



FAITH  
ST.  
THOMAS

MEMBERSHIP



# I AM A CHURCH MEMBER

FAITH ST. THOMAS

Welcome to Faith St Thomas. Maybe you've been attending here for a few months, or maybe you've been here for a few years. Either way, you've come to the place of wanting to know about what it means to be a church member here at Faith St. Thomas.

BE. LOVE.  
SERVE. REPEAT.

## VISION

**"A Community of Jesus Followers on mission with good news."**

Previously, this served as our mission statement; but, we feel it functions much better as our vision. This statement accurately and concisely describes who we want to become. It's not a goal we will ever check off as completed, but one we will always be in pursuit of. As a church we are always striving to fulfill the Great Commission given to us by Jesus. We are always becoming 'a community of Jesus followers on mission with good news.'

## MISSION

**"Be.Love.Serve.Repeat"**

Tells us how we become 'a community of Jesus followers on mission with good news'. It can be corporate, speaking to and informing our direction as an organization, and also personal, serving as a guiding statement for individuals as we seek to incorporate our faith into our daily lives.



*We have used Thom Rainer's book "I Am Church Member" as a reference and guide in this document. For more info please pick up a copy of this book.*

This will be more than a statement on a document. In the months ahead as we work to further develop areas like integration and discipleship, the programming we develop and language we use will be shaped around Be.Love.Serve.Repeat.

### **1. I will be a functioning church member.**

As you read through 1 Corinthians 12 -14 the author Paul gives you a picture of what church membership looks like. Unlike other organizations that use the term membership, like a Country Club or a store's loyalty program where you receive perks because you've signed up to become a member, church membership holds a different meaning. We have been called the body of Christ and each of us has a different role to play within the body.

Church membership means that we are diverse, but we still work together. If one part of the body isn't functioning well the whole body suffers, and likewise when one member is honoured we all rejoice (1 Corinthians 12:26). Every member in a church has a function and role to play with their varying gifts and abilities.

As a functioning church member, we must base what we say and do on the biblical foundation of love. The love chapter in 1 Corinthians was originally written to demonstrate how church members should relate to one another. "Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It does not dishonour others. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." As a church member, we strive to abide by these principles in 1 Corinthians 13 and use them as a guide for our interactions. We learn to love and serve each other even the seemingly unlovable. We choose to pray for our leadership in all seasons. We choose to serve. We remain a biblical church member when we "give abundantly and serve without hesitation."

"Biblical church membership is a functioning church membership."

*Section one is based on Chapter One of "I AM A Church Member" by Thom Rainer*

## **2. I will be a unifying church member**

John 13:35 "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." Jesus was very clear about his followers getting along and showing love to one another. We are called to be unified.

Unity is necessary, essential and vital to the health of a church. Paul urges members of the church to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Eph 4:1-3). As we love our church members we are called be a source of unity and lay divisiveness aside. It does not mean that you will agree with everyone all of the time, but it does mean that you lay down personal preferences in order to promote unity. We do this by avoiding gossip and negative talk. Gossip is listed as one of the many unrighteous acts in Romans 1:29-31. Gossip is a destructive force and as a church member, we choose to not partake in it.

As a church member, we will look towards forgiveness, as unity can be torn apart when we refuse to forgive. We realize that there are no perfect pastors, staff or church members, and so we offer forgiveness. Colossians 3:12-13 says "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Forgive promotes unity within the church.

*Section two is based on Chapter two of "I AM A Church Member" by Thom Rainer*

## **3. I will not let my church be about my preferences and desires.**

Throughout the New Testament, the word servant occurs 57 times and the word serve another 58 times. In Mark 9:35, "Jesus called the Twelve and said, 'Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all'".

Being a church member means serving and learning how to be last while laying down your own personal preferences. It means meeting the needs of others, giving and sacrificing. If we are to take on the attitude and mindset of Christ that we see listed in Philippians 2:5-11, we would see that Jesus:

- He "did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage"
- "He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant"
- "He humbled himself"
- He became "obedient to death—even death on a cross!"

With that example, we can see that we are to humbly serve, obey and put others first. In church membership, we can discover the joy of being last when we give up our views of entitlement and ask how we can best serve.

*Section three is based on Chapter three of "I AM A Church Member" by Thom Rainer*

#### **4. I will pray for my church leaders**

The pastors and leaders at Faith need your prayers. Every day they face a series of challenges as they lead and guide the church. They get a front-row seat to witness amazing life transformations. They guide and help people through the most difficult parts of life. They are running ministries and raising families.

Here are a few areas to be praying for:

- Pray for them, their spouse and their families
- Pray for their spiritual protection
- Pray for their preaching & teaching
- Pray for their mental & physical health
- Pray for encouragement
- Pray for wisdom and courage
- Pray for discernment

*Section four is based on Chapter four of "I AM A Church Member" by Thom Rainer*

#### **5. I will lead my family to be healthy church members.**

As we look in Scripture we can see the comparison that Paul makes between the church and family. In Ephesians 5 and 6, Paul writes about family structure and weaves the comparison of Christ and the church throughout the text. We can see in this text that we are to serve, sacrifice and love our family unconditionally. We know that there is no perfect family member, or church member, as we ourselves are not perfect. We are called to serve and love both our family and the church. How we love our church will impact the lives of the people around us whether you are single, married, with or without children.

Ways that we can teach our families to be healthy members of a church are:

- Praying for our pastors and leadership.
- Be an example of serving
- Worshipping together as a family
- Fall deeply in love with the Bride of Christ

*Section five is based on Chapter five of "I AM A Church Member" by Thom Rainer*

**6. I will treasure church membership as a gift**

When you received salvation you received forgiveness, adoption, the Holy Spirit and you became a member of the body. (1 Cor 12:27 All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.). Part of the gift of salvation is membership into the body of Christ. It is a gift. When we choose to be thankful for the church and the gift that it is, the less time and energy we will have to be negative. We need to approach this gift with gratitude as we consider the weight of being adopted into Christ's family. We choose to lay down an attitude of entitlement and take on the role of humbly loving and serving the church.

*Section six is based on Chapter six of "I AM A Church Member" by Thom Rainer*

**What our staff and elders commit to our members:**

We will be striving to function as servant-leaders with accountability and transparency.

We will seek to create unity in the body of Christ at Faith St. Thomas, locally, nationally and internationally.

We will not let our church be about our preferences and desires.

We will uphold our congregation in prayer and support them with pastoral care.

We will treasure the people of Faith and strive to see them as God sees them.

We will uphold our essential beliefs and central teachings.

## Affirmation of Faith

### What we teach at Faith (Essential Beliefs)

We believe that some teachings are essential to the Christian faith and cannot be compromised, "candy-coated," or denied. They are absolutes that must be accepted to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ. To be an official member of Faith, one must personally agree to support the church's freedom to promote these beliefs, as well as, agree not to promote views or organizations among the congregation contrary to these beliefs. We also believe that churches cannot cooperate on a spiritual<sup>[1]</sup> level without full agreement on these Essential Teachings.

## Essential Beliefs

**Bible:** The Holy Scriptures, as originally given by God, are divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy, and constitute the only final authority in all matters of faith and conduct. We proclaim the absolute authority of the Word of God without apology.

**God:** We believe in one God, Creator of all, holy, sovereign, eternal, existing in three co-equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is known as the Trinity.

**Father:** We believe in the person of God the Father. He is eternal, all knowing, all-powerful, sovereign, and loving. It was by His plan the universe was created. In His eternal decrees, He set in motion a plan to provide salvation from sin through His eternal Son, Jesus Christ.

**Son:** We believe that Jesus Christ is God manifest in human flesh. We affirm His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, substitutionary death, bodily resurrection, ascension, ongoing mediatory work and literal, personal return in power and glory.

**Holy Spirit:** We believe in the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit. He convicts of sin, righteousness and of judgment. He makes the believer spiritually alive and aware. In fellowship with Him and the Bible, He teaches, informs, changes and comforts those who believe in Jesus Christ. He baptizes<sup>[1]</sup>, fills, gifts, and guides Christians.

**Satan:** We believe that Satan is a real, personal, spiritual being who, while limited in his power, nevertheless, still seeks to attack and destroy believers and Christ's Church. He has an army of fallen angels, called demons, under his command. We believe that Satan seeks to fill his targets with deception, guilt, fear, and shame; and, will use any means, good or evil, to accomplish his purposes. (See later articles)

*[1] We recognize, of course, there will be times when cooperation in social or community beneficial events will occur.*

*[1] At the time of salvation, the Christian is said to be "baptized in the Holy Spirit," which means he/she is placed in the Body of Christ - the Church. This word "baptized" is sometimes used to describe the "filling" or "empowering" by the Holy Spirit. Faith does not believe that the baptism in or by the Holy Spirit always manifests itself in any particular spiritual gift (i.e. tongues); but that the resident Spirit can manifest any gift to the individual believer as He wills for His purposes. Potentially every believer can have any gift. We do believe that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (i.e. tongues, miracles, healings, etc.) are available and working today. (See articles later on the Holy Spirit.)*

**Man:** We believe that humankind was divinely created<sup>[1]</sup> in the image of God, but because of the Fall, received a sinful nature. We believe that each individual sins and thereby become guilty before God, incurring spiritual death.

**Salvation:** We believe that God chose a plan whereby He could save men and women from their sins. This plan was fulfilled in Jesus' death on the cross for their sins, and His resurrection for their justification. His bloodshed, which led to His death, was the payment for sin. All sinners deserved to pay the death penalty for themselves, but Jesus' did it for them. A person responds to the ministry of the Holy Spirit by coming to God in repentant faith. God declares that person not guilty for his or her sins and gives them eternal life. The Spirit of God continues His work in the life of the believer shaping him/her over time into a Christ-like person. Salvation, as a gift of God, once received, is not forfeited.

**Future Things:** We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ; in the resurrection of the just and unjust; in the eternal blessedness of the redeemed and the eternal judgment of the unredeemed.

**Christian Example:** We believe that when a follower of Christ is walking in an intimate relationship with God, he or she will desire to live a life exemplary of the teachings of the Bible. This life includes a desire to serve the Lord in the local church. It includes a desire to be accountable to the church for encouragement, teaching, comfort, exhortation, and discipline in Christian living. We believe that, although the Scriptures were written in a specific cultural setting and situation in life, there are absolute teachings in the Scriptures concerning morality and lifestyle. These teachings are trans-cultural and eternal in nature. We believe the local church has the right to define these teachings and proclaim them, regardless of the current cultural or community standards.

We also believe that the Bible is to be interpreted in light of its original culture and context before valid applications can be made to the present.

**Marriage:** We believe that marriage is a God-ordained institution wherein one man and one woman are joined to each other in a loving covenant relationship until death. (Genesis 2:18-25, Matthew 19:4-9, Ephesians 5:22, 23). Marriage is to be monogamous in accordance with the New Testament teaching. We believe that all sexual expression is to be within the bounds of marriage.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Faith believes in Creation, that is, God spoke the universe, including fully developed life forms such as humans, into existence. We also accept the teachings of genetics that upon creation, organisms can genetically mutate and change over time.

## What Else Do We Teach?

We realize that among Bible-believers there are various distinctives, respected interpretations, personal convictions, and personal preferences<sup>[1]</sup>, which are not Essential Teachings, but are still important to various church traditions and individuals. Faith respects these differences. The following describes what Faith teaches and practices in these additional areas of belief.

**The Local Church:** We believe that a local church is a family of baptized believers, organized on the principles of the New Testament. The purpose of the church is to lead others into a committed relationship with Jesus Christ. This commitment leads to a lifetime of growth in Christ likeness.

The Bible gives freedom to the local church to organize itself in creative ways based on cultural needs and expectations. Faith is an Elder-led, congregational church, which is wholly operated by the members of the church as a Canada Corporation, Registered Charity and Denomination in Ontario. Although Faith is associated with various organizations, none of them has authority or control over the decisions of the Church. Faith chooses its own Elders and pastors, owns its own property, and rules its own affairs under its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the leadership of the Elders.

**Ordinances:** We believe there are only two ordinances (i.e. regular practices) for the Church observed in the New Testament: water baptism and the Lord's Supper.

**Water Baptism:** The Bible describes baptism as the saturation<sup>[1]</sup> of the believer in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Water Baptism is to follow salvation and is in obedience to Christ's command. It pictures the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. It describes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the time of salvation and symbolically pictures the washing away of sin.

Baptism following salvation is a prerequisite to church membership at Faith. We recognize that many individuals come to Christ following infant baptism. By only practicing baptism following salvation for membership at Faith, we do not thereby nullify the sincerity of the person's faith and baptism in other churches. Our attempt is to follow as closely to the model found in Scripture and the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was baptised as an adult "to fulfil all righteousness." (See Child Dedication below) Faith accepts other methods of Evangelical baptism following salvation and those individuals may be accepted as Associate Members as per our by-laws; but practices baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The elders of Faith understand that there are some individuals who have physical handicaps that might restrict their access to immersion baptism. The elders will examine these requests on a case by case basis.

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*[1] We differentiate between the easily provable Essential Teachings, taught in the Bible, and the interpretations, which flow from debated passages. Our position is to defend the Essentials and respect the various Distinctives and interpretations of other churches and denominations about non-essential matters. We also wish to be sensitive to personal convictions and preferences held by others. We, however, do not allow these differences to govern our ministry. [1] The original Greek word translated "baptism" is the word BAPTIZO. It was used in the Bible and ancient literature most often to mean, "dip, plunge, or immerse." It was also used as a synonym for "saturation," or "wash". The early church most often baptized by immersion, but would baptize in other ways when necessary. In all cases, it involved an act following salvation.*

**Child Dedication:** At Faith, although we follow the pattern of Christ's baptism, we do present our children before the Lord in the Parent Dedication, which we believe is as significant as the Old Testament practice of covenant circumcision or the practice by other faith communities of infant baptism. By so doing, like the people of old, we are recognizing that we are people of the covenant of God and a believing family.

For those struggling with re-baptism for membership, we encourage each one to accept the original practice by their parents as the sincere and significant covenant act it was; but also to decide to follow Christ's pattern of baptism.

Since the Parent/Child Dedication is a dedication of the parent/parents/guardians/grandparents to rear the child according to the teachings of the Bible, only followers of Christ, who are making this commitment, should consider Parent/Child Dedication. Since Faith acknowledges the Bible's teaching that marriage is sacred as defined, we do not accept applications for parent/child dedications from those parents, who are living Common Law. We will work with any couple who desire the church's support in bringing their family onto a biblical pathway. Sometimes grandparents will present their grandchildren for dedication. God-parents are also welcome to participate in the child dedication.

**The Lord's Supper:** The Lord's Supper, also called the Lord's Table, and Communion, is the memorial where the believer partakes of the two elements, bread and juice. These elements symbolize the Lord Jesus' body and shed blood given on the Cross. The observance of the Lord's Supper is a reminder of His crucifixion, and proclaims His death until He comes again.

**The Lord's Day:** We believe that the first day of the week (Sunday) is the Lord's Day and that, in a special sense, it has been historically the most suitable day for worship and spiritual exercise. The New Testament clearly does not require Old Testament Sabbath keeping. The individual believer is free to enjoy Sundays according to his or her conscience; although the Scripture always presents the Lord's Day as a day devoted for God and church attendance.

**Civil Government:** We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interest and good order of society. Government officials are to receive prayer, be conscientiously honoured and obeyed, except only in the things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Family Issues:** Family, in its most basic sense, is defined as one man and one woman joined together in marriage, as explained above. It is also our position that life often creates circumstances where the basic definition does not apply, such as when death occurs to one spouse, divorce, or abandonment, which can create single parent homes and foster families. We recognize that the definition of family, in its sociological sense, is very diverse and includes these other definitions. We will seek to have a biblically relevant ministry to all people, and seek to assist individuals and families in strengthening their families in accordance with God's ideals for such.

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*\*\*The original Greek word translated "baptism" is the word BAPTIZO. It was used in the Bible and ancient literature most often to mean, "dip, plunge, or immerse." It was also used as a synonym for "saturation," or "wash". In all cases, it involved an act following salvation.*

**Marriage Ceremonies:** We believe that with the all too frequent breakdown of so many marriages, that marriage should not be entered into quickly or lightly. All couples seeking marriage by the Church shall comply with the wedding policies, including any personal requirements by the pastor being asked to sanction the marriage. Those seeking marriage by one of the pastors, or in the church, must fulfil the church approved pre-marital preparation program and, either the bride or groom, or at least one of either's parent(s), has an established relationship with Faith through Membership or other criteria as established by the Elders in their sole discretion on an individual case by case basis.

The pastors at Faith, who are licensed to perform marriages, may only perform marriages between two Christians, or two unbelievers. We won't perform a marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian. Individuals of other faiths should apply to the officials of their own religious persuasion for marriages to be performed. Faith's pastors are not permitted to perform civil (i.e. non-religious), same-sex, or any other marriage other than between one male and one female, resulting in a monogamous marriage. Faith Baptist Church of St. Thomas is affiliated with and falls within the guidance and allowances of The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada with respect to that organization's national "Policy Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality".

**Divorce:** Divorce was permitted in the Bible under certain circumstances (Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Matthew 19:3-8); but was contrary to God's ideal (Malachi 2:16). Our Lord Jesus permitted divorce and subsequent remarriage when one spouse was guilty of sexual immorality (Matthew 19:9), but the example of Hosea shows that God's will would be forgiveness and reconciliation, where possible. Sexual immorality includes all forms of sexual relationships outside the bonds of marriage between one man and one woman.

Paul stated that abandonment by an unbelieving spouse frees the believing spouse to marry (1 Corinthians 7:15), although it should be understood that all reasonable attempts at reconciliation should be made before divorce or remarriage. We believe that abandonment of any kind, including abandonment by abuse, or neglect, would fulfil this requirement. Permission to remarry is granted where divorce is permitted.

**Common Law Relationships:** Although we recognize that society's view of Common Law relationships is acceptance, we believe that such relationships do not fulfil the biblical design for marriage and family. We are also aware that many sincere people do not know the Bible's mandate against common-law relationships. Couples living in a "common law" relationship are invited to attend Faith and benefit from our discipleship ministry. Upon being married and completing the usual membership steps, they may join the membership of the Church. The church stands ready to help such couples take necessary measures to bring their relationship into agreement with God's principles. We do not perform Parent Dedications for couples living Common Law. Church members who decide to live Common Law are choosing to forfeit their membership.

**Alcohol and Drugs, Addictions:** Although recognizing the medicinal value of alcohol and legal drugs [Proverbs 30:6a; 1 Timothy 5:23], we believe the Scriptures warn against the dangers of the use of such for recreational purposes [Proverbs 20:1], especially the dangers of addiction [Isaiah 5:22-23]. Since the use of drugs recreationally is illegal, it would be inappropriate for a follower of Christ to take this pathway [1 Peter 2:13], as would the illegal use of alcoholic beverages. Although the Scripture allows social drinking in moderation [Deuteronomy 14:22-27], it does forbid drunkenness [Galatians 5:16-23]. Our society has legalized cannabis and may continue to legalize other mildly euphorogenic and hallucinogenic drugs for medical use as well as recreational use.

We accept the use of doctor-prescribed legal medications when used only as prescribed. However, we believe euphorogenic and hallucinogenic drugs, if used recreationally, have the same biblical prohibitions as alcohol when used to produce an inebriated state. The New Testament encourages all followers of Christ to avoid any behaviour that would cause another person to "grieve," or "to fall" into sin, including "drinking wine" [Romans 12:14-23]. Therefore, the Scripture gives extreme caution to the use of alcohol recreationally, especially in one's influence on others, but does not forbid it entirely.

With the increase of addictions among those in our society, and with the current research into those more prone to become addicts, it is our position that abstinence in the recreational use of alcohol is the safest pathway for those whom we influence as examples. Any social drinking should always take into consideration the impact one's example is having on those around him/her [Romans 14:21]. Faith does not allow alcoholic beverages to be served at its on-campus events.

**Addictions:** There are many ways to become addicted, some more devastating than others. Faith's position on addiction is to encourage abstinence of those potentially addictive activities, places, and behaviours, which can be avoided (i.e. tobacco, gambling, internet pornography, etc.). For all who have become addicted, we will seek to assist them to find freedom in Christ from their addiction [1 Corinthians 6:12].

**Supernatural Events:** We accept the existence of supernatural manifestations. Since these can come from either demonic forces or God's angelic beings and the Holy Spirit, it is our position that discernment must be used in separating that which is demonic from that which is a true manifestation of God. We also acknowledge the human ability to mimic supernatural manifestations. The foundational tool for discernment is the Bible [John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 John 4:1-3].

**Complete Bible:** We believe that God has given us a complete, final and authoritative revelation in the sixty-six books of the Bible. God, the Holy Spirit, continues to help His Church understand and apply these scriptures today through His illumination ministry, but does not add to them. Therefore, we do not promote any claim that personal revelation or direction is to be equated with the inspired, written revelation from God. This does not preclude the fact that God's Spirit does speak to the heart of the believer and lead him or her according to His will as recorded in the Bible. We accept the biblical teaching of God's ability to communicate to a person in any way He chooses. [2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2]

**Spiritual Gifts:** Notwithstanding the fact that God can give any spiritual gift to anyone at any time, according to His will, we do not believe that every Christian will receive every gift, or that any one gift should be considered as mandatory for the Christian life. We believe that all of the gifts of the Spirit are available as the Spirit wills. They are governed according to the precepts of Scripture. We believe that all expressions of gifts in the services and programs of the Church are under the authority of the Elders and Senior Pastor [1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 29-31]. We do not promote the public use of sign gifts in our worship services without approval of the Elders and Senior Pastor.

**Gender Issues:** It is our belief that male and female are determined by their biological identity at birth, and that they are created equal and considered as equal in the Kingdom of God [Galatians 3:26-29]. By observing the examples of how God used men and women in both the Old and New Testament, it is our belief that the Holy Spirit equally gifts men and women. When the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, the Scripture clearly teaches that both men and women were affected with the gift of prophecy [Acts 2:17-18]. We see this gift, along with public prayer, exercised in the local church by both men and women [1 Corinthians 11:4, 13]. It is our belief that the passages in the Epistles, which seem to limit women in ministry must be taken in context of the rest of the Scripture.

As such, they are to be interpreted as applications to specific issues of that time. Hence, it is our belief that men and women should be given the opportunity to minister freely in the church community, including the public services of the church.

It is also our belief, however, that God has ordained certain spiritual roles and positions that are gender-related [1 Corinthians 11:1-3]. In the biblical culture, the human family had the male as the spiritual head [Ephesians 6:22-23], as did the local church family. At Faith every position, role, or responsibility, except Elder, is open for males and females. [1 Timothy 3:1-13].

Faith only endorses sexual activity that is limited by Scripture to one biological male and one biological female, who are legally married in a monogamous relationship. That is not to say that Faith believes other definitions of marriage are "illegal" and not in accordance with the laws of Canada, but that we only endorse and sanctify these marriages which fall within our faith and biblically understood boundaries.

In addition, Faith believes and affirms that all persons are created in God's image and are made to glorify Him (Genesis 1:27; Isaiah 43:7). God's design was the creation of two distinct and complementary sexes, male and female (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6) which designate the fundamental distinction that God has embedded in the very biology of the human race. These distinctions in masculine and feminine roles as ordained by God are part of the created order and should find expression in every human heart. (Genesis 2:18, 21-24; 1 Corinthians 11:7-9; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Timothy 2:12-14) The Fall of man into sin and God's subsequent curse have introduced brokenness and futility into God's good creation (Genesis 3:1-24; Romans 8:20). It is Faith's belief that transgenderism differs from hermaphroditism or intersexualism in that the sex of the individual is not biologically ambiguous but psychologically ambiguous that reveals itself as gender dysphoria.

While some would try to normalize the transgender experience, it would be Faith's belief that it is contrary to God's design to define gender according to one's self-perception apart from biological anatomy. The separation of one's gender identity from the physical reality of biological birth sex poses the harmful effect of engendering an understanding of sexuality and personhood that is fluid, and these cultural currents run counter to the biblical teaching that "Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation".

In light of God's good design that gender identity is determined by biological sex and not by one's self-perception—a perception which is often influenced by fallen human nature in ways contrary to God's design (Ephesians 4:17-18); we grieve the reality of human fallenness which can result in such biological manifestations as intersexuality or psychological manifestations as gender identity confusion and point all to the hope of the redemption of our bodies in Christ (Romans 8:23). We extend love and compassion to those whose sexual self-understanding is shaped by a distressing conflict between their biological sex and their gender identity. We invite all transgender persons to trust in Christ and to experience renewal in the Gospel (1 Timothy 1:15-16). We love our transgender neighbours, seek their good always, and welcome them to our church as they repent and believe in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Galatians 5:14).

In so much, we regard our transgender neighbors as image-bearers of Almighty God and therefore condemn acts of abuse or bullying committed against them. Further, we do not condone and will discourage efforts to alter one's bodily identity (e.g., cross-sex hormone therapy, gender reassignment surgery) to refashion it to conform with an individual's perceived gender identity. Our love for the Gospel and urgency for the Great Commission must include declaring the whole counsel of God, proclaiming what Scripture teaches about God's design for us as male and female persons created in His image and for His glory (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 20:27; Romans 11:36).

Faith also understands that society has come to recognize various gender variations that don't reflect a biblical perspective on male and female. Faith welcomes individuals who may reflect this as their reality to attend, but further participation at the baptism, membership and serving levels would be restricted by our biblical beliefs as set out elsewhere in our statement of belief and governing documents. The elders recognize that medical knowledge and science are always expanding. As such, we are always prepared to discuss special cases, such as for those born intersex, hermaphrodite or with other genetically ambiguous physical conditions for consideration at the levels of baptism and membership at Faith.

**Healing:** We believe that God does heal individuals today through the same means found in the Scripture. We believe that God's primary method of miraculous healing is found in James 5:13-16. We believe that God also heals through the means of medical treatment. Healing can include healing of the physical body, mind, emotions, and will; but that God's grace is sufficient for those times He decides not to heal [2 Corinthians 12:6-8].

## Be. Love. Serve. Repeat.

As we seek to live out Be.Love.Serve.Repeat. as a church family for our community, we will look for ways to love and serve our community of St. Thomas and area. This will be evident in, but not limited to, the following areas of our community life.

**In our neighbourhoods:** At Faith St. Thomas we seek to advance the Kingdom of God in our neighbourhoods through:

- Volunteering in organizations that seek to create better neighbourhoods in our city,
- Engaging in sports and recreational activities,
- Joining and practicing discipleship as part of a missional neighbourhood small group,
- Discerning creative ways to encounter our neighbours and bless them as a part of a community of Jesus followers on mission with good news,

In short, we will seek to discern where God is at work in our neighbourhoods, and we will obediently follow Him into His mission.

**In our local businesses:** At Faith St. Thomas we seek to advance the Kingdom of God in the space of business by:

- Partnering with local business men and women and seeking to be a blessing to them as they work and lead in our city.

We will seek to discern where God is at work in the space of business, and we will obediently follow Him into His mission.

**In the areas of homelessness and poverty:** At Faith St. Thomas we seek to advance the Kingdom of God in our city through engagement in the work of poverty alleviation:

- Volunteering and partnering in organizations that seek to create a better understanding of the reality of poverty and who are seeking to engage in this complex issue in our city,
- Creating and leading a support and resourcing ministry for members of our church to help them grow into their vocational calling in the area of poverty engagement.

**In Education:** At Faith St. Thomas we seek to advance the Kingdom of God in the space of education by:

- Volunteering and partnering with local schools and seeking to be a blessing to the staff and families within the school system,

We will seek to discern where God is at work in the space of education, and we will obediently follow Him into His mission.

Faith currently actively supports the work and efforts of these, and other, community-based agencies,

St. Thomas Food Bank

The Grace Café

Indwell

Harvest Hands

Bridges Out Of Poverty (In partnership with the YWCA) and Refugee Resettlement

Inn Out of the Cold

Youth for Christ

Fresh Start Maternity

Teen Challenge

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## What Policies Does the Church Have?

The Church has a number of policies covering many areas, including building use, emotional, physical, and spiritual abuse, sexual harassment/abuse, mission policies, staff policies, spiritual counselling, marriage, and a hiring policy. All policies are considered as part of the Governing Documents, of which all members are accountable. These are located in the Church Leaders' Manual or in the main office.

**Becoming a church member includes acceptance of the Church's view that abuse and neglect is wrong and grounds for discipline under the church's accountability. Faith takes a zero tolerance position on all forms of abuse, neglect, and promotion of hate.**

Faith reports all suspicions of child abuse and neglect. We believe these activities are wrong and disqualify a person from ministry. Faith does not knowingly welcome, provide ministry, or serving opportunities to any person, who is or has been a convicted sexual offender. We will attempt to direct such a person to an appropriate Para-church ministry for assistance. It is also understood that many church events are "public events," where any member of the community, who is not known by the church leadership, may attend. Therefore, we encourage parents and guardians of vulnerable individuals to be vigilant at all times, and take appropriate precautions.

All those wishing to work with minors are required to read the "Because We Care" document, submit the signed application, and complete a police background check. These documents are available from the church office.

To access the "Because We Care" booklet contact [office@faithstthomas.com](mailto:office@faithstthomas.com) and type in "Because We Care." and

one will be e-mailed to you. You will receive information on becoming approved in our ministry to minors. Small groups and groups where sharing is part of the ministry, are to be particularly cautioned that, although confidentiality is the requirement for all members of these kinds of groups, that certain behaviours do not have an expectation of privacy and are not protected by the Law or Church. These include threats of harming oneself or others, criminal activity, and abuse or neglect of children or the elderly.

## Who We Are & How We Are Organized

Faith St. Thomas was started in 1950 with a small group of Jesus followers. Internationally, Faith participates with a number of global partners and agencies. Nationally, we are a part of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Canada, more commonly known as "The Fellowship" ([www.fellowship.ca](http://www.fellowship.ca)). Locally, we are a supportive part of the local body of Christ in St. Thomas and surrounding area having fellowship with other evangelical churches. Faith Church is an Elder-led church, the members of which serve as the spiritual leaders of the church, as well as, the official Board of the Church and Corporation. Reporting to the Chair of the Elders is the Senior Pastor, who leads our Tuesday Team: pastors and administrators.

## How Do I Become A Member?

### How Do I Become A Member?

The membership of the Church consists of those persons who are:

- Followers of Christ
- Eighteen years of age or older
- Baptized following their salvation
- Read the Church Members' Guide and agree to support it
- Approved by the Elders, whose decision is affirmed by the congregation at a regular worship service.

### Participation – Membership is all about participation.

When a person discontinues participation, then membership may be suspended or cancelled. The Board automatically suspends membership when a Member has ceased to participate in the ministry for a period of 12 months, has changed participation to another church in the community, or moved. The suspended member is considered as inactive and cannot vote, or serve in those positions limited to members. Upon the suspended member renewing participation in the life of the church, the temporary suspension is automatically removed by the Elders. The Elders following disciplinary procedures as outlined; or, if the person verbally, or in writing, resigns to the Church Office or any Elders or member of the Pastoral Team, or dies terminate membership.

### Voting Rights

Each Member has one vote at any Membership Meeting and may vote by proxy. Associate Members are not entitled to vote, however, are able to attend meetings. Voting policies are described in the Church Leaders' Manual. All members not present in person or by proxy are considered as confirming any resolution determined at the meeting.

### Who are our Elders?

Kevin Abell, kevin@faithstthomas.com  
 Laurie Brescacin, laurie@faithstthomas.com  
 Josh Browne, josh@faithstthomas.com  
 Keith Dodds, keith@faithstthomas.com  
 (Chairman)  
 Al House, allan@faithstthomas.com  
 Dave House, david@faithstthomas.com  
 Barry Pearce, bpearce@faithstthomas.com  
 Jeff Smith, jeff@faithstthomas.com

Jeremy Best, Lead Pastor  
 jeremy@faithstthomas.com  
 Greg Barker, Youth Pastor,  
 greg@faithstthomas.com  
 Nichelle Olsen, Youth Coordinator  
 nichelle@faithstthomas.com  
 Barry Pearce, Administrative Pastor,  
 bpearce@faithstthomas.com  
 Steve Brown, Community Engagement  
 steve@faithstthomas.com  
 Interim Kids Team, Kids Ministry  
 office@faithstthomas.com  
 Jordan Thiessen, Interim Worship Coordinator

### Who are our Administrators?

Cindy Graves, Administrator of Finance,  
 cindy@faithstthomas.com  
 Krysten Linker, Social Media Coordinator,  
 krysten@faithstthomas.com  
 Lori Fitzgerald, Facilities Coordinator,  
 lori@faithstthomas.com  
 Kerry Howarth, Church Office Administrator,  
 Life Groups Coordinator  
 office@faithstthomas.com,  
 lifegroups@faithstthomas.com

# WHAT'S NEXT?

Membership  
At Faith St. Thomas

## COMPLETE THE ONLINE APPLICATION

Once you have complete the member application it will be submitted to the church office and you will be contacted by one of our office staff.

## ELDER INTERVIEW

Once you have completed the membership application the church office will contact with you setup an interview.

## LIFE SUNDAY

A few times a year we celebrate with a special gathering that we call 'Life Sunday.' This special event is a time when we make a lot of noise and joyfully tell the story about what the living God is doing in and through our church family. It's kind of like a family reunion and everyone is in on it - all the children come and stay with us for the party and it's a lot of fun! We have baptisms, hear stories of life change, learn about missional activity in our city.

It is during Life Sunday that we welcome new members to our big church family and remind ourselves why we exist.

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## QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about Faith St. Thomas or the membership process please reach out to our church office at [office@faithstthomas.com](mailto:office@faithstthomas.com).