

Hope Community Church

Week 7 - Statement of Faith: The Church

Leader's note: We are going to touch on local church membership later in the study. Consider sharing your journey toward membership at Hope or ask another member of your group to be prepared to share his/her journey toward membership. It may be helpful to have a personal story to help with the conversation.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the role of the church in a global, local and personal context.
- Learn about and consider ways to become involved in the body of Christ at Hope

Statement of Faith: The Church

We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible confession of faith, and associated for worship, work and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary tasks of living a life of worship, nurturing the body of believers and giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world.

Ice Breaker Question:

What do you think are the components that make up a church?

Possible Answers: physical attenders, those who call the church their "church home", people who believe in Jesus, meet together, worship together, learn about the same things at the same time, geographic placement, in communication with others who participate, etc.

Living Spiritual Body

We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members.

Read aloud: Ephesians 2:19-22 (NIV)

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

? What does this passage tell us the church is? What does that mean for us?

Possible Answers: no longer foreigners or strangers, fellow citizens with God's people, members of God's household, built on a foundation of the apostles, Christ is the cornerstone, he joins together the temple, we are built to be a dwelling for the Spirit, we are all one in Christ, political/social barriers are no longer keeping us apart, Christ joins us all together through the Spirit

? What are the implications of belonging to a global church body?

Possible Answers: believers from all countries but all focused on Christ, distance can be tricky to know more about other groups of believers around the world, we need to keep expanding the church to where Christ is not known

Regeneration:
A secret act of God in which He imparts new spiritual life into us, sometimes called "being born again."
-Wayne Grudem

? Which aspects of global missions excite you? Which do you find difficult?

Possible Answers: more people need to know Jesus, there can be unique ways different cultures worship Jesus that we can learn from, we can worship with believers all over the world, what is "Christian" vs national culture preference, how to pursue unity with so many differences, language barriers

Read aloud: At Hope, we think that all believers are sent and should be "on mission;" however, for clarity of terms, we use "missions" to describe those who are pursuing being "on mission" in a cross-cultural manner. If you are interested in learning more about how you can be a part of reaching the world with the gospel visit hopecc.com/missions/.

Local Church

We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible confession of faith, and associated for worship, work and fellowship.

Read aloud: Next we're going to read a few passages about the local church. As we read, listen for the characteristics of what a local church is or should do.

Ephesians 5:19-21 (NIV)

¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to

give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)

²³ Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

? Based on the passages we read, what are some of the characteristics of a local church? What should a local church do or be?

Possible Answers: give thanks together, be devoted to the apostles' teachings and fellowship, pray, encourage one another, meet together

? What role does our small group play in the local church?

Possible answers: meet/talk/connect regularly, pray for one another, pray for the church body, help each other know Jesus more, learn together, build each other up to build up the local church body, serve/reach out in the community as representatives of the local church

? Each passage references fellowship, being together, or speaking to one another. In what ways does our group already do this? Are there any ways our small group can pursue community more deeply?

Possible answers: meeting weekly, having community nights, studying and praying together, group chat, meet outside of small group night, concerted effort to be more vulnerable/open in accountability, invest more deeply in personal relationships

? In what ways can our small group encourage one another and experience fellowship in times when we may not be able to physically meet or be together?

Possible Answers: intentionally checking in with individuals, praying for one another, using video meeting platforms to continue connecting, group chats, virtual game nights, virtual group meals

? One way to formally practice this is to become a member of a local church. What might be some benefits of officially becoming a member of a church? What privileges come with that?

Possible Answers: identifies a person as a Christ-committed follower, provides a spiritual family to support and encourage a person in their walk with Christ, places a person under the spiritual protection and guidance of Christ-centered leaders, gives a person the accountability needed to grow, provides the opportunity to hold offices within the church, gives the person the privileges to vote on church matters. (Answers from the Hope Community Church constitution)

Read aloud: The heart of covenant membership boils down to mirroring God's devotion to us through Christ by belonging to one another as His body of believers & committing to live out the vision of His church. Is HopeCC your home? Do you consider yourself a Hopester? If yes, visit hopecc.com/membership.

Article 5 recap from Hope's constitution: Positional vs Church member

Positional member: every individual who has made a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ as lord and Savior is a "positional member" of the universal Body of Christ and should be given an opportunity to use their God-given gifts and resources to serve Him and further the Kingdom of God.

Church member: individuals who God calls to grow by becoming church members in a specific, local fellowship united with common Biblical beliefs and a common sense of mission. Positional members in Christ have an invisible bond, but church members have a visible bond established among the members of Hope Community Church.

Living a Life of Worship

We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary tasks of living a life of worship, nurturing the body of believers and giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world.

Read aloud: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (NIV)

⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. ⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

? Spiritual Gifts are for the common good to build up the body of believers. What gifts or talents have you been given that can be of service to the church? Have you taken action to use them?
Possible answers: prayer, hospitality/welcoming, musical talents, teaching, encouragement, AV/Tech skills, small group writing, working with kids, connecting with partners ministries, listening well to others, etc.

? How can we encourage fellow believers in their giftings?
Possible answers: pray for them, tell them what we see as their strengths, help others find ways to plug into serving within their gifts & talents, use their gifts to serve the community, encourage them when they use these gifts to glorify God

Leader's note: You may be a key piece of helping others finding a place to use their gifts at Hope. Offer encouragement or contact info to the right leaders at Hope to get the ball rolling!

Read aloud: We believe every person is uniquely made in God's image & each follower of Jesus is meant to live and thrive in the midst of the body of Christ. Hope offers SHAPE class to help individuals better understand how to find productive and satisfying ways to live out their SHAPE in life, at church, at work, and in the world. Reach out to find more information about the next SHAPE class.

Application Questions

- How well have you been living out the role of a member of the church lately – living a life of worship, nurturing the body of believers and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world?
- What steps of faith could you take to better fulfill that role? How can we support you in those steps?