



COUNT ME IN

WELLS BRANCH COMMUNITY CHURCH

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WELCOME

I'm so excited that you have decided to join us here at Wells Branch Community Church. Count Me In is where you will find out who we are, what we believe, and our deep desire for this community to love God, love people, and make disciples. God has done great things with this family of believers and it is my heart that you would lock arms with us in pushing back the darkness. Here you will find opportunities to reach out to those who are far from God, connect with other believers, and grow to be fully devoted followers of Christ.

Count Me In is taught by elders, staff, and volunteers committed to our family of believers. They will share their own personal experiences at WBCC and how they have been impacted by what we believe and what we do. Our goal at Count Me In is to get to know who you are, find out where you are on your spiritual journey, and help you take the next step. That might be joining the church, getting plugged into a community group, finding your place to serve, or giving you more opportunities to check out life at WBCC.

Live For More!

Chris Plekenpol

Lead Pastor of Wells Branch Community Church

COUNT ME IN

Count Me In is Wells Branch Community Church's membership class. The course is designed to be a first step into experiencing the fullness of what it means to be a part of a local body of believers. We believe that, as a church, God has called us to make this journey of faith together.

Count Me In is organized into three parts:

Part I is designed to welcome everyone interested in learning more about the history, vision and mission of the church. Here we also talk about what it means to be a believer in Christ and how the church is a part of our faith journey. If you're new, this is the best place to get a full introduction to who we are as a church.

Part II is focused on membership in the church. We believe that there is indeed a difference between being a part of the historic, global, "big C" church and covenanting with a local body of believers ("small c" church) in order to live out our faith in our immediate community and context. Here we also cover the full process of becoming a member of WBCC.

Part III is designed to engage those who, understanding who we are and what we're about as a church, desire to covenant into membership. Here, we'll discuss how members can be engaged in serving the church, the community, and engage in meaningful relationships with other members. We'll also discuss the next steps involved in becoming an official covenant member of WBCC.

We're excited to be a part of this journey with you. God is weaving your story with the story of his family here at Wells Branch Community Church; let's take that next step together.

PART I

The Gospel and The Church

THE CHURCH: DEFINITION

Before we look at the history of our church, we have to understand what a church is. Most importantly, the church is a people, not a place. Wells Branch Community Church is not a particular place or building, it's the people that make up our church.

You can understand the church as a group of people in two ways. First is the universal church. The **universal church** is the community of all people from all times whose sins are forgiven through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by having personal faith in him. In order to be a member of the universal church you have to believe that Christ died on the cross for your sins and rose again according to the Scriptures.

Second is the **local church**. The "local church" refers to one of the various congregations of the universal church that gather for things like worship, Jesus fellowship, discipleship, teaching, evangelism, and prayer in a particular community.

The local church has the twofold mission of stirring our affections of disciples to worship the Triune God and mobilizing disciples to reach people with the life changing reality of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the head of the church, both local and universal. Local church leadership submits to the authority of Jesus and consists of biblically qualified Christians who are equipping and encouraging others to follow them as they follow Jesus.



THE CHURCH: HISTORY

Our local church is part of a network of local churches called the Association of Hill Country Churches. So, even though our church started in 2009, our history actually begins in 1986. It was then that the first services of Hill Country Bible Church met with the goal of forming a local association of like-minded churches. In 1989 Tim Hawks came to Hill Country Bible Church as the lead pastor with the desire to build leaders who would represent God's word to the world. HCBC continued to grow and because they believed they were not called simply to expand a single location, the elders determined to follow the pattern of the New Testament church by planting strategically located churches that would reflect the cultural makeup of that area

2003 The elders developed a specific and compelling vision, that every man, woman, and child in Greater Austin would experience the life changing reality of Jesus Christ. They developed a church planting training center the next year to train, equip, and support church planters.

HCBC sent out a group of people to plant a church in Pflugerville. They planted HCBC Pflugerville. In following the vision of the association, HCBC Pflugerville planted Wells Branch Community Church.

2008 Todd and Cassi Wortham responded to God's call to start a church that would love people and change lives through authentic relationships with God. God connected them with Hill Country Bible Church Northwest, and Todd moved to Austin to be a Church Plant Pastor.

2009 God continued to work as Todd was interviewed by Hill Country Bible Church Pflugerville as a candidate for church planting.

God responded to the prayers of the church as nearly 30 people relocated from around the country to be a part of what God was doing in Wells Branch. These 30 people began to meet for prayer and planning to seek to impact their neighborhood with the message of the gospel.

June – God again provided for the church plant through providing the Wells Branch MUD Annex as a regular meeting place. This was an answer to prayer.

September – Wells Branch Community Church was commissioned and the first Sunday Worship service was held with 135 adults attending. Within a month the results of God moving were seen through baptisms.

2011 August – While serving in Joplin, MO in the tornado relief effort our founding pastor Todd Wortham went to be with the Lord after suffering a heart attack. December – God continued to work by opening the door for us to meet at the Wells Branch Recreation Center for Sunday morning worship.

2012 February – God provided Chris Plekenpol and his wife Adrienne to lead us on our mission to reach the people of Wells Branch with the gospel of Jesus Christ

2015 Wells Branch Community Church sends out its first long term missionaries, James and Didi Myer, to establish a church planting ministry in Tanzania.

2017 Wells Branch Community Church launched its first church plant, Eastside Community Church, in East Austin

2018 Wells Branch Community Church moved into its current location on Wells Branch Parkway.

2020 Eastside Community Church co-planted it's first church plant, Refuge Community Church, in Southeast Austin alongside the Well Community Church.

PURPOSE AND PROCESS

In one way all churches are the same. They are called by God to love God, love people, and make disciples according to Jesus' Great Commandment and Great Commission.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:37-40)

THE GREAT COMMISSION

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

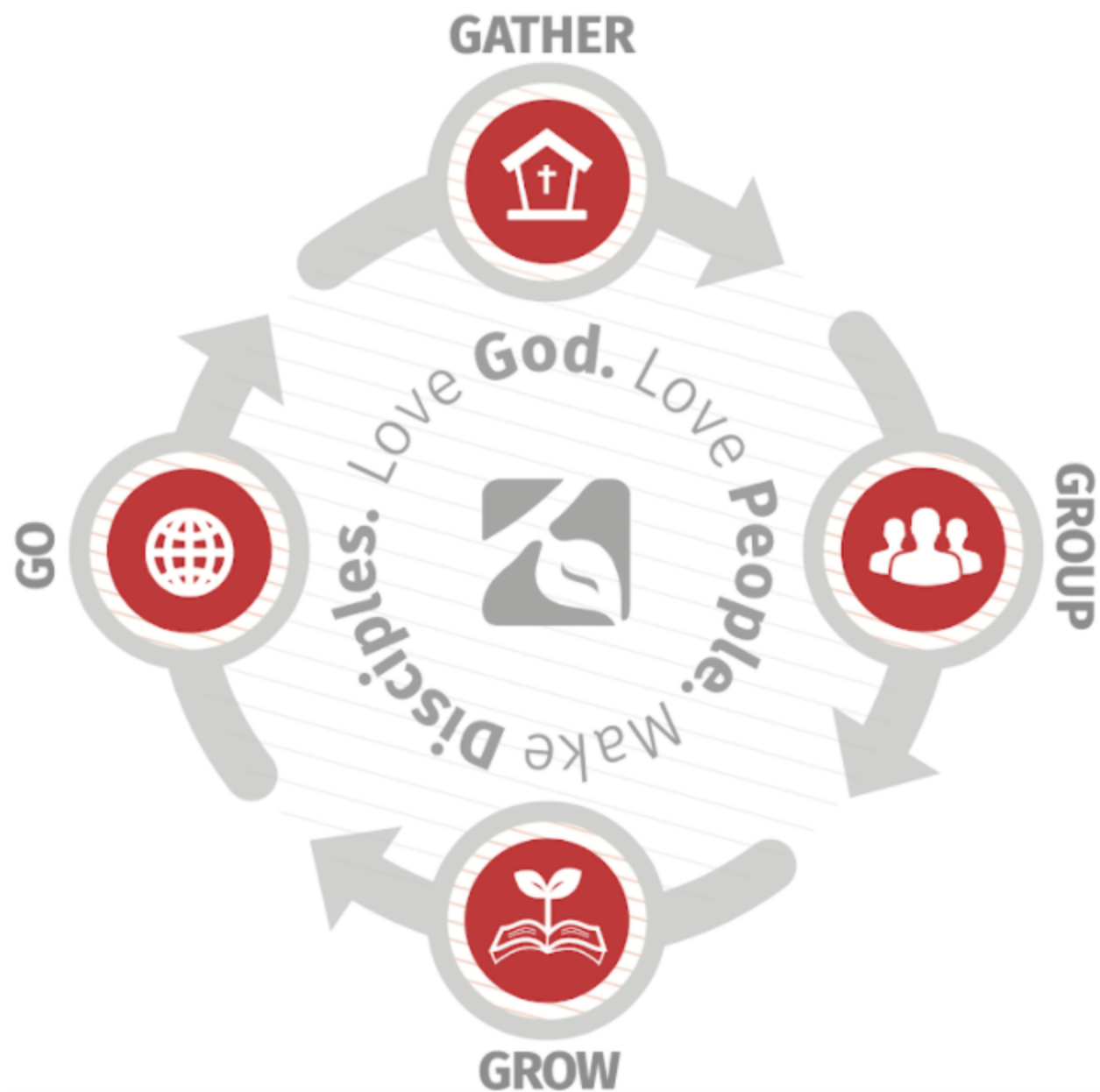
However, they are all very different because they all are in a different context with different strategies. So while the goal of the global church is to make disciples the strategy and process to do it is very different from church to church.

Our Purpose:

**Wells Branch
Community
Church exists
to: Love God.
Love people.
Make
Disciples.**



\PURPOSE AND PROCESS



ASSOCIATION VISION: Every man woman and child in the greater Austin area has an opportunity to hear, see, and respond to the gospel from someone associated with our movement.

WBCA PURPOSE: We exist to: Love God. Love People. Make Disciples.

WBCA PROCESS: Gather, Group, Grow, Go.

- *We believe that each of us are called to love God, love people, and make disciples. We aim to accomplish our purpose through our Gather, Group, Grow and Go process.*
- *We encourage each person at WBCA to **Gather** for corporate worship, **Group** into smaller community groups, **Grow** through our discipleship pathway, and **Go** reach our spheres of influence through local and global mission.*

- *We believe that our purpose to love God, love people, and make disciples is found throughout each step of this process.*

PROCESS EXPLAINED

We love God, love people, and make disciples corporately through our Gather, Group, Grow, and Go process.

GATHER

Wells Branch Community Church is committed to gathering those seeking God to gospel centered assemblies primarily on Sunday mornings. The goal of these gatherings is to worship God in a way that grows believers in their faith while making a relationship with Jesus accessible to those who are not connected to God.
(Heb. 10:23-25, Ps. 95:1-11)

GROUP

A vital part of WBCC is community groups. Community groups exist to connect people relationally and grow people spiritually.
(Acts 2:42-47, Gal. 6:2)

GROW

We desire for people to grow to be fully devoted followers of Christ. Growth to maturity comes through discipleship - as those who were once far from God are brought into the family of believers, growth happens through the Holy Spirit when a Christian receives the Word of God through meaningful teaching, small group discipleship relationships, and missional experiences. We have a specific discipleship pathway intentionally designed to help us see our core identities fully formed in us with corresponding life patterns that we are called to reproduce in others.
(I Cor. 11:1, II Cor. 3:18, II Tim. 2:2)

GO

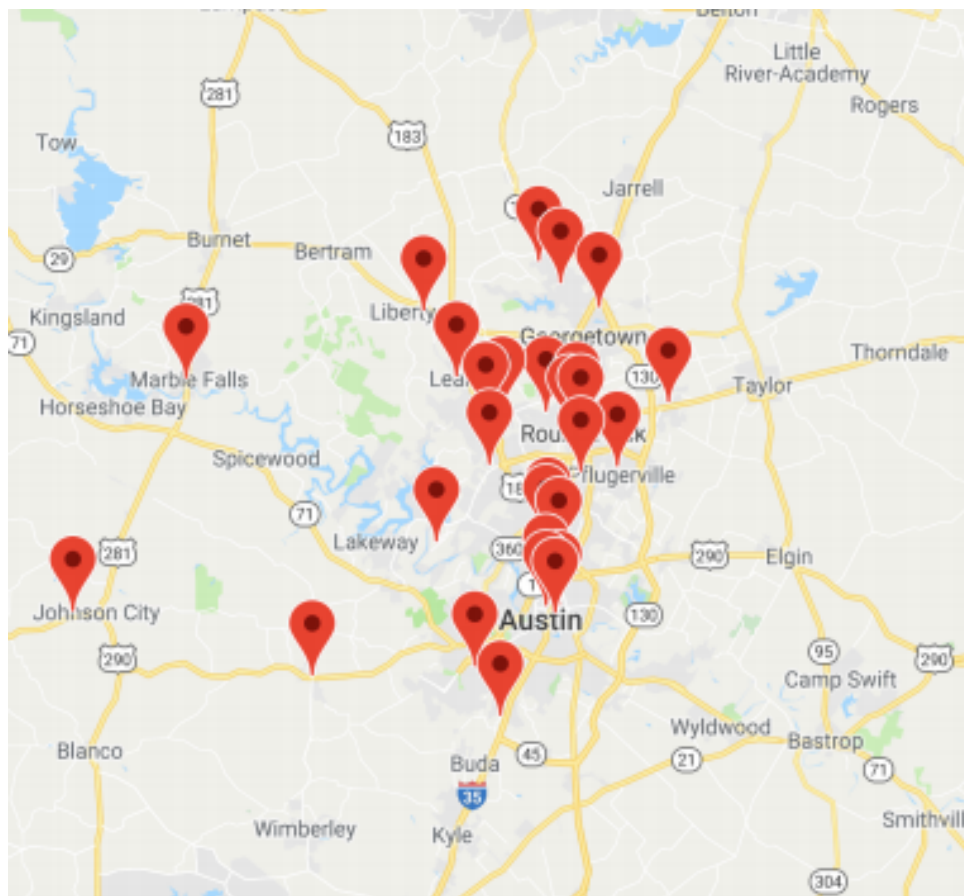
Jesus' plan to reach the world was for His followers to intentionally go out into the community and neighborhoods to interact with those around us as well as continue that mission around the world. We like to say the "mission" has a church, the "church" doesn't have a mission. We seek to utilize our community groups to serve in community events, leverage our Benevolence program to help those in need and encourage people to engage the people in their circle of influence in spiritual conversations that lead to sharing the gospel. Wells Branch Community Church also engages in an intentional mission to go to those far from God both near and far through our summer Great Adventure.
(Matt. 4:19, Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:8)



VISION

As a church plant of the Association of Hill Country Churches, WBCC has the vision that every man, woman, and child in the greater Austin area would have repeated opportunities to hear, see, and respond to the gospel through the lips of someone associated with our movement.

We believe we can accomplish this through planting local churches.



Find out more at ahccatx.com

The **Association of Hill Country Churches**, of which Wells Branch Community Church is a member, seeks to reach 10% of the greater Austin area with the gospel. There are currently more than 20 churches and church plants in the association, with the goal of planting more in the future.

We work towards accomplishing this goal by:

- Multiplying disciples
- Planting churches that are spiritually vibrant and seek reproduction
- Partnering with other like minded ministries

Wells Branch Community Church is a third generation church of Hill Country Bible Church of Austin. WBCC became a church planting church in 2017 when we planted Eastside Community Church and we reached our own third generation when Eastside Community Church planted Refuge Community Church in 2020.

\THE GOSPEL

The church consists of Christians, followers of Christ, who have responded to the message of the gospel that Jesus Christ died for their sins and rose again.

The gospel is at the center of what makes us a church and what we do as a church. We want to clearly articulate what the gospel is so that we are all on the same page from the beginning.

There are many incorrect ways people may think they can become a Christian:

- My parents were Christians, so I am too.
- As long as you are sincere, it doesn't matter what you believe.
- I do more good things than bad.

These views are held by many people, but just because a lot of people think it is correct, does not make it so. We believe that the Bible is God's word to us and rely on it as the source of truth when it comes to the issue of eternity and salvation.

The gospel can be stated simply: Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day. But it is also complex. There is no end to the depth of understanding how the gospel applies to our lives. One needs a way to think about, talk about, and share the gospel with others.



\THE GOSPEL

A good way to summarize the gospel is to biblically unpack the words God, Man, Christ, Response.

God

- God is the creator of all things, (Gen. 1:1)
- He is perfectly holy, worthy of all worship, and will punish sin. (1 John 1:5, Rom. 2:5-8)
- God is love. (1 John 4:7-8)
- God is holy. (1 Peter 1:16)
- God is just. (Gen. 18:25)

Man

- All people, though created good, have inherited a sinful nature through the sin of Adam. (Gen. 1:26-28, Gen. 3, Ps. 51:5, Rom. 3:23)
- From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God. (Eph. 2:1-3, Rom. 1)

Christ

- Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to bear God's wrath in the place of all who would believe in him, and rose from the grave in order to give his people eternal life. (John 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:26, Rom. 3:21-26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:20-22)
- Jesus is our substitute who died in our place. (Rom. 5:8, 2 Cor. 5:21)

Response

- God calls everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and trust in Christ in order to be saved. (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:20-21, Rom. 10:9-10)
- We cannot earn salvation. (Eph. 2:8-9)
- We must receive the gift of salvation. (Eph. 2:8-9, Rom. 10:9-10)

\THE GOSPEL

At Wells Branch Community Church, everyone who becomes a member is asked to affirm the following statement:

I believe that I am a sinner, someone who has rejected God by nature. I believe that there is no good that I can do on my own to make me right with God again. (Rom. 3:23)

I believe that the penalty of sin is death (Rom. 6:23) , but God in his great love for me sent his son Jesus (Rom. 5:8), perfectly God and perfectly human, to die the death that I deserved to pay the penalty of my sin. On the third day, Jesus rose again, proving once and for all that my sin has been forgiven (I Cor. 15) and by God's grace through my faith I can have a relationship with God for all eternity (Eph. 2:8-9).

I believe that Jesus is the king of my life, and that God has raised him from the dead (Rom. 10:9). I have decided to follow him.



THE CHURCH: THE LORD'S SUPPER

We celebrate and remember what Christ has done for us through The Lord's Supper.

Jesus instituted The Lord's Supper at the Passover meal just before his crucifixion. Jesus took the bread and the wine on the table and gave them special significance. He told his disciples that the bread would represent his body, which would be offered up on the cross as a sacrifice for sin. The cup, he told them, would represent the blood that was shed for the forgiveness of sins, the blood of the New Covenant. We observe The Lord's Supper regularly in our Sunday services.

The Lord's Supper is a memorial. We observe it to remember what Christ did for us on the cross (1 Cor. 11:24). The bread represents the body of Christ, which was broken for us. The wine represents the blood of Christ, which was shed for us. It also serves as a reminder that Christ will come again. It is a reminder of future hope (1 Cor. 11:26).

The Lord's Supper is for those who believe that Jesus died on the cross for their sins and rose from the dead (1 Cor 11:29).



\ THE CHURCH: BAPTISM

We also identify with Christ and celebrate changed lives through baptism. Baptism serves as a symbol of Christ's burial and resurrection that testifies to new life in Christ (Col. 2:12, Rom. 6:4).

Baptism is an important step in one's spiritual journey. Jesus commanded it right before his ascension (Matt. 28:19-20a). Therefore, baptism is an act of obedience once you have responded in faith in Christ. Baptism also publicly identifies you with Christ. It is a person saying they are representing Christ to the world. They believe what he has done for them and are striving to live their lives in a way that represents Christ.

We practice baptism by immersion because the Greek word "baptize" means to immerse in water. It was also the practice of believers in the New Testament (Acts 8:38-39). It also is the best symbol of the burial and resurrection of Christ.

If you have not been baptized as a believer we encourage you to do so. If you would like to be baptized speak to one of the leaders of the class afterwards or email us at info@wellsbranchchurch.com.



PART II

Membership

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in a church can be a confusing thing. The church is not a club which begins with a point of common interest where membership is optional. It's not a service provider, which begins with a common need or desire and the customer has all the authority. Church members have a common interest in the message of Jesus and a common desire to serve our King with obedience. God calls us to be a part of local churches under his authority to grow to spiritual maturity.

We see in the early church that:

They tracked numbers and growth of people who were a part of the church.

(Acts 2:37-47) They appointed leaders to address a specific problem. (Acts 6:1-6)

Paul addressed the people who were a part of the church in Rome by name, making their membership distinct from other local churches. (Rom. 16:1-16)

The early church submitted to their elders. The Elders were responsible for the spiritual growth of each local church. (Heb. 13:17)

The local church was a safe place to confess and repent. (Heb 10:24-25)

God's plan is that we would belong to a local church, for our own good, protection, and maturation. As members interact with others in their own local body, their own shortcomings and sin are exposed. This gives members the opportunity to live out Jesus' command to love one another as family.

LEADERSHIP

In order to reflect the structure set forth in the early church and throughout the Bible we are a local church led by a plurality of elders Acts 14:23. Our elder board is comprised of up to seven elders including the Senior Pastor. Each elder serves a three year term, except for the Senior Pastor who serves perpetually.

All of our elders go through an identification and interview process to ensure that they meet the biblical requirements for elders before they can serve as an elder. (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9)

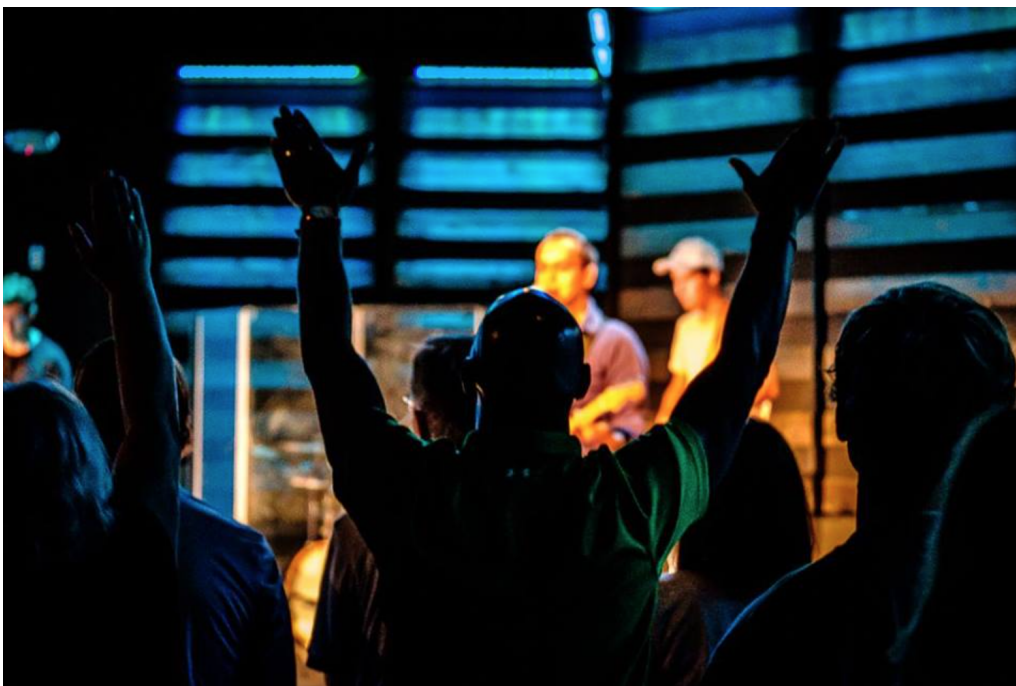
Elders lead the church by setting the vision and making major decisions in the life of the church. Church members submit to the leadership and direction of the elders unless it is unbiblical. (Heb. 13:17)

The elders protect, feed, and lead the congregation in order to effectively equip the body of Christ for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-12). They do not do all the work, but organize, train, and equip others to serve the church by using their gifts and talents.

MEMBERSHIP

When the Bible speaks of how God chooses to relate to his people throughout history, both for national Israel and the church, it speaks in terms of covenant. A covenant, unlike a contract, binds the individual to his or her commitments regardless of the other party. With some covenants, one party binds himself or herself to fulfill the obligations of both sides, while other times the parties are reciprocally bound to adhere to the obligations. Because of the covenantal nature of the relationship between God and his people (Gen. 6:18, 9:16, 15:18, Luke 22:20, Heb. 8:6-7), we believe it is appropriate to understand the relationship between the local church and its members in this way.

Covenants in the Bible have also historically been accompanied by a ratifying sign or symbol. The form of representation varies: sometimes it was with the literal sacrifice of animals (Gen. 15), sometimes it was the gift of an object (Ruth 4) or a ceremonial feast (Matt. 26:17-29). While the symbols may vary, the value of ratifying the covenant and commemorating its terms remains constant.



At Wells Branch Community Church, the process of ratifying and commemorating the membership covenant involves the completion of this membership class, affirming a personal faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and being baptized, the affirmation of that faith by the leadership of the church, and a public presentation to the church.

God calls his people into covenant, not only with himself in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but also to each other as a family of believers. We believe that in order to “obey all that [Jesus] commanded” (Matt. 28:18-19) the

individual Christian is called to such a covenantal relationship with his or her local body of believers. This faithful and joyful obedience is most readily pursued in the context of that local community. In light of this reality, membership to Wells Branch Community Church is not merely a token of affinity, or a burden or responsibility - it is instead a blessed opportunity to covenant together in order that we might live out the gospel together.

MEMBERSHIP

First, it is important to remember that in the covenant between a member and the local church, both the individual and the church covenant to each other certain things. The individual member can require and expect certain things from the church body and its leadership while the church likewise requires and expects certain things of its members.

At Wells Branch Community Church, these are the things the church requires of its members:

To complete the Count Me In course in its entirety.

To make a declaration of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ to qualified elders, deacons, or pastors.

To be baptized.

To agree with both the purpose and doctrinal statements of the church.

As a church, in light of this membership covenant, the church expects its members to:

Gather to participate in corporate Sunday worship. (Heb. 10:25, I Tim. 4:13)

Serve in a ministry within the church. (I Cor. 12:7)

Give joyfully and regularly. (II Cor. 9:7, Luke 11:42, Acts 4)

Submit to WBCC leadership and pursue unity as a covenant member. (Heb 13:17)

Regularly spend time in prayer and study of the Word of God (Acts 1:14, 2:42)

Belong to and participate in a community group. (Heb. 10:25, Acts 2:46)

Evangelize by sharing the gospel as a witness of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18-20)

\ MEMBERSHIP:THE MEMBER

The member, having met the requirements of the membership covenant and striving to live out a lifestyle that is expectant of a member of the local body of believers can expect to enjoy:

- The identification as a partner with a group of committed believers
- The example of a commitment to God, to your own spiritual walk, and to others
- A place to invest your time, talents, and finances to further God's kingdom
- Unity in the body of Christ
- Greater accountability within the body
- The intentional care and leadership of pastors and elders
- Priority use of facilities
- The right to vote on these major issues: the appointment of new elders; the hiring and firing of the Senior Pastor; and the purchase of real property



\ MEMBERSHIP:THE CHURCH

The member of Wells Branch Community Church can, in turn, expect the church to covenant to the following:

The elders, representing the local body of believers at Wells Branch Community Church, covenant...

- to lovingly caring for you and seeking your growth in Christ (Heb, 3:13, 13:17)
- to provide teaching and counsel from the Scriptures (1 Tim. 5:17-18)
- that this teaching will span the whole counsel of God's Word (Acts 20:27-28)
- to helping you in times of need (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37; James 2:14-17)
- that your elders and leaders will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1-13, 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- to pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14)
- to be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31)
- to exercise church discipline when necessary (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1)
- to help you become equipped to serve Christ (Eph. 4:11-13)
- to seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5)
- to set an example and join in fulfilling the duties of church members (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:12)



MEMBERSHIP: COVENANT

I am a Christian who has been saved from my sins by the grace of Jesus Christ. I have accepted His gift of salvation bought by his death on the cross, the penalty for my sins, and His resurrection, by which I am assured of eternal life (John 3:16-18; Rom. 3:23-26)

I have read and understood the Wells Branch Community Church doctrinal statement and agree to not be divisive to its teaching. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Eph. 4:1-3; Heb. 13:7-17)

I understand that Wells Branch Community Church recognizes me as a member of the local body because I am a Christian, saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, baptized, and because I have chosen to submit myself to the purpose and doctrinal statements of the church.

I also understand that a covenant relationship with the local body of believers involves a genuine faith. As such I will strive to participate in corporate Sunday worship, faithfully engage in community through community group, serve in a ministry within the church, give regularly and joyfully, regularly spend time in prayer and study of the Word of God, submit to the leadership of the church, and share the gospel as a witness of Jesus Christ (Psalms 119:97; 105:1-2; Acts 2:42-47; Heb 10:23-25, et. al.)

I commit myself to the WBCC church family and agree to aid in fulfilling its missional purpose to reach people with the life changing reality of Jesus Christ in Wells Branch and the surrounding area by being a doer of the Word and not a hearer only, serving Jesus in every area of my life.

God enabling me, I will strive to consider my commitment to this Membership Covenant on a yearly basis. I understand that this consideration is an affirmation of my continuing conviction and purpose. My responsibility will be to notify the Wells Branch leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, which includes leaving the church for another church, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Wells Branch Community Church.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Elder Signature: _____

Date: _____

MEMBERSHIP:PROCESS

The membership approval process at Wells Branch Community Church begins with the individual Christian experiencing the Holy Spirit's leading to covenant into the local body of believers. Once the believer begins walking in obedience to that conviction, the process of becoming a covenant member of the church is as follows:

1. The believer attends Count Me In at Wells Branch Community Church in order to understand fully what being a member of the local body of believers means.
2. The candidate then submits the Wells Branch Community Church membership application to the elder board for consideration. The membership application includes the membership covenant above. A married couple should submit two separate applications and covenant forms.
3. The WBCC membership team will schedule an interview for the candidate and a pair of church leaders (Elders, Pastors, Deacons) to affirm the salvation of the individuals and their desire to covenant with the church.
4. The elders will approve or refer the candidate based on his or her application and interview. The decision will be communicated to the candidate.
5. Any candidate who is declined membership will be given clear direction as to what their next steps should be.
6. Any candidate whose membership is approved will be invited to participate in a new member presentation held on Sunday morning during church service. The new members are asked to affirm their covenant to the church, as the church affirms its covenant to them. They are finally presented with a symbolic gift representing the membership covenant.
7. Each year all members will have an opportunity to communicate their experience of membership, and to affirm their covenant through covenant renewal (see page 25).

MEMBERSHIP: RENEWAL

While membership to Wells Branch Community Church is ultimately founded in the unchangeable reality of God's faithfulness to the Christian who has received salvation through grace by faith, we acknowledge that every Christian needs encouragement and exhortation to continue living out the life of faith to which we were called (Heb. 3:13).

Each year, the Membership ministry of Wells Branch Community Church is committed to contacting the members of the church to provide encouragement and accountability to the expectations of all members.

The renewal process may look different from year to year: an online survey, a personal phone call, a conversation with a community group shepherd. The goal, however, remains the same: discipleship of all our members to fulfill the command given by Jesus to obey all he has commanded (Jn 14:15, Matt 28:20).



PART III

Ministry and Community

MINISTRY: GIFTS

A major part of living out our faith in Jesus Christ is the experience of exercising our spiritual gifts. Paul writes in I Corinthians that:

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (I Cor. 12:4-7)

While the actual gifting may be different, the purpose of these giftings is ultimately the same: to edify the church. Wells Branch Community Church is committed to discovering and cultivating these giftings in our members. The church is also committed to providing opportunities for every member to exercise his or her spiritual gifts in edifying the church through ministries, both on Sunday mornings and beyond.



MINISTRY: SERVING

Wells Branch Community Church believes that God has given every Christ-follower gifts and talents in order to edify the church and grow in intimacy with God. As a church, we are committed to discovering and cultivating these giftings in our members.

Every member of Wells Branch Community Church is expected to serve in an official capacity to edify the church body and engage in the mission of the church to: Love God. Love People. And Make Disciples.

Currently, the formal ministries of Wells Branch Community Church are:

Sunday Morning Ministries

Welcome Team
Connections
Hospitality
Worship
Creative
Parking
Teaching
Prayer

Support

Systems
Welcome Desk
Finance Team
Benevolence
Care
Samson Society
Spanish Ministry

Community Engagement

Community Service
Evangelism
Letter Writing
Community Group Shepherding
Women's Ministry
Membership
Austin Disaster Relief Network
Apartment Life
Global Missions
Live For More Counseling

Generational

Branch Kids
theBranch Youth Ministry

Ministries at Wells Branch Community Church are regularly evaluated and adjusted as needs in the church evolve. Anyone who has an interest in these ministries should contact info@wellsbranchchurch.com to get connected with the ministry team leaders. Some ministries require background checks and approval from ministry team leaders.

Wells Branch Community Church also acknowledges that spiritual giftings and passions do not always line up neatly with programmatic ministry. The church is committed to walking with its members to experience the joy of serving the church body in the way God has called them.

MINISTRY: GIVING

Giving at Wells Branch Community Church is something that is expected of all members, not because of a contractual obligation, but simply out of obedience to the Word of God. As a church we believe that all Christians are called to give of their time, talents, and treasure. Financial giving, in particular, is something both the Old and New Testaments are clear are a part of the experience of walking in obedience to God.

All Christians (and therefore all members) are called to walk in obedience to II Corinthians 9:7.

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Giving of our resources to the church is not just for the sake of resourcing ministries; it is something Christians are all called to do in order to correctly prioritize our treasures in heaven rather than in material things of this world (Matt. 6:19-20).

If you have any questions about giving, you can contact info@wellsbranchchurch.com for more information.



\MINISTRY:EVENTS

Beyond regular ministry within the church, we also recognize that God's desire to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Which means we are called to GO ourselves into the community. We do this most visibly and directly at our ministry events. Every year, the church invites the members of the church to engage in that mission through events designed to both edify the believer and equip him or her to reach people. Check out the list below for different ministry events that we are currently looking forward to at Wells Branch Community Church.

Events at Wells Branch Community Church include, but are not limited to:

Great Adventure

Boot Camp

Backyard Bible Club

GO local missions

GO international missions

Retreats and Conferences

Renew Youth Retreat

Men's Retreat

Women's Retreat

Focus Ministry Conference

For more information about events and opportunities to engage in serving in ministry events, please contact info@wellsbranchchurch.com.



\COMMUNITY GROUPS

The church in all its forms has since the very beginning been a community of believers. Starting with the twelve apostles, the church has always been the experience of the family of believers walking out Jesus' command to make disciples. At Wells Branch Community Church, Sunday mornings are designed for both believers and unbelievers alike to be invited into corporate worship through music, the preach of the word, prayer and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Because of its large corporate nature, however, the church desires all its members to engage in community through smaller community groups.

Meaningful relationships in these small community groups is a vital part of experiencing life as a member of Wells Branch Community Church, and a big part of walking in obedience to the word of God.

For more information about Community Groups at Wells Branch Community Church, please contact info@wellsbranchchurch.com or visit <http://wellsbranchchurch.com/community-groups/>



\COMMUNICATION

Communication is a big part of creating community. Because of the ever evolving nature of communication in our world, Wells Branch Community Church is committed to constantly updating and improving our communication with our members.

You can stay connected to what's happening at the church in several ways:

1. Download and join us on Slack

Slack is an online communication platform that the community uses to stay up to date on what's happening in and around the church. You are welcome to join any of the public channels and engage in the conversations that are happening. Private channels are also available depending on your individual involvement in things like ministry teams or community groups. To request an invitation to join us on Slack, email info@wellsbranchchurch.com

2. Follow us on social media

Wells Branch Community Church regularly sends reminders and updates via social media. Find us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. If you're ever out of town, you can also join us online for a live-stream of our Sunday services. Also remember that both our youth ministry (theBranch) and our young adult ministry (The Well) also have their own social media accounts.

3. Check our website for calendar updates

If you ever have a question about what events are coming up, or need to register for a church retreat, our website is a good first place to check. Links to events and information are regularly updated. Check us out at wellsbranchchurch.com

4. Check with your ministry team leader or community group shepherd

Ministry teams and community groups may use different applications and platforms to communicate with members. Financial statements, for instance, may still be mailed by post. Some ministry teams utilize Planning Center Online to coordinate schedules. Check with your ministry team leader or community group shepherd to see what you need to stay connected with ministry and community at Wells Branch Community Church.

PART IV

Resources and Readings

\RESOURCES

The leadership of Wells Branch Community Church is committed to fulfilling our call found in Ephesians 4 to

...equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ... (Eph. 4:12-13)

As such, the elders, pastors, staff, and deacons of Wells Branch Community Church commits to be available to the members of the church in order that every member may have the opportunity to grow in his or her walk pursuing Christ.

Our current sitting elders are:

**CHRIS PLEKENPOL - PERPETUAL
JOEL FRANKLIN - CHAIR
DAVE SHEFFIELD
MARC ELLIOTT**

Our current staff members are:

**JESSICA NELSON - ADMIN
JONI SCOTT - ADMIN TO LEAD PASTOR
CIERRA AIKEN - CREATIVE
TANYA RICHARDSON - WB KIDS DIRECTOR
JONATHAN BLICK - YOUTH DIRECTOR**

Our current staff members are:

**CHRIS PLEKENPOL - LEAD PASTOR
GRAYSON DZIALO - EXECUTIVE PASTOR
JOSEPH AIKEN - CONNECTION PASTOR
JAMES FOSTER - COMMUNITY PASTOR**

Our current Deacons are:

**CHELSEA MCCOWN - WOMEN'S
CHRIS CHILTON - GLOBAL MISSIONS**

\DOCTRINE

Wells Branch Community Church is dedicated to teaching and upholding through our life, faith, and conduct certain doctrines. We affirm these doctrines as leaders and overseers of this local body of believers. Not all doctrinal items are “close handed” matters of orthodoxy, but are nonetheless held in high regard. If you have any questions about a particular part of the church’s doctrinal statement, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@wellsbranchchurch.com.

The Bible

We believe that the books of the Old and New Testament, comprising the Holy Bible, are the inspired Word of God. We believe that the Holy Spirit supervised the writers of the Scriptures in what they wrote so that, using their own peculiar personalities, the very words recorded in the original manuscripts are the inerrant revelation of God. We believe the Bible not only contains the Word of God but actually is God’s Word and, therefore, is the complete and final authority for belief and behavior. We believe that this inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of Scripture: historically, poetically, doctrinally and prophetically (2 Tim. 3:16, 2 Pet. 1:21, 1 Cor. 2:13, John 17:17).

The Trinity

We believe that there is one and only one true and living God, an infinite Spirit who is the Maker and Supreme Ruler of the universe. We believe the Scriptures reveal Him to be holy, sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, immutable and full of love, justice, goodness, mercy and truth. Although there is only one God, we believe that in the unity of the Godhead there are three eternal and coequal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We believe these members of the Trinity are the same in substance, having precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections, but are distinct in subsistence, executing different but harmonious functions (Mark 12:29, John 4:24, Matt. 3:16-17, Matt. 28:19, 2 Cor. 13:14).

Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is the pre-existent and eternal Son of God who became man in order to reveal God and redeem man. We believe He was supernaturally conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. In His person, we believe the Lord Jesus combined forever full and undiminished deity with true and perfect humanity to become the God-man. We believe Christ died on the cross as a substitute for sinful man, was buried, arose bodily from the tomb, ascended into Heaven where He ministers on the behalf of saints, and someday will come again for His own (John 1:18, 8:58, Matt. 1:23, Col. 1:15-17, 1 Tim. 1:15, 3:16).

\DOCTRINE

Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, fully equal with God the Father and God the Son. Although He is of the exact same essence, we believe He is a person distinct from the other members of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit, we believe, has an active ministry to the world in general which includes the restraining of evil, convicting of the unsaved and bestowing of God's goodness on all mankind. We also believe He has a ministry to every Christian which consists of regenerating, sealing, indwelling, baptizing into the Body of Christ, and the giving of spiritual gifts. We believe some of these gifts such as Apostleship (that is, the office of Apostle in the establishment of the Church) and prophesying new revelation through scripture have completed their function and thus are not for the Body of Christ today. Other ministries to obedient Christians include filling, assuring, teaching, guiding and comforting (Acts 5:3-4, John 16:7-11, Tit. 3:5, Eph. 1:13, 1 Cor. 6:19, 12:13, Eph. 3:20, 1 Cor. 14, James 5:14, Eph. 5:18, Rom. 8:16, John 16:13).

Angelic Beings

We believe that God created an order of spirit beings known as angels before the formation of the world for the purpose of worshipping and serving Him. We believe angels possess individual personalities and are intelligent, powerful, and inferior to God but superior to man. Lucifer, we believe, was one of the highest in rank of all the angelic beings in eternity past, but he sinned through pride and rebelled against God, thereby becoming Satan. We believe the Satan's proclaimed purpose is to oppose the plan of God and to promote his own evil program by deceiving and attacking men. In carrying out his work, we believe Satan is aided by other fallen angels known as demons or evil spirits. We believe these demons can influence, tempt, and control all men and even "possess" unbelievers. We believe there are unfallen angels, known as elect or holy angels, who carry out the will of God by ministering to men (Col. 1:16, Heb. 1:6, 2 Pet. 2:11, Isa. 14:12-15, 1 Pet. 5:8, Eph 6:12, Heb. 1:14).

Creation

We believe that the Triune God, according to His sovereign will and for His own glory, created the heavens and the earth without the use of pre-existent material.

All living things, we believe, came into being by a direct creative act of God and not by an evolutionary or random process, and thus have an existence distinct from Him and yet always dependent on Him (Gen 1, Gen. 2:4, Prov. 16:4, Acts 17:24, Col. 1:16-17).

\DOCTRINE

Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God in a state of innocence. Through deliberate disobedience, we believe man fell from his sinless state and as a consequence lost his fellowship with God and became subject to spiritual and physical death. We believe that through Adam's transgressions the entire human race has inherited a corrupt nature which is essentially evil and unable to please God (Gen. 1:26-27, 3:24, Rom. 5:12, Eph. 2:1-3).

Sin

We believe that sin is anything contrary to the character of God. Every man, we believe, is alienated from God because of his depraved nature as well as personal acts of sin. We believe that each person born into the world is separated from God and completely incapable of meriting salvation and avoiding the judgment of God. The sin nature, we believe, is never eradicated, even for those who are born into the family of God, but it remains until the end of life. However, we believe God has made provision for forgiveness of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ and victory over sin through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 3:10, 23, 6:23, Eph. 4:18, 1 John 1:8-10, Gal. 5:16-17).

Salvation

We believe that salvation from the penalty and power of sin is provided only through the blood of Jesus Christ which He shed on the cross when He was made sin for us and died in our place. There is nothing man can do, we believe, to attain this salvation through good works, moral achievement or religious status. We believe the one and only condition for salvation is personal faith in Jesus Christ as one's own substitute for and Savior from sin. At the time of salvation, we believe a person is spiritually regenerated, his sins are forgiven, God's righteousness is imputed to him, and he is declared righteous in the sight of God. This salvation, we believe, is complete and a present possession of all believers which remains theirs forever. All who have trusted Christ as Savior are kept secure and will never lose their salvation (1 Pet. 1:18-19, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Pet. 2:24, Eph 2:8-9, Tit. 3:5, Eph. 4:32, Rom. 5:1, Rom. 8:38-39).

DOCTRINE

The Church

We believe that the Church is a unique organism composed of individuals who have placed their faith in Christ as Savior. The Church began, we believe, on the day of Pentecost and will continue its distinct purpose until the Rapture. We believe that the Church exists in both a universal aspect, as the Body of Christ, and in a local assembly of believers. The local church, we believe, has the twofold purpose of the edification of believers and the evangelization of the lost. The two ordinances of the church are water baptism, which we practice by immersion, and the Lord's Supper, which we believe to be a memorial of Christ's death and is open to all believers (1 Cor. 12:13, Acts 2:1-4, Col. 4:16, Heb. 13:17, Matt. 28:19-20, 1 Cor. 11:23-28).

Dispensations*

We believe that God administers His purpose in the world through man under varying dispensations or stewardships, such as the period of Mosaic law, the present age of grace, and the future millennial kingdom. We believe that these dispensations span the entire history of mankind but that dispensations are not different ways of salvation. Rather, they are ways of life which test the obedience of man to God's revealed will during a particular time. We believe that it is necessary to observe the dispensational distinction in order to properly understand the teaching of the Scriptures (1 Cor. 10:32, Eph. 1:10, 3:2, Gal. 4:2, Luke 12:42, Heb. 12:22-23).

Future Things*

We believe that the next event in God's prophetic calendar is the Rapture of the Church when living and dead Christians will be caught up to meet the Lord and receive rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Following the Rapture, we believe a seven year period of Tribulation will commence upon the earth at which time God's wrath will be poured out on mankind. We believe God's millennial kingdom will be ushered in by Jesus Christ when He returns to the earth in power and glory to rule sovereignly over the world for a thousand years. The unsaved dead of all ages, we believe, will be raised after the millennium to face the judgment of the Great White Throne and will be cast into the lake of fire where there will be eternal punishment. We believe the redeemed of all ages will exist in an eternal state of joy and bliss in the new heavens and new earth where they will worship and serve God forever (Dan. 7:25, 9:27, John 14:3, Heb. 10:37, 2 Cor. 5:10, Matt. 24:21-31, 1 Thes. 4:13-17, Rev. 13:5, Rev. 20-22).

**Strict agreement with these doctrines is not required for membership at WBCC; however, we affirm these beliefs as taught in Scripture and have established them as the official positions of our Church. The understanding of these doctrines and commitment to not teach against these doctrines is required for church membership.*

\ PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

This document contains the operating guidelines for Wells Branch Community Church. It is intended to be a dynamic document and will likely be revised as the church grows and takes on a greater scope of ministry. Revisions will be made according to section V. below.

I. GOVERNMENT:

Scripture provides general principles which serve as guidelines for church leadership. These guidelines have been followed in formulating a philosophy of government for Wells Branch Community Church as follows: (Acts 6:3, 14:23, Col. 1:18, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 5:17, Titus 1:5-9, Heb. 13:7, 17).

A. Christ (Col. 1:18)

Christ is the true source of all the Church is and does, and His glory is to be the objective of every act, function, and motive of the Body, both individually and corporately (1 Cor. 10:31). Christ has provided His thoughts and His direction for the Body in the Word. The Bible reflects and contains His mind, His commands, His counsel, and His purpose for every believer (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

The Body is to conform to His Word, thus carrying out His will to His glory. That is the Body's reason for being (Col. 3:15-17).

B. Elders

Wells Branch Community Church has chosen to be an elder led church. The elders, as overseers of the local church, are responsible for the spiritual health of the Body. They are to glorify Christ by serving the Body according to the biblical principles of love and care. In practice, the elders establish the guidelines and policies for conducting services, programs, and the general conduct of church business. They are to lead by precept and example, realizing they are accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ for their efforts (Heb. 13:17, Acts 20:24,28).

1. Qualifications

The qualifications for an elder are set forth in the scriptural passages 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:1-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. He is to be self-controlled, hospitable, able to teach, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, not a recent convert. He has a good reputation with outsiders, is not overbearing or quick-tempered, loves what is good, is upright, holy, disciplined, above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, respectable, not given to drunkenness, manages his own family well, sees that his children obey him, does not pursue dishonest gain, and keeps hold of deep truths. An elder demonstrates through leadership a commitment to the purposes, vision and the core values of the church.

2. Selection

Any man who aspires to the office of elder is first approved by a vote of the elders, then a vote of the membership assembled at a duly called congregational meeting.

3. Number and Term

There will be a maximum of seven elders at any time. Each man will serve for a three-year term. Upon conclusion of his term, he must function in a non-elder role for at least one year before becoming eligible for eldership again. A man filling an unexpired term of two years or less may be eligible to waive this one year at the end of his term and serve an additional term subject to the above prescribed selection process. The Senior Pastor serves as a perpetual elder and is one of the seven. The elders shall annually select a chairman to direct elder and congregational meetings. In the absence of the chairman, the elders will select an interim chairman.

4. Replacement

A vacancy created by departing elder may be filled in accordance with B.2 above. The new elder will complete the departing elder's term.

5. Dismissal

The dismissal of an elder because he is not fulfilling the responsibilities and/or qualifications of an elder is the responsibility of the other elders, and is accomplished by a vote of these elders. The exception is the Senior Pastor whose dismissal is covered in III B., below.

C. Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor is the spiritual leader of the congregation. In this unique position he provides for the equipping of the saints through a regular ministry of preaching, training, and encouraging the congregation as a whole. His goal is to mature the saints through insightful and accurate presentation and proclamation of the Word, stressing both the understanding and application of divine truths and principles. He provides vital input on planning, ministry challenges, and biblical guidance to the elders during the decision making process. He is often the primary agent in the implementation of the various programs and ministries undertaken by the church. He is accountable to the elders for the discharge of his ministry. He is also responsible for the management of the church office and supervision of all staff (1 Tim. 4:11-13, 15, 16; Eph. 4:11, 12; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17, 4:2-4; Matt. 5:13).

D. Deacons

At the discretion of the elders, deacons may be appointed to assist the elders in the discharge of the church ministry. They are delegated the authority for the execution of ministry. Each deacon is appointed annually by the elders for a specific area of service. Deacons must be members of Wells Branch Community Church and exhibit qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

E. Staff

1. Definition

Staff members are defined as paid employees of the church, whether full or

part-time. 2. Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor will be recruited and hired by the elders with the approval of the voting membership. His salary and benefits will be established by the elders and reviewed annually.

3. Church Staff (other than Senior Pastor)

The Senior Pastor is the manager of the church staff. With the approval of the elders, the Senior Pastor may delegate responsibilities within the staff for the purpose of carrying out his responsibilities.

The Senior Pastor is responsible for the recruitment and management of all staff. Their salaries and benefits are established by the elders upon the recommendation of the Senior Pastor. Final offers of employment or termination require mutual agreement between the Senior Pastor and the elders. However, the hiring and termination of non-pastoral staff is at the discretion of the Senior Pastor within the constraints of the approved budget. Except for the Senior Pastor, staff members will not be eligible for elder nomination.

4. Performance Review

The performance of staff members will be reviewed on at least an annual basis. The Senior Pastor is responsible for church staff reviews. The elders review the Senior Pastor.

II. MEMBERSHIP

A. Qualifications

Membership in Wells Branch Community Church is open to all who testify to two elders, an elder and a pastor, or an elder and a deacon of their salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been baptized by immersion as a believer, and agree with both the Purpose and Doctrinal Statements. Associate membership is available for those under eighteen years of age who testify to two elders, an elder and a pastor, or an elder and a deacon of their salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and have been baptized by immersion as a believer. Associate membership does not include the right to vote. Elders, pastors and deacons must be members of Wells Branch Community Church.

B. Expectations

Members of Wells Branch Community Church are expected to support their church by participation in worship, instruction and giving of their time, talents, and treasures to the accomplishment of the purposes of the church. Members should take seriously the Great Commission and the admonition of the Lord Jesus Christ to love one another (Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 9:7, Heb. 10:25, John 13:35).

C. Term

The term of membership is permanent unless one of the following occurs:

1. The member is not in attendance at regular services for a period of six months.

2. The member asks to be dropped from the membership roll. If a member asks to be dropped from the membership roll, or if they are dismissed due to action, behavior or opposition to the Purpose or doctrinal statements an exit interview is required before the member will be officially removed.

3. The member is dismissed due to action, behavior, or speaking in opposition to the Purpose or Doctrinal Statements of Wells Branch Community Church (see Dismissal section).

D. Dismissal

The dismissal process for any member of Wells Branch Community Church must follow the pattern established by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 18:15-17. If the member refuses to repent and seek restoration of fellowship, as determined by the elders, that person's membership is terminated.

E. Reinstatement

A former member in good standing can be reinstated to membership following an interview with at least two elders and a one-month period of regular attendance.

A dismissed member will be reinstated by repenting and seeking restored fellowship with the elders and then if deemed appropriate by the elders with the church assembled.

III. VOTING

A. Elders

Voting within the eldership is preferably unanimous, but knowing the frailty of mankind, a simple majority will suffice. Exceptions are voting on major indebtedness, the purchase or long term leases of real or other property, and the selection or dismissal of elders and amendments to this document. These exceptions shall be approved with no more than one dissenting elder vote.

B. Members

Voting by the membership is required for the following: The purchase of real property, calling or terminating a Senior Pastor, the appointment of elders, lease agreements of over 60 months and amendments to this document. A two-thirds majority vote of those present and eligible to vote is required for approval of the above-mentioned items.

IV. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

A. Annual Meeting

In order to effectively communicate major issues and decisions, a congregational meeting will be held annually, scheduled at the elders discretion.

B. Agenda

An Agenda will be prepared and distributed to the congregation the Sunday prior to that

meeting date. Agenda items submitted by a voting member(s) will be placed on the Agenda at the discretion of the elders. Agendas for meetings called by the voting members will be part of the petition calling the meeting. In case of emergencies, the requirement for distribution of Agendas may be waived.

C. Special Meetings

A congregational meeting may be called by petition of 10% of the voting membership of the Church. Special meetings may be called by the elders as required.

D. Announcement

Except in extreme emergencies, congregational meetings will be announced in the church bulletin two Sundays in advance of the meeting date.

E. Quorum

The voting members present at a duly called congregational meeting will constitute a quorum.

F. Attendance

Congregational meetings are generally open to regular attenders and members alike, however voting is limited to members 18 years of age or older.

V. AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS TO THESE PRACTICES

Amendments and revisions to these Practices must be presented to the congregation at least one week prior to a congregational meeting and approved by a vote in accordance to paragraph 3B.