



**Parklands Church**

**Who We Are, How To Belong, How We Are Led**

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# **Parklands Church**

## **Who We Are, How To Belong, How We Are Led**

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# Who We Are, How To Belong, How We Are Led

## Introduction

This leaflet is designed to be a 'living document' reflecting the dynamic life of Parklands Church and describing a little of who we are, how to connect with the Church and our leadership ethos. If you want further information, why not contact one of the Elders: we'd love to help.

Any changes to this leaflet will be brought to and agreed upon by the Fellowship with the exception of Section 6 which is illustrative. Changes will be agreed at an Annual General Meeting or at a special meeting convened by the Elders for that purpose, where a simple majority will be required (by show of hands) of all present who are formally in fellowship.

## 1. Our DNA

*Our vision and mission is all about glorifying God and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ from Swansea to the ends of the earth. It is a 'Church without walls'.*

### **Vision**

Our vision statement is taken from the Lord's prayer:

To see God's '*Kingdom come ... on earth as it is in heaven.*' (Matt 6:10)

Our general vision will be translated into specific annual vision goals which we will communicate to the Church.

### **Culture**

Our culture has been captured in the acronym STEPS. We are a STEPS Church:

- S**peaking about Jesus
- T**aking Time to build relationships
- E**mpowered to live Spirit-filled lives
- P**raying about anything & everything
- S**erving selflessly, especially the poor

### **Mission**

Our Mission is: 'Taking STEPS to share the transforming love of Jesus by living and loving like Him'.

In short it is: 'Taking STEPS to be like Jesus'.

### **Statement of Faith**

Our Statement of Faith is included as Appendix 1.

## **2. Fellowship at Parklands**

*Fellowship is a fresh way of describing our relationship with one another at Parklands and is a term used in scripture (Koinonia) to describe the shared life of God's people.*

### **A Fellowship Model**

At the end of Acts 2, a model of belonging and commitment to Jesus Christ and to each other is presented, which we aspire to at Parklands Church:

*<sup>40</sup> With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.'<sup>41</sup> Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.<sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.<sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common.<sup>45</sup> They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.<sup>46</sup> 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,<sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:40-47).*

Parklands is a place where we encourage people to belong and to feel at home. We exist to encourage each other as a family, to introduce people to Jesus and to enable each other to reach our God-given potential as disciples of Jesus.

Those of us who have accepted Jesus' message of new life and have become Christians will want to deepen our commitment to Jesus and to one another. The early church, in Acts 2, demonstrated their commitment to Jesus and to each other by a hunger and desire to:

- Be baptised v.41
- Learn from God's word v.42
- Express fellowship—doing "STEPS" together v.42
- Participate in the Breaking of Bread vv.42,46
- Pray v.42
- 'Wonder' when God is at work v.43

- Be together v.44
- Share Life v.44
- Be a generous people v.45
- Be diligent in meeting together v.46
- Be a united people v.46
- Be a thankful people v.46
- Eat together v.46
- Be a people who find a way to express praise to God v.47
- Be a people who share their joy in Jesus with others v.47

### ***Becoming Part of the Fellowship***

We regularly encourage people who want to develop this 'belonging', to commit to the vision, mission, culture and Statement of Faith of Parklands Church. This desire should be communicated by those wanting to become part of the Fellowship to one of the Leadership Team for affirmation, recording and pastoral purposes. The Church will then be informed of this commitment.

### ***Connect Groups and Fellowship***

Parklands Church believes that small groups are fundamental to Church life so there is an expectation that anyone wanting to become part of the Fellowship at Parklands Church will join a Connect Group or be involved with another small group activity.

### ***Renewing Our Fellowship***

We will also renew our commitment together annually at a special service for that purpose. Those who commit to Parklands will be held in prayer and care by the Elders, Team Leaders, Pastoral Team, etc.

### ***Feedback from the Fellowship***

Those in fellowship are encouraged to give any feedback in relation to church issues to their connect group leaders in the first instance. Those in fellowship are also welcome to meet with Elders and/or Team Leaders at one of their regular meetings.

A meeting for those in fellowship will be held at least annually to update the Church on progress against any vision goals set and to receive feedback.

### ***Leaving the Fellowship***

Where circumstances change and someone is no longer able to or wishes to 'belong' to Parklands, then as a fellowship we want to ensure that they will be supported positively and lovingly to move on.

## ***Church Discipline***

In cases where disciplinary issues may arise, where appropriate, Biblical discipline will be exercised in a loving, restorative context (Galatians 6:1-6).

## **3. Parklands Leadership**

*Parklands is committed to servant leadership within a team context.*

### ***Team Principle***

Parklands is led by a team of Elders (Titus 1:5). Elders will also be supported by other leaders known as 'Team Leaders'. Together Elders and Team Leaders (Leadership Team) shall hold office as detailed below. Of course, leadership within the church is not exclusive to those who hold 'office'.

### ***Qualification***

The qualification for leaders who hold office are the principles laid down in Scripture. For Elders, the characteristics are based upon 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9; for other leaders, the principles are from 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

The qualification criteria will focus on a person's character, calling and gifting, and each leader shall be in fellowship at Parklands Church and in wholehearted agreement with the Statement of Faith, our mission, vision and culture.

### ***Recognition***

Potential leaders joining the Leadership Team will be identified by those in the leadership and those in fellowship at Parklands Church. They will be prayerfully considered over a period of time. During this time, the Leadership Team will invite those in fellowship to give prayerful feedback which will be both invaluable and warmly welcomed. Following this, the Leadership Team may recognise the new leaders and all in fellowship at Parklands will be asked to stand with leaders and the new leader in their decision.

### ***Leadership Roles***

Elders will have overall responsibility for the spiritual health and wellbeing of Parklands, and will have the responsibility of ensuring that the church is shepherded, overseen and taught in a godly way from servant hearts.

Team Leaders will have responsibility within operational areas of the church.

### ***Terms of Office***

The term of office for leaders who hold office will be for 5 years, after which their calling will be reviewed and, where appropriate, re-affirmed prayerfully with the whole church.

### ***Elders and Team Leaders Meetings***

Leaders will commit to meeting regularly and will be readily available to meet with those in fellowship as requested.

### ***Discipline of Elders and Team Leaders***

The discipline of Elders/ leaders will follow the principles laid down in 1 Timothy 5:19-21.

## **4. Parklands Governance**

*Parklands is committed to having processes in place which ensure good governance.*

### **Governance Principles**

Parklands as a church has a strong and secure body that is able to manage its resources so that the main purpose of the church can be fulfilled. All financial and legal aspects of the church are managed through the Parklands Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This is the legal entity, managed by a number of Trustees, working closely with senior church staff. Typically, the Trustees will include a number of non-staff elders and a number of those in fellowship, some nominated by the Elders and up to four others who would be 'Fellowship Nominated Trustees'. The CIO will be the final arbiter in allowing a candidate to be put forward for election to the CIO.

### **Qualification**

CIO Trustees should have the appropriate skills and abilities to assist with the oversight of the church and associated CIO governance, be spiritually minded with similar character qualities associated with leaders, and must be available, willing and diligent in serving. Each Trustee shall be in fellowship at Parklands Church and in wholehearted agreement with the Statement of Faith, our mission, vision and culture.

### **Recognition**

When 'Fellowship Nominated Trustee' vacancies arise, the CIO would welcome nominees, proposed by four others currently formally in fellowship at Parklands. If there are more nominees than vacancies, a number of those meeting the office criteria could be asked to serve the church/CIO at a later date. At a meeting of the fellowship announced by the elders with at least two weeks' notice, all potential CIO Trustees proposed for office will be recommended for appointment, a recommendation which would require a simple majority (by show of hands) of all present who are formally in fellowship.

## **CIO Trustees Roles**

CIO Trustees are accountable for agreeing the approach to good governance and ensuring that appropriate policies and frameworks are in place and effective. The areas for governance include child protection, vulnerable adult policies, staff employment rights/conditions, health & safety and good financial stewardship.

## **Terms of Office**

Trustees are appointed for a term of 5 years and can serve for two consecutive terms. A minimum gap of one full year is required after any two-term appointment, before an individual can be re-appointed as a Trustee.

## **CIO Meetings**

The CIO meetings would be expected to take place a minimum of three times each year. The Trustees can invite anyone they feel appropriate to attend, but only Trustees have voting rights when the need arises. From time to time, particularly when discussing staff terms and conditions, the Trustees may choose to meet without Parklands staff being present.

## **Discipline of Trustees**

This is in line with procedures for Elders and Team Leaders

## **Fellowship Responsibilities**

For those in fellowship at Parklands Church, it is all our responsibility to ensure that the CIO continues to provide a safe and secure environment for the worship and service of God. We also have a Policies and Procedures Manual covering Health & Safety, Child Protection & Safeguarding, and other processes which further facilitate Safety and Security amongst us. In God's family, caring for our home as a church and our finances are ways in which we worship God. Our commitment to providing the resources for the CIO is part of our joyful relationship with God.

## **5. Principles of Faith**

*The following are some key principles that we hold to as being vital to the outworking of our faith at Parklands Church.*

### **5.1 Worshipping Community & Prayer**

Before we are involved in any activity as a busy church, we want to be marked first and foremost as a community who worship and exalt our God (Psalm 34:3). This is our primary principle, to glorify Him. Out of worshipful lives comes a desire to share the good news of Jesus.



At Parklands, we believe that we cannot do anything that is meaningful without God's help. Therefore, prayer is at the heart of the church. Prayer is as essential to a believer as breathing is to all people (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer enables us to communicate with God—that means listening as well as asking. Jesus found it impossible to live His life on earth without spending time with His heavenly Father (Luke 6:12).

Prayer can be undertaken individually or with other believers and we encourage both, providing opportunities to learn about prayer and pray together.

We have weekly opportunities to meet together and pray at 'Breakfast with God', which currently takes place on Wednesday mornings, and at prayer times before Sunday services.

But as prayer can be seen as 'a constant conversation with God', you can pray at any time (even without closing your eyes and putting your hands together) and about anything to reap the benefits (Philippians 4:6).

Why not ask God to teach you how to pray (Luke 11:1)?

## **5.2 Relationship with God**

At Parklands, we believe the Bible which says that God created us to have relationship with Him. However, we have all demonstrated that we want to do our own thing, rather than follow God's way. This is what the Bible calls 'sin'. It's not just simply that we do wrong things. We say and think wrong things too! That is the evidence of what is called 'sin'.

The New Testament makes it clear that God, through Jesus, has paid the price for our sin and we have to accept the gift of forgiveness and life that God offers. This is an act of faith. The apostle John writes that 'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:16).

Believing involves an act of faith, based on all we know about Jesus. It is not blind faith. It is putting our trust in a Person. In some ways, it is like the step of faith taken by a bride or a bridegroom when they say 'I will' on their wedding day.

The way people take this step of faith varies enormously but one way in which this step can be taken is summarised by three very simple words.

- **Sorry**

You have to ask God to forgive you for all the things you have done wrong and turn from everything which you know is wrong in your life. This is what the Bible means by 'repentance'.

- **Thank You**

We believe that Jesus died for us on the cross. You need to thank Him for dying for you and for the offer of His free gift of forgiveness, freedom and His Spirit.

- **Please**

God never forces His way into our lives. You need to accept His gift and invite Him to come and live within you by His Spirit.

If you would like to have a relationship with God and you are ready to say and really mean these three things, then here is a simple prayer which you can pray and which will be the start of that relationship:

**Lord Jesus Christ,**

**I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life (take a few moments to ask for His forgiveness for anything particular that is on your conscience). Please forgive me. I now turn from everything which I know is wrong.**

**Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free. Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your Spirit. I now receive that gift.**

**Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever. I give my life to you.**

**Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen**

*Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life." (John 5:24).*

The Christian life is of course not just a prayer, but an ongoing journey, traveling together with a community of like-minded believers.

### 5.3 Water Baptism

The Bible clearly teaches that all believers should be baptised. The practice we adopt and teach at Parklands Church is by total immersion in water. The mandate of Jesus was 'go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' (Matt 28:19).

Should you wish to be baptised, please chat with your Connect Group Leader or one of the Elders who will give you Steve Gaukroger's excellent book 'Being Baptised'.

Following this, if you wish to be baptised, you will have opportunity to meet with one of the Elders to make sure you understand what baptism actually means and to discuss any practical arrangements.

You will then have the opportunity to be baptised at the next Baptism service which will be advertised in the church notices.

#### Romans 6:2-5

*When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace—a new life in a new land! That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus: when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus. Each of us is raised into a light filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country (the Message Bible).*

### 5.4 Breaking Bread

What we call breaking bread has a number of other names, including communion and the Lord's Supper. Along with baptism, it is also called a sacrament. A sacrament is a physical act which Jesus instructed His followers to do and which reflects spiritual realities. We read about the practice of Breaking Bread in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. It was a key feature of the early Church's life (Acts 2:42,46).

When we break bread together, we take part in a powerful, spiritual act of remembrance and we are expressing truths at the heart of the Christian faith. These include the truths that:

- Jesus died for us
- Jesus rose from the dead
- The Church is one body
- Jesus is with us
- Jesus will return

At Parklands, we typically break bread once a month in the Sunday morning services, and also encourage our Connect Groups to break bread together from time to time. In addition, and where appropriate, we encourage one another to break bread periodically during our meal times, in order to help us remember Jesus in the midst of daily life.

## 5.5 Being Filled with the Spirit

Being filled with the Holy Spirit on an ongoing basis is a command of God (Ephesians. 5:18) and it is necessary to receive this power to live a life as a true follower of Jesus. Without the Holy Spirit filling us, it is just impossible to live an authentic Christian life.

We will regularly teach on this key element of the Christian life at Parklands and will give you the opportunity to ask for and receive prayer to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit will:

Make Jesus more REAL to you.	(John 15:26)
Give you POWER to WITNESS.	(Acts 1:8)
Open up the Bible and make it LIVING.	(John 16:13)
Help you receive new SPIRITUAL GIFTS	(Acts 10:46)
Make your prayer EFFECTIVE.	(Romans 8:26)
Help you make the RIGHT DECISIONS.	(Romans 8:14)
Set you free in PRAISE and WORSHIP.	(2 Corinthians 3:17)
Fill you with God's LOVE and JOY.	(Romans 5:5/ Acts 13:52)

When we meet together we will create space and opportunity for God to move by His Spirit and to support one another to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit.

## **5.6 Making Disciples**

The mandate of Jesus to His disciples and by definition passed down to us was, *'to go and make disciples of all nations...'* (Matthew 28:19).

We believe at Parklands Church that being a Christian is a 'whole life' experience and not a hobby: it is about becoming disciples and not just followers. At the heart of the teaching of Jesus was His proclamation of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23).

We believe at the centre of this message is the need for followers of Jesus to know His Kingdom's rule and reign in their lives: this is the key to authentic Christian living.

To help us develop the concept of discipleship in Parklands Church we encourage everyone to belong to a connect group/small group and encourage people to take their Church friendships beyond the walls of programmed gatherings, so that we may support one another in our adventures of faith (See section 6.4).

## **6. Parklands Practices**

*At present, these are some of the ways we do things at Parklands. Please ensure the arrangements are up to date by referring to the notice sheet/website.*

### **6.1 Welcome & Meals**

Firstly, if you're new to Parklands Church: 'Welcome'! We will try and help you feel welcomed by:

Giving you, and talking through with you, a Welcome Leaflet, detailing the activities of the church. It gives you the opportunity to fill in the Connect section, which will help us explore together how you may want to be connected to the life and activities of the church.

Inviting you to join us at an Open House on Sundays following our 11.00am service. Open House usually takes place during University term times, where a hot meal and good company can be enjoyed in one of our homes.

Inviting you to stay for our Church Lunch, held at Parklands on the last Sunday of the month outside of Holiday periods (July, August,

December), where once again, we can enjoy one another's company with a meal together.

Inviting you to a monthly Open House on designated Sunday evenings (listed in the notice sheet) for a relaxing time and some nibbles.

Inviting you to our Newcomers Welcome Meal, held most terms, where anyone new to Parklands can find out more about who we are and what it means to belong to the church by becoming part of the Fellowship.

Encouraging you to join a Connect Group, details of which are given in section 6.4.

Eating and drinking together as Jesus modelled! (Luke 7:34)

An amazing way to network informally is to visit Square Peg Coffee Shop at Sketty Cross where you will often find many of us just hanging out...and it serves the best coffee around!!!!

## **6.2 Exploring Faith**

If you're looking to explore the Christian Faith, we regularly run Alpha courses (usually) starting in January and September each year. Alpha is an excellent way to discover more about the basics of Christianity. Each Alpha evening starts with a meal, which is followed by an Alpha talk on video and then an opportunity to discuss your questions in a safe and friendly setting.

The course lasts for 9 weeks and deals with the following topics:

Is this it?

Who is Jesus?

Why did Jesus die?

How can I have faith?

Why should I pray?

How should I read the Bible?

What about evil and does God heal today?

What about the church and telling others?

The Holy Spirit & God's guidance

It is hosted in the surrounds of a café set-up either at Parklands or in Square Peg.

To book in for the next course, see one of our Leadership Team.

### **6.3 Sunday Congregations**

At Parklands, our two Sunday morning services are amazing opportunities to meet together in congregational worship and great ways of introducing people to Jesus.

We are exhorted in the Bible not to give up meeting together (Hebrews 10:25), but to come together to encourage one another and Sunday mornings are a great way to be encouraged by worshipful singing, peoples' stories and hearing God's word.

Our first congregation is currently smaller and more reflective in its style than the second congregation which is considerably larger and more lively in its approach. Some come to both, as God is not limited to one style of communication: He just wants to meet with those who seek Him.

### **6.4 Connect Groups**

Connect Groups are small group communities that help everyone feel that they really belong to the Church family. They help to deepen and strengthen our walk with God. The early Church met in homes and it is a great model to follow (Acts 2:46; Romans 16:4-5)

Typically Connect Groups will comprise about 12 people and will meet regularly, weekly or fortnightly, usually in a home.

Connect Groups meet at various locations in the city, at different times of the day and on different days of the week.

The DNA, or Culture, of Parklands will be reflected in the DNA of the Connect Groups who will look for opportunities as a group to:

- S** Speak about Jesus, using opportunities to witness and invite guests to activities and meals organised by the group;
- T** Take Time to build quality relationships with one another, often connecting with one another out of group time;

- E** Encourage **E**mpowered Holy Spirit filled living as we study God's word together;
- P** **P**ray together about anything and everything in an atmosphere of love and trust, noting how God answers prayer;
- S** **S**erve one another selflessly in the group but also look to serve the poor and those in need outside, thereby encouraging a balanced focus, and not a 'holy huddle' mentality.

Connect Groups are far more than just Bible Study groups. Through their leadership structure, they provide a first line of pastoral support, and are places of social, as well as spiritual, connection.

Furthermore, some Connect Groups will be structured around an area of interest e.g. music group, football team, crafting group.

Information about Connect Group times and locations will be available on notice boards, the website or via the Eldership Team.

## **6.5 Serving in a Team**

Serving is a vital part of the Christian life. Jesus set the example and we seek to follow Him (John 13:1-17).

Within Parklands, many people serve and give time to others through various teams and events that happen. However, there is always room for more!!

It is our aim to encourage all who are in fellowship at Parklands to find a place to serve. We are all like different parts of a body, with different parts to play (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).

In order to find where you best serve, we seek to help you find:

- What you are interested in or passionate about;
- What your God given gifts are (Romans 12:6-8, 1 Cor 12:4-11,28, Ephesians 4:11-16);
- How you best operate these gifts.

The variety of life in Parklands is so wide that there really is something for everyone to be involved in. Check out with Elders/Connect Group Leaders serving opportunities and see what excites you...or add to it



the vision God is giving you. Ultimately, however, we serve God just because, by doing so, we express our love and obedience to Him.

Teams are currently involved in serving in the following areas:

- Prayer
- Global Community
- Creative
- Youth, Kids and Students
- Connect Groups & Pastoral
- Hospitality

Being part of a team can be the most rewarding way to be involved in the life of the church and, in the process, you can make some great friends.

Many teams operate on a rota system, meaning that you can commit to any of the teams in whatever way you are able.

As Parklands Church develops, we will be able to achieve a great deal for the Kingdom of God if we use the gifts we have been given and serve where help is needed.

## **6.6 Financial Giving**

The Bible clearly teaches the principle of giving (2 Corinthians 8-9, Acts 2 & 4). Our information leaflet gives further details of this. Giving our money is just one demonstration of our commitment to the life and ministry of Parklands.

The work of Parklands Church is largely financed by the generous giving of those who have become part of the Fellowship, together with a small proportion of income raised from hiring out of the premises. We would like to stress that visitors to Parklands are under no obligation to give.

A vital part of committing to Parklands in becoming a part of the Fellowship is helping to 'pay the bills'. Making a regular financial contribution to the work of the local church is not only Biblical but a very practical way of standing shoulder to shoulder with the whole church and demonstrating your commitment and support.

How can you give?

- In the offerings taken at each Sunday service and/or
- By setting up a Standing Order

If you are an income tax payer, please consider becoming part of the Gift Aid Scheme as this increases the value of your gift by 25% without costing you an extra penny.

A Standing Order mandate, including details of the gift aid scheme, is attached to our information leaflet.

We adhere to a strict code of financial administration and will comply with regulations that relate to our accounts.

## **6.7 Home & Overseas Mission**

*Our desire at Parklands is “to position the church at the heart of mission, and mission at the heart of the church, both at home and abroad”.*

Parklands has close connections with a range of projects at home and overseas. We like to be described as a Glocal church, with both a Global and Local focus. As the early church grew, so did its focus on home mission and mission further afield. We believe it is at the heart of God to have a world focus (John 3:16; Matthew 28:19-20).

Over time, we have been involved with the projects detailed below.

At home, we have supported both financially and through the work of those in the Fellowship at Parklands:

- Swansea Hope – networking churches together in the city for prayer & social action which includes Swansea Night Shelter and Street Pastors;
- Nicholaston House – a healing retreat in Gower, the vision of two of our fellowship;
- St. Madoc Camp – a facility on the Gower coast used by Parklands and other local/regional churches over many years;
- Pregnancy Advisory Centre – a project that has seen many young mums link to us, the vision of another of our fellowship;
- Signpost Café – working with the International Community in the City.

Abroad, we have had involvement with and given support to:

- Children of Hope in Kenya;
- Project Dengke in China;
- To Russia with Love in Belarus;
- House of Prayer in Turkey;
- Samaritan's Purse worldwide;
- Tearfund worldwide;
- YWAM worldwide;
- The Leprosy Mission;
- Pastor Thankachan in India;
- ZOA in Burundi.

We have sent teams from Parklands Church over many years to most of these areas, and encourage a culture of significant involvement with what God is doing overseas.

We aim to give away at least 10% of our income annually. This giving is overseen by a small team.

We encourage the Church to use Operation World, a prayer manual, to fuel worldwide prayer support. We also have those in the Fellowship who have a significant interest in the persecuted church.

## **6.8 Marriage**

We are passionate at Parklands Church about preparing couples for marriage and then helping safeguard and enriching established marriages, as marriage is close to the heart of God (Genesis 2 v23-24).

As the introduction to the marriage service states: *'Marriage is a gift of God in Creation through which husband and wife may know the grace of God. It is given that as a man and woman grow together in love and trust, they shall be united with one another in heart, body and mind, as Christ is united with His bride, the Church'*.

Every couple, before getting married, will be required to undertake a marriage preparation course with a couple designated by the Elders.

The course essentially covers the 5 areas of:

- Communication;

- Commitment;
- Resolving Conflict;
- Keeping Love Alive;
- Shared Goals and Values.

Couples wishing to get married in Parklands will meet with a designated Elder who will ensure the date is free and it is then booked in the church diary; also that the couple are briefed on the practical and legal requirements for the big day. Parklands has its own designated registrars for weddings.

Periodically, marriage enrichment will be offered as part of the church programme using the marriage course by the same authors as marriage preparation. However, where required, the material will be used to support couples in a private context.

The marriage course comprises:

- Building Strong Foundations;
- The Art of Communication;
- Resolving Conflict;
- The Power of Forgiveness;
- The Impact of Family—Past and Present;
- Good Sex;
- Love in Action.

Details of the next available course will be published in the notice sheet.

## **6.9 Dedication of Children**

Children are of incredible importance to us at Parklands (Psalm 127:3). We believe that the dedication of children to God is a way of the church standing with parents in the difficult, but rewarding, job of parenthood.

Dedication of children is not to be confused with infant baptism which is not one of our practices at Parklands. Dedication does not make a child a Christian, but rather it can be:

- An opportunity to say thank you to God for your child;
- The making of a promise to God in the way you bring up your child;

- An opportunity to ask God for His blessing on your child;
- An opportunity for Parklands to pledge to support you in bringing up your child.

When the disciples tried to stop mothers from bringing their children to Jesus, the Bible tells us He was displeased and said to them: *'let the little children come to me...for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'* (Mark 10:13-14).

If you would like to arrange for the dedication of your child, please contact one of the Elders.

## Appendix 1–Statement of Faith

### **We believe in...**

1. The unity of the one true God who lives eternally in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Matt 3:16-17  
Matt 28:19  
2 Cor 13:14
2. The love, grace and Sovereignty of God in creation, revelation, redemption, justification and final judgment. Acts 17:24-31  
1 Pet 4:5  
Eph 1:3-14  
1 Cor 8:4,6  
Gen 1:1-31  
Ps 9:7-8
3. The divine inspiration and infallibility of the Old & New Testament Scriptures as originally given, and their supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. 2 Sam 23:2  
2 Tim 3:16-17  
2 Pet 3:15-16  
2 Pet 1:19-21
4. The original dignity of all people made in God's image yet utterly corrupted by sin resulting in the guilt of all mankind, making each one subject to God's wrath and judgment. Gen 1:27-31  
Rom 3:22-23  
Rom 5:12-21  
1 Cor 15:21-22  
Rom 6:23
5. The full deity and full manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, His virgin birth, His real and sinless manhood, His death on the cross, His bodily resurrection, His Ascension, His present reign in Heaven, His supreme Lordship over His Church. Matt 1:18-25  
1 Cor 15:3-4  
Acts 1:7-11  
Col 1:15  
Phil 2:5-11  
Heb 4:14-16  
Gal 4:4
6. Redemption from the guilt, penalty and power of sin, only through the sacrificial death, once and for all time, of our representative and substitute Jesus Christ the only mediator between God and mankind. Mark 10:45  
1 Pet 2:24  
1 Tim 2:5-6  
Heb 9:24-28
7. By the grace of God, the sinner is justified in God's sight solely through faith in Christ's atoning merits. Eph 2:8-9  
Rom 3:24-26  
Gal 2:16
8. The ministry of the Holy Spirit in making the work of Christ effective to the individual sinner, leading that person to repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. John 16:7-11  
John 3:1-21

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| <p>9. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all who are regenerated, guiding them, in accordance with Scripture, into all truth, producing in them an increasing likeness to Christ in character and behaviour, and equipping them to proclaim the Gospel in the world, to promote justice and love and the building up of His Church.</p> | <p>Gal 5:22-23<br/> 1 Cor 6:19-20<br/> John 14:26<br/> Acts 1:8<br/> John 16:13<br/> 1 Cor 12:7-11<br/> 1 Cor 13</p> |
| <p>10. The personal, visible, future return of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory.</p>  | <p>Acts 1:11<br/> Matt 16:27<br/> Matt 24:30</p>   |
| <p>11. The bodily resurrection of all people to face judgment by the Lord Jesus Christ upon His return, with eternal blessedness for the believer and eternal punishment for the unrepentant.</p>   | <p>Job 19:25-27<br/> 1 Cor 15:51-54<br/> Ps 96:13<br/> Matt 25:31-46<br/> 2 Thess 1:6-10</p>                         |

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