each individual child based on the information we have available.

**Discipleship Culture > Discipleship Programs**  
*Embassy Church's Seven Discipleship Principles*

1. Everything we do must help us make better disciples or we don't do it.
  - a. Does \_\_\_\_\_ ministry help bring lost people to faith in Christ?
  - b. Does \_\_\_\_\_ ministry help establish and equip members to grow in their faith and make disciples? How so?
  
2. We try to train our people to go out more than we try to put on events to bring people in. We want to free up our members weekly schedules.
  - i.e. Biblical Counseling Training; Core Seminars Classes; Gospel Network workshops
  
3. We teach all prospective members about discipleship and help them understand that discipleship will be expected of them if they want to join the church.
  - a. We want to redefine for most people what the work of the church is.
    - i.e. The best way someone can serve at Embassy is by doing someone else spiritual good, by prayerfully speaking the truth of God's word into another person's life. When this is what serving the church looks like, then the opportunities will be limitless and the jobs will never be taken.
  - b. Discipleship Process: 1) Evangelize; 2) Establish; 3) Equip; 4) Export
  - c. During our membership interviews we try to figure out what discipleship will look like for each individual member. We also stress One-on-One meetings more than we do community groups or bible studies.
  - d. Church growth = slow and steady multiplication vs. rapid growth by addition
  
4. We try to make our "Business Meetings" less about business and more about discipleship in the church.
  
5. We provide an informal weekly meeting for leaders and members to share updates about discipleship in the church.
  - a. We give away free books and resources that will help people with discipleship
  - b. Our church announcements and prayer requests are about bible studies and disciple-making opportunities. We want people to drink our discipleship Kool-Aid and start seeing discipleship as the normal way to live as a Christian.
  
6. Our church leaders must be models of disciple-making
  - a. Our leadership meetings are more focused on making disciples and prayer
  - b. Our leaders meet with members one-on-one for counseling / discipleship
  - c. Our leaders lead bible studies, community groups and teach bible classes
  - d. Our leaders are chosen because they already are making disciples
  
7. We want to start with the people God gives us and their gifts instead of starting with specific program ideas. We want our members to initiate ministry and we never want to be afraid to let ministries die out if there is nobody to do them.

## Reading and Praying During Worship Service

Things to consider when reading and praying in the worship service:

1. Make sure the microphone is pointing toward you.
2. Make sure you have an ESV translation for the reading so that it matches the “pew Bibles.”
3. Introduce the passage and explain what page number it is on in the black bibles.  
*This morning’s Scripture Reading is Acts 16:25-34. It can be found on page 925 of the black bibles scattered throughout the pews.*
4. Give people a little bit of time to find the passage. While they are turning to the passage, say the 1-2 sentence explanation as to why we are reading this passage.  
*Acts 16 was chosen for our scripture reading because it provides the background stories to the book of Philippians. This chapter tells what happened when Paul and Timothy came to the city of Philippi to preach the gospel and start a new church.*
5. Read the passage slowly and clearly into the microphone.
6. Then transition to the selected prayer.  
*“Please join me in a prayer of thanksgiving.”*

Before you even go up on stage to pray, make sure you think through which prayer you are being asked to pray. A prayer of thanksgiving is not the same thing as a prayer of praise, confession, or petition.

**Thanksgiving** - A prayer of thanksgiving should focus more on what God has done. Thanking him for his works and the goodness of his ways.

**Praise** - A prayer of praise is a prayer focused on God's attributes and his character. It's less about thanking God for what he has done and more about who he is as a person.

**Confession** - is a prayer focused on our sins.

**Petition** - is a prayer asking God to meet our needs.

Other things to consider:

### **Try to connect your prayer to the passage?**

At Embassy we talk about "praying the word" and what we mean by that is that we want our prayer to be based on the passage of scripture that was just read in the service. So use that passage as the starting point for ideas of what to pray. Use the language of the passage. You do not need to quote the verses number, but do feel free to quote the words.

### **Are you writing your prayer out?**

We do not require you to write your prayer out and read it, although some choose to do that. If you do write it, make sure it sounds like you normally pray and not like an essay that you write for a school paper. If you don't write out your prayer, then that is fine too. We just want to encourage you to write out an outline or think through what you want to say or what part of the passage you want to focus your prayer on.

## Types of Groups

1. **Teaching** = Studying God's word is the primary goal.  
Examples Include: Wednesday Night Bible Study, Saturday Morning Seminars, and Children's Ministry Classes
2. **Fellowship** = Developing relationships and prayer is the primary goal.  
Examples Include: The Breakfast Fellowship, Wednesday Night Prayer, After Church Sermon Application Group, and Accountability Groups.
3. **Discipleship:** These groups Build relationships for deeper discipleship through **Teaching, Prayer, and Fellowship.**  
Examples Include: Community Groups, 1 on 1 Discipleship, Biblical Counseling

***What is a Community Group?*** It is a smaller group of Embassy Church members/attenders who regularly gather for **teaching, prayer, and fellowship.**

- **Teaching:** studying the sermon text (recommended), the bible, or a Christian book
- **Fellowship:** meals are encouraged, but not required.
- **Prayer:** pray for one another and pray for the mission and ministries of the church.
- It is **not** the local church.
- It is a discipleship group, not just a Bible study or a fellowship gathering.

***What is the purpose of Community Group at Embassy Church?*** Ongoing discipleship in order to support the mission and ministries of Embassy Church.

- **Ongoing Discipleship:** a platform/launch pad for believers to disciple one another.
- **Mission:** Embassy's mission is to glorify Christ by making disciples of all nations.
- **Mission and Ministries:** it supports the church's overall mission and ministries.

***What are some of Embassy Church's positions on Community Groups?***

- They're not required for church members. They're optional but highly encouraged.
- There will not be any formal or institutional commitments. (See expectations below).
- They're open to both Embassy members and non-members.
- They're meant to be diverse and include singles, families, various ages and genders.
- There is not one ideal size for all CGs. Each leader and the elders will determine the ideal size of their group.
- There is no church-wide policy regarding kids for these groups.



## **Expectations: Community Group Member (CGM)**

### **Qualifications: Community Group Member (CGM)**

The Community Group member (CGM) should be and is highly encouraged to be a member of Embassy Church. However, church membership is not a requirement.

### **Individual-Related Tasks: Community Group Member (CGM)**

- The Community Group member (CGM) should know and understand the essence and purpose of the Community Group (CG).
- The CGM is encouraged to arrive at the CG gathering on time, help with providing meals, share thoughts and questions during the Bible study time, and share praises and struggles during the prayer time.

### **Group-Related Tasks: Community Group Member (CGM)**

- The CGM should love and disciple others in the CG. (*Broadly, discipleship is when a Christian helps someone know Jesus and follow him.*)
- The CGM should act in a way that is consistent with the Embassy Church covenant.
- If there are issues in a group, the CGM should address those with the CGM involved in Christian charity and inform the group leader of the situation. The leader will address this with (and inform) the elders if required.

## **Other Questions**

### **Can a person just hop from one CG to another?**

A newer member who is seeking genuine Christian community within the local church may initially attend more than one group, but after a few weeks they will be asked to commit to one group.

### **Can a person continually attend a CG gathering without seeking church membership forever?**

The Primary Leader (PL) and the Community Group Member (CGM) must be in regular dialogue regarding this question. Each person's situation is different. The eventual desired result is the CGM to become a church member. If the CGM expresses a clear desire to never become a member of the church, then depending on the reasons for not pursuing membership, the PL may be required to have a conversation with the CGM about his/her future CG gathering attendance.

### **Since non-members are allowed in the CGs, how will group members enforce the "one-another" commands outlined in the member covenant?**

All CGMs, regardless of church membership, are expected to be held to the same standard, i.e. Embassy Church covenant. The only exception is when the CGM is not a Christian, but these occasions will usually be less common.

### **Do you have to be invited to attend a CG gathering?**

No. There are no CGs that are invite-only. All are welcome to join any CG that is not too full (see above on the size of the groups).

**Embassy Missions**  
Principles for Support

**1. Members > Non-members**

(i.e. anyone we raise up for church planting or overseas missions)

**2. Like-minded Theology & Ministry Practices > Less Like-minded Christian Work**

(i.e. Reformed Theology, Baptist Ecclesiology, Complementarian, etc...)

**3. Unengaged & Unreached Peoples > Reached Peoples**

(It would be ideal to focus in a target region or maybe a few people groups who are spread out in various regions.)

**4. Unreached People Groups with Representatives and Connections to Chicagoland > Unreached People Groups without any North American Representatives**

(It would be even more ideal if our target region or people groups has representatives in the NW suburbs or close enough to Embassy so that we can connect local and global missions.)

**5. Disciple-Making that leads to Church Planting > Humanitarian Work**

(i.e. Nepal Disaster Relief is less of a priority)

**6. North American Church Planting With Opportunities to Reach the Nations > North American Church Planting with Limited Opportunities to Reach the Nations**

**7. Chicagoland Church Planting > Anywhere Else In North America**

(i.e. Chicagoland Church Plants should be given more consideration than other parts of the state or country)

**8. Business As Missions + Full-time Missionaries > Only Full-time Missionaries**

(i.e. We want to encourage a team concept for all missions and church planting work. Therefore, we should be encouraging the idea of team with people who can get a secular job in the target region and partner with full-time missionaries. This will cut costs and we will be able to send more people than if we simply focus on full-time missionaries.)

**9. Indigenous > Unindigenous**

## **Questions and Responses Regarding Our Missions Budget**

### **Would we take on more missions work if we do not have room in our budget?**

- Only if giving was higher than the budget and we were able to restructure the budget. We might also consider doing it if we had extra room in our budget at the end of the year.
- As a general rule, we would not take on new missions if we do not have the funds for them.
- We do not want to foolishly say "the Lord will provide" and put our church in a bad situation. We want to have both faith and wisdom.

### **If money is designated for missions and not used will it roll over for missions the next year?**

#### **How do we think about that for all the other categories of the budget?**

All monies that we do not use at the end of the year get put into our savings account and can be spent any way we sense the Lord leading us to spend. However, since we want to intentionally look for ways to support missions work, we may consider designating some left-over missions funds to the next year. We are not required to spend those extra monies on missions, but we probably would want to do it because of how it flows out of our mission as a church.

### **Is every missions opportunity going to be a case by case basis? Are the needs of the funds considered? How big is their family? Do they check off our principles for supporting missions, etc...?**

Yes. Individual and Case by Case Basis

### **Would we support for non-attending, non-members of the church?**

No, the church budget would not support such persons. However, they could share a brief update and prayer request during the Sunday morning prayer breakfast meeting. Then individuals of the church can support them if they would like, but they will be clearly told that the church will not be giving anything from our budget.

### **Will we administer designated gifts through our offerings?**

No. Church members should do that directly through their agency.

### **Is it required for missionaries to be connected to a missions organization? Will we support someone connected to missions collections agencies?**

- Yes they must be connected to a missions organization
- No we will not support missions collection agencies

### **Who will make the decisions for who will be supported?**

All the elders or maybe a subset of the elders.

### **Who is benevolence for? Is it only for members?**

Normally it would only be for members, but for the sake of doing evangelism with a person or someone attending regularly but not a member.

### **How should we use the benevolence application?**

- It would be used when people are asking for larger amounts of money or reoccurring requests.
- Smaller amounts one-time gifts would not necessarily need the application to be filled out.