



Being Church

Loving	Praying
Mission	Growing



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WHY CHURCH?

Thornbury Baptist Church is a community of God's people in the locality. We express the reason why we have been called together in the following short statement:

Going and growing together in the love of Christ to make Him known

In seeking to "go" and "grow" we aim to be a:

- Loving Community
- Praying Community
- Mission Community
- Growing Community

By this statement we seek to fulfil the two great commands of Jesus:

- to love one another
- to go and make disciples.

The great commandment: Jesus said the greatest commandment is:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is: 'Love your neighbour as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two.'" Matthew 22:37-40.

The great commission: Before His ascension back to heaven Jesus said to His disciples *"All authority on heaven and earth is given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the end of the age."* Matthew 28:18b-20.

The local church looks outwards to the world, seeking to 'make disciples' of men and women, children and young people, beginning where we are. By our aims we seek to fulfil our mission, keep the church healthy, and fulfil the 'great commandment' and the 'great commission' Jesus gave to his disciples, and therefore to us.

COMMUNITY

We become Christians as individuals but we are called to live together as God's people, as a community of those who believe in and follow Jesus Christ. This community is world wide but we express our 'oneness' in the local church and with the believers in the locality.

As a community we seek to support each other, to share our joys and our sorrows. By being a community all the gifts that God has given to each one of us can work together for the good of each other and the extension of His Kingdom.

The idea of being a community stems from the very first church after Pentecost. The amazing growth of the church that we read in Acts came through being a community of believers empowered by the Holy Spirit.

A LOVING COMMUNITY

We see in the great commandment that we are to love our neighbours, and Jesus teaches his disciples to begin by loving each other... *'A new commandment I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'* John 13:34-35.

We believe that showing care for each other, looking after each other's needs, being sensitive to one another and helping each other, are all practical expressions of a loving community.

This is worked out whenever we meet together, particularly in the many small groups we have

in the church. But it is also found in the many other ways we can 'be there' for each other ... on the phone; by letter; through visiting; providing food; practical help; shopping; caring for children or the elderly; and many other ways.

We encourage each other to be part of a 'small group' within the church where we can get to know people better, and where we can learn, grow, and find support and love, and where we can seek to care for and love others, so fulfilling the teaching of Jesus.

A PRAYING (AND WORSHIPPING) COMMUNITY

Our love for one another is a natural outcome of our love for God. This is itself a result of what God has done for us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Because of God's mercy we are urged ... *'to offer (our) bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is (our) spiritual act of worship.'* Romans 12:1.

It is normal to talk and listen to those we love. Prayer and worship are two of the ways we communicate with God. We are called and directed to ... *'pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of requests.'* Ephesians 6:18.

The Message Bible translation urges us to ... *'Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean revel in him!'* Philippians 4:4.

This reminds us that 'worship' is the offering of all that we do to God - our family life, our work and our leisure, as well as our time together worshipping and working within the life of the church.

We want to encourage everyone to have a real relationship with God through prayer, worshipping together, in small groups, in the family, and in every day life and work.

A MISSION COMMUNITY

God's purpose for his people goes far beyond our love for each other, prayer and worship. He calls and leads us into sharing ourselves and our faith with our friends, family, with neighbours and work colleagues, with the local community and with people around the world. Jesus put it this way ... *'You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the World. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. By opening up to others you will prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.'* Matthew 5:14-16 in *The Message Bible*.

We help bring God's light and love to people in many ways. Through support of people and organisations working around the world: through events to serve and reach our local community; through individual friendships and contacts.

Our desire is that every Christian in the church will be taught and be able to share their faith with the people they come into contact with. We are encouraged to *'always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have.'* 1 Peter 3:15.

Our desire is that every Christian will be concerned for the poor of the world, as God is, and involved through prayer, giving and encouragement ... and perhaps even going, so that the good news about Jesus is shared with people to the ends of the earth.

A GROWING COMMUNITY

Growing is a part of living. Bodies grow and so also does the body of Christ, the church. Together we are to live in love, remain united in the Spirit and live at peace with each other. As we share and use our abilities to bless one another and those not yet in the church, the community will grow up into knowing Jesus better, into being a mature people of God. The apostle Paul said that, rather than being prey to every new idea of religion around us in the world, if we are ... *'speaking the truth in love we will in all things grow up into Him who is the*

head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.' Ephesians 4:15-16.

- We seek to grow in character by the power of the Spirit.
- Through the 'fruit of the Spirit' in Galatians 5:22-25, we can be changed, and overcome our weak and sinful natures.
- We seek to grow in love for each other through the Spirit, see Ephesians 4:29-32 and Colossians 3:12-17.
- We seek to grow in effectiveness through the power of the Spirit. See Acts 1:8 and 1 Corinthians 12-14.
- We seek to grow in numbers as God adds to us those who are being saved, and as we reach out in love with the gospel, through actions and words. See Acts 2:46-47.