

**WELCOME TO  
DISCOVERING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

We're glad you've chosen to find out more about South Avenue Baptist Church! This class is the basic introduction to our church family. Since we have members from many different church backgrounds or from no church background at all, this class was designed to clearly explain who and what our church is.

Discovering Church Membership is divided into three sessions of an hour each.

**THE BASIS FOR THIS CLASS:**

"...You are a member of God's very own family...and you belong in God's household with every other Christian." Eph. 2:19 (LB)

Key Truths:

1. The church is a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. God expects you to be a \_\_\_\_\_ of a church family.
3. A Christian without a church family is a \_\_\_\_\_.

**THE GOAL OF THIS CLASS:**

...That I will commit myself to \_\_\_\_\_ and to the \_\_\_\_\_.

**WHAT MAKES SOUTH AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH A FAMILY?**

Three things unite us

- \*Our \_\_\_\_\_ (What God has done for us)
- \*Our \_\_\_\_\_ (Why we exist as a church)
- \*Our \_\_\_\_\_ (When & where we fulfill our purpose)

## SEMINAR OUTLINE

- **SESSION ONE: OUR SALVATION**
  - \*What it Means to be a Christian
  - \*The Symbols of Salvation: Baptism & Lord's Supper
  
- **SESSION TWO: OUR STATEMENTS**
  - \*Our Purpose Statement
  - \*Our Faith Statement
  - \*Our Lifestyle Statement
  - \*Our Character Statement
  
- **SESSION THREE: OUR STRUCTURE**
  - \*The Story of South Avenue Baptist's Beginning
  - \*How Our Church is Structured
  - \*Our Affiliation
  - \*What it Means to be a Member

## Session One

### Our Salvation

*"For now we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and we who have been baptized into union with Christ are enveloped by Him. We are no longer Jews or Gentiles, or slaves or free men, or even merely men or women, but we are all the same - we are Christians; we are one in Jesus Christ?"*

**Galations 3: 26-28 (LB)**

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

Most people live their entire lives without ever knowing "Why?" They exist year after year with no idea of why they live or God's purpose for their lives. The most basic question a person can ask is, "What is the meaning of life?"

Everyone wants to be happy. People try many ways:

- ...Some look for happiness by \_\_\_\_\_
- ...Some look for happiness by \_\_\_\_\_
- ...Some look for happiness by \_\_\_\_\_

But real happiness comes from understanding my \_\_\_\_\_.

### I. WHY AM I HERE?

1. GOD MADE ME TO \_\_\_\_\_ ME!

God says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love!" Jer. 31: 3

*"Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be His through our union with Christ...**because of His love.** God had already decided that through Jesus Christ He would make us His children - this was God's pleasure and purpose."*

Eph. 1: 4-5 (GN)

2. WE WERE CREATED TO \_\_\_\_\_ A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND TO \_\_\_\_\_ ALL OF THE REST OF GOD'S CREATION! THIS MAKES US SPECIAL!

*"So God created human beings, making them in His image. He blessed them, and said, ...live all over the earth and bring it under control. I am putting you in charge."*

Gen. 1:27-28 (LB)

*"God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."* I Tim. 6: 17

Jesus said, "I have come in order that you might have life - life in all its fullness!"

John 10: 10

3. WHEN WE \_\_\_\_\_ AND \_\_\_\_\_ GOD, AND LIVE IN HARMONY WITH HIS PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES, IT PRODUCES TREMENDOUS BENEFITS IN OUR LIVES:

**Clear Conscience**

Rom. 8: 1

**Life & Peace**

Rom. 8: 6

**Help with Weakness**

Rom. 8: 26

**Purpose**

Rom 8: 28

**Confidence**

Rom. 8:31

**Security**

Rom. 8: 39

**Power & Strength**

Phil. 4: 13

**Fulfillment**

Phil 4: 19

**Freedom**

John 8:32, 36

This is the kind of lifestyle God intends for us to live. Why then aren't most people really happy?

## II. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Man has a natural desire to \_\_\_\_\_ and to ignore God's principles for living.

"Look out for #1. Do your own thing."

"If it feels good, do it - regardless of what God says about it."

"It's my life and I'll do as I please!"

THE BIBLE CALLS THIS ATTITUDE: \_\_\_\_\_.

*"All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, and each of us has turned to his own way."*

Isaiah 53: 6

*"If we say that we never sin, we are only fooling ourselves, and refuse to accept the truth."*

I John 1: 8

Sin breaks our close relationship with God. It causes us to fear God and try to live our lives outside His will.

*"The trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God."*

Isaiah 59: 2 (LB)

*"All have sinned and fall short of God's glorious ideal."*

Romans 3: 23

When our relationship to God is not right, it causes PROBLEMS in every area of our lives - marriage, career, relationships, finances, etc.

**WHEN PEOPLE HAVE \_\_\_\_\_, THEY OFTEN TRY MANY DIFFERENT WAYS OF COPING BEFORE TURNING TO GOD.**

*"There are ways that SEEM right to man, but they only end in death."*

Proverbs 16: 25

**Even when we know that our deepest need is God, we often try wrong ways of getting to know Him:**

- \* 'My mother was a Christian so...'
- \* "It doesn't matter what you believe, just be sincere."
- \* "I'll give up all my bad habits."
- \* "I'll work real hard and earn it."
- \* "I'll be religious and go to church."

### **III. WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?**

Jesus Christ said, *"I AM THE WAY, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except THROUGH ME!"*

John 14: 6

God Himself came to earth as a human being to bring us back to Himself. If any other way had worked, Jesus Christ would not have had to come. This Way is a Person!

**JESUS HAS \_\_\_\_\_ TAKEN CARE OF YOUR SIN PROBLEM!**

*"The wages of sin is death, BUT the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Rom. 6: 23

**God did this for us because He loves us and wants us to know Him.**

*"God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still separated from God by sin, Christ died for us."*

Rom. 5: 8

*"God is on one side and all people are on the other side, and Christ Jesus is between them to bring them together, by giving His life for all mankind."*

I Tim. 2: 5

God has already done His part to restore our relationship to Him. He took the initiative. Now He waits for each of us to individually accept what He has done for us.

#### IV. WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO DO?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ THAT GOD HAS NOT BEEN FIRST PLACE IN YOUR LIFE AND ASK HIM TO FORGIVE YOUR SINS.

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from every wrong."*

I John 1: 9

2. \_\_\_\_\_ THAT JESUS DIED TO PAY FOR YOUR SINS AND THAT HE ROSE AGAIN ON EASTER, AND IS ALIVE TODAY.

*"If you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*

Romans 10:9

*"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name (Jesus) by which we must be saved."*

Acts 4:12

3. \_\_\_\_\_ GOD'S FREE GIFT OF SALVATION. DON'T TRY TO EARN IT.

*"For it is by grace you are saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."*

Ephesians 2: 8,9

Our relationship to God is not restored by anything *we* do, but on the basis of what Jesus already did for us!

4. \_\_\_\_\_ JESUS CHRIST TO COME INTO YOUR LIFE AND BE THE DIRECTOR ("LORD") OF YOUR LIFE.

*"To all who receive Him, He gives the right to become children of God. All we need to do is to trust Him to save us. All those who believe this are reborn! - Not a physical rebirth...but from the will of God!"*

John 1: 12-13

*"Jesus says, 'Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in...'"*

Rev. 3: 30

**YOU CAN TAKE THESE STEPS BY PRAYING A SIMPLE PRAYER OF COMMITMENT TO GOD:**

"Dear Jesus, thank you for making me and loving me, even when I've ignored you and gone my own

way. I realize I need you in my life and I'm sorry for my sins. I ask you to forgive me. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. Please help me to understand it more. As much as I know how, I want to follow you from now on. Please come into my life and make me a new person inside. I accept your gift of salvation. Please help me to grow now as a Christian."

***"Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."***

Romans 10: 13

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BAPTIZED**

### **I. WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?**

1. TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE SET BY \_\_\_\_\_.

*"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river."*

Mark 1:9

2. BECAUSE CHRIST \_\_\_\_\_ IT.

*"Jesus said, 'Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.'"*

Matt. 28: 19-20

3. IT DEMONSTRATES THAT I REALLY AM A \_\_\_\_\_.

*"...many of the people who heard Him believed and were baptized."*

Acts 18: 8

*"We know that we have come to know Him, if we obey His commands."*

I John 2: 3

### **II. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?**

1. IT ILLUSTRATES CHRIST'S \_\_\_\_\_ AND RESURRECTION.

*"Christ died for our sins...He was buried...and He rose again."*

I Cor. 15: 3-4

*"For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ."*

Col. 2:12

2. IT ILLUSTRATES MY \_\_\_\_\_ AS A CHRISTIAN.

*"When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun!"*

2 Cor. 5: 17

*"By our baptism then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...so also we may live a new life!"*

Rom. 6: 4

Baptism doesn't make you a believer - it shows that you already believe. Baptism does not "save" you; only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring - it's the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart.

*"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."*

Ephesians 2: 8, 9

### III. WHY BE BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION?

BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_ WAS BAPTIZED THAT WAY.

*"As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water."*

Matthew 3: 16

EVERY BAPTISM IN THE \_\_\_\_\_ WAS BY IMMERSION.

(Example) *"...Then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water..."*

Acts 8: 38-39

THE WORD "BAPTIZE" MEANS "TO \_\_\_\_\_ WATER".

The Greek word *baptizo* means, "to immerse or dip under water".

IT BEST SYMBOLIZES A \_\_\_\_\_ AND A \_\_\_\_\_!

The founders of denominations agree:

**Martin Luther**... "I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the words imports and the mystery signifies."

**John Calvin**... "The word 'baptize' signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church."

**John Wesley...** "Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church."

#### IV. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

EVERY PERSON WHO HAS \_\_\_\_\_ IN CHRIST.

*"Those who believed and accepted His message were baptized..."*

Acts 2: 41

*"Simon himself believed and was baptized..."*

Acts 8: 13

*"But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News... and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."*

Acts 8: 12

At South Avenue Baptist, we wait until our children are old enough to believe and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them.

Some churches practice a "baptism of confirmation" for children. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make his own personal confession of Christ. This custom began about 300 years ago after the Bible was completed.

This is different from the baptism talked about in the Bible, which was only for those old enough to believe. The purpose of baptism is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ. At South Avenue Baptist, it is a membership requirement that every member must have been baptized the way Jesus demonstrated, even though many were "confirmed" as children.

#### V. WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

AFTER YOU HAVE \_\_\_\_\_ !

*"Those who believed...were baptized."*

Acts 2: 41

*"Then Philip began with the scripture and told him the Good News about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water, and the man said, 'Look, here is water! Why shouldn't I be baptized right now?' The man answered, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So they went down into the water and Philip baptized him."*

Acts 8: 35-38

There is no reason to delay. As soon as you have decided to receive Christ into your life, you can and should be baptized. If you wait until you are "perfect", you'll never feel "good enough"!

### **Can my family be baptized together?**

Yes! If each family member understands fully the meaning of baptism, and each one has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation, we encourage families to be baptized at the same time. It is a wonderful expression of commitment. Young children who wish to be baptized are asked to meet with one of our pastors for a pre-baptism conversation.

However, it is important to remember that baptism is a personal statement of faith, not a family tradition. It is usually not wise to delay your baptism while waiting on other family members to accept Christ, particularly children. This puts an undue pressure on them, and delays your obedience.

### **What should I wear when I am baptized?**

Bring a change of clothes, a towel, and a plastic bag for your wet clothes. We provide changing rooms.

### **Will I have to say anything?**

No. At the beginning of the service, our pastor will briefly explain the meaning of the baptism. You will wait at the edge of the pool for your turn to be baptized. Pastor Hail or another pastor will introduce you, briefly lower you just under the water, and then you can leave the pool, dry off, and watch the others. We encourage you to invite all your relatives and friends to attend your baptism.

## THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER/COMMUNION

Jesus never asked His disciples to remember His birth. But He did instruct them to remember His death and resurrection. He gave the church two visible symbols (called "ordinances") as reminders of His death. These two ordinances are: Baptism and The Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is an object lesson that represents a great spiritual truth for believers.

### I. WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER? (1 COR. 11: 23-26)

1. IT IS A \_\_\_\_\_.

*"The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread..." (vs. 23)*

2. IT IS A \_\_\_\_\_.

*"...and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; eat it in remembrance of me.'" (Vs. 24)*

3. IT IS A \_\_\_\_\_ OF JESUS' BLOOD & BODY.

*"In the same way, He took the cup saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; drink it to remember me.'" (Vs. 25)*

4. IT IS A \_\_\_\_\_.

*"For whenever you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes back." (vs. 26)*

### II. WHO SHOULD TAKE THE LORD'S SUPPER?

1. ONLY THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY \_\_\_\_\_.

*"For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment upon himself."*

1 Cor. 11: 29

### III. HOW DO I PREPARE MYSELF FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER?

*"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A person ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup."*

I Cor. 11: 27-28

By...

**1. Self-Examination**

I Cor. 11: 27

**2. Confessing my sins**

I John 1: 9

**3. Recommitment**

Rom. 12: 1

**4. Restoring Relationships**

Matt. 5: 23-24

**IV. WHEN AND HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER?**

Jesus never said when or how often believers should observe The Lord's Supper or Communion. He instituted it on a Thursday night. Since it is a "supper", it may seem more appropriate to observe it at an evening service.

But we take the Lord's Supper about twelve times a year and we usually take the Lord's Supper the first Sunday morning of every month. We do have special services where we may observe the Lord's Supper at that service as a special memorial, i.e. Christmas Eve Celebration

## Session Two

### South Avenue Baptist Statements

*"...Get together. Have the same attitude and the same purpose.  
There should be no divisions among you."*

**1 Corinthians 1: 10**

## Our Purpose Statement

1. The Purpose of SABC is to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ - Jesus Christ.  
How can we praise Jesus Christ?

*"Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together."*

Ps. 34: 3

*"Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the Lord our God is holy."*

Ps. 99: 9

To \_\_\_\_\_ means to lift up, to magnify, and to honor.

*"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life."*

John 3: 14-15

*"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."*

John 12: 32

**We must always lift up Jesus Christ.**

- II. The Purpose of SABC is to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ to do the work of ministry.

*"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..."*

Eph. 4: 11-12

### AT SOUTH AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

Every member is a MINISTER.

Every task is IMPORTANT.

Every member is a "10" in SOME AREA.

- III. The Purpose of SABC is to \_\_\_\_\_.

*"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"*

Matthew 28: 18-20

*"His intent was that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known..."*

Eph. 3: 10

*"Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But who can ask them to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tell him?"*

Rom. 10: 13-14

### WHY OUR CHURCH MUST NEVER STOP GROWING

1. BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_.

*"The Lord...is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but wants everyone to come to repentance."*

2. BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_.

*'Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come in, so that My house will be full.'*

Luke 14: 23

*"...you will be my witnesses..."*

Acts 1: 8

3. BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_ IS GOD'S WILL.

*"Under Christ's control, the whole Body is nourished...and grows as God wants it to grow."*

Col. 2: 19

*"(Jesus) I will build my church."*

Matt. 16: 18

Unbiblical excuses for not growing:   \* "God isn't interested in numbers."  
  \* "Our church wants quality not quantity."  
  \* "Large churches are impersonal."

We believe our church must grow **larger** and **smaller** at the same time.

*"And the Good News of the Kingdom will be preached to the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and THEN the end will come."*

Matt. 24: 14

**OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH**  
**What we believe**

Our church has adopted the Baptist Faith and Message as its doctrinal statement. We will only hit the highlights of that statement in this course. Our philosophy is as follows:

**\*In essential beliefs - we have \_\_\_\_\_.** (List of essential beliefs on this & following pages)

*"There is one Body and one Spirit...there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all..."*

Eph. 4: 4-6

**\*In non-essential beliefs - we have \_\_\_\_\_.**

*"Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters...Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls...so then each of us will give an account of himself to God...So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God."*

Rom. 14: 1, 4, 12, 22

**\*In all our beliefs - we show \_\_\_\_\_.**

*"...If I hold in my mind not only all human knowledge but also the very secrets of God, and if I have the faith that can move mountains - but have no love, I amount to nothing at all."*

1 Cor. 13: 2

**THE ESSENTIALS WE BELIEVE:**

**1. ABOUT GOD**

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in three personalities: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God.  
Genesis 1:1,26,27; 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; I Peter 1:2; I Corinthians 13:14

**2. ABOUT JESUS CHRIST**

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory and will return again someday to earth to reign as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Matthew 1:22,23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5,14, 10-30; Hebrews 4:14,15; I Corinthians 14:3,4; Romans 1:3,4; Acts 1:9-11; I Timothy 6:14,15; Titus 2:13

### 3. ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son of God. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. He gives every believer a spiritual gift when they are saved. As Christians we seek to live under His control daily.

II Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7-13, 14:16,17; Acts 1:8; I Corinthians 2:12, 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:8

### 4. ABOUT THE BIBLE

The Bible is God's Word to us. Human authors, under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit, wrote it. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is the truth without any mixture of error.

II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20,21; II Timothy 1:13; Psalm 119:105,160, 12:6; Proverbs 30:5

### 5. ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS

People are made in the spiritual image of God, to be like Him in character. People are the supreme object of God's creation. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called "sin". This attitude separates people from God and causes many problems in life.

Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 5:3-6a; Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:1,2

### 6. ABOUT SALVATION

Salvation is God's free gift to us but we must accept it. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. When we turn from our self-ruled life and turn to Jesus in faith we are saved. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith.

Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8,9; John 14:6, 1:12; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26; Romans 5:1

### 7. ABOUT ETERNAL SECURITY

Because God gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, the true believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. If you have been genuinely saved, you cannot "lose" it. Salvation is maintained by the

grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and keeping power of God that gives us this security.

John 10:29, 30; II Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25, 10:10, 14; I Peter 1:3-5

## 8. ABOUT ETERNITY

People were created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence.

John 3:16, 14:17; Romans 6:23, 8:17-18; Revelation 20:15; I Cor. 2:7-9

## OUR LIFESTYLE STATEMENT What We Practice

Beliefs are not worth much unless they are translated into actions. Based on what the Bible teaches, we feel very strongly about the following seven practices:

### 1. THE BIBLE AS OUR SOLE \_\_\_\_\_

*"The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us to do what is right."*

2 Timothy 3:15

Since God's Word is the only completely reliable and truthful authority, we accept the Bible as our manual for living. Our first question when faced with a decision is "What does the Bible say?" We practice daily Bible reading, Bible study, and Bible memorization. The Bible is the basis for all we believe.

### 2. THE \_\_\_\_\_ OF EACH LOCAL CHURCH

*"Christ is the head of His Body, the church. He is the source of the Body's life..."*

Col. 1: 18 (GN)

Christ is the recognized head of our church, not any person, group, or religious organization. While recognizing the value of associating and cooperating with other groups of Christians, we believe every local church should be self-governing and independent from any denominational control. In relating to our "daughter churches" that we sponsor, we encourage each congregation to determine its own strategy, structure, and style.

3. THE \_\_\_\_\_ OF EVERY BELIEVER

*"Christ loves us, and by His death He has freed us from our sins and made us a kingdom of priests to serve God."*

Rev. 1: 6 (GN)

*"You are...the King's priests...God's own people, chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God."*

1 Peter 2: 9 (GN)

The Bible teaches that every Christian is called to "full time" Christian service, regardless of his or her vocation. We practice the truth that every believer is a minister by encouraging every member to find a place of service and ministry. Every believer has direct access to God through prayer and Bible reading.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

*"A tithe of everything you produce belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord."*

Lev. 26: 30

At South Avenue Baptist Church, we practice tithing for the support of Christ's Body, the church, as God commands. We recognize that giving 10% of our income is the Biblical standard of giving.

5. \_\_\_\_\_ OF BELIEVERS

*"For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ..."*

Col. 2: 12 (GN)

We practice baptism by immersion under water - the way Jesus was baptized, and the way the Bible commands.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ LIVING

*(Jesus said) "I am the Vine, you are the branches. If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; but apart from me you can do nothing."*

John 15: 5

We believe the only way possible to live the Christian life is by God's power within us. So we seek to practice a daily dependence on God's Spirit to enable us to do what is right.

(Phil. 2: 13; Eph. 5: 18)

7. \_\_\_\_\_

*"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."*

1 Peter 3: 15

It is the responsibility of every Christian to share the Good News with those God brings us into contact with. We practice personal sharing about Christ and inviting friends to church.

### OUR CHARACTER STATEMENT

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ in our faith.

**W**alking in the \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Word.

**E**nergetic in our \_\_\_\_\_.

**S** \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus with others

**O** \_\_\_\_\_ to Jesus in our attitudes and behaviors.

**M**anaging our \_\_\_\_\_ and abilities for God's glory.

**E**xhibit a \_\_\_\_\_ in all we do.

### OUR CORE VALUES

- ❖ We believe that Spirit empowered preaching and teaching of God's Word, the Bible, is the catalyst for the transformation of individual lives. (Isaiah 55:9-11; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)
- ❖ We believe that lost people matter to God and we ought to be aggressive in reaching out to them. (2 Peter 3:9; Luke 19:10)
- ❖ We believe the message of Christ will not be received unless we live holy and Godly lives. (1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Peter 1:14-16)
- ❖ We believe that Christ was a servant and that we should serve God and others in humility. (Matthew 20:26-28)
- ❖ We believe that God gifts every believer with at least one spiritual gift and that God has called us to exercise our spiritual gifts and share our talents, and resources to advance His Kingdom.

(I Corinthians 12)

- ❖ We believe that life transformation and Christian development best takes place when we are involved in small groups. (Matthew 10:1; Matthew 11:1)
- ❖ We believe that our church should be relevant to our culture while remaining true to God's truth, the Bible (I Corinthians 9:20-23)
- ❖ We believe daily prayer and Bible reading is essential for understanding and doing God's will. (Proverbs 29:18; Psalm 119:105)
- ❖ We believe that through wholehearted devotion to God and love for each other we will attract others to Christ and our fellowship. (John 13:34-35)
- ❖ We believe that involvement in exciting, enthusiastic, and God honoring worship is vital for the health and growth of believers. (Psalm 149 & 150; Romans 15:5-13)

### **CHURCH COVENANT**

Having been led, as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale of, and use of, intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

## Session Three: Our Structure

### The History of South Avenue Baptist Church

The population of Pasadena in 1953 was 22,438. It is over 150,000 now. Highway 225 was then Sterling Drive, a two-lane highway. South Avenue was a two-lane street. The Deepwater community was located between South Avenue and Deepwater Street, Sterling Drive and Hays. No other streets were open. The area's one school, Deepwater Elementary, was located on Glenmore.

South Avenue Baptist Church began as a mission, sponsored by First Baptist Church, Pasadena, which was pastored by Dr. L. D. Morgan. The first service of the mission was held on July 19, 1953, in what is now our middle building. Rev. J. R. "Bob" Pearce was the mission pastor. One hundred twenty-four people attended Sunday School that day, and thirty-three joined the mission church. The purpose of the new church was to provide the Deepwater community with a visible witness for Jesus Christ.

South Avenue Baptist Church was officially organized as a church from the mission on March 24, 1954, with one hundred eighty members. The physical plant evolved as shown by the following events:

- 1953 The middle building was built.
- 1954 The sanctuary building was built for worship and education.
- 1960 The first story of the office building was erected.
- 1965 The second floor was added to the office building.
- 1982 The second floor of the sanctuary building was renovated for adult education.
- 1987 The final payment was made on all church buildings and property.
- 1999 The sanctuary was completely renovated.
- 2001 The middle building was renovated.

During these 60 years, more than 4000 people have joined South Avenue Baptist Church.

Years ago, South Avenue Baptist Church adopted a motto: "A burning lighthouse for a coming Savior." For over half a century, this church has brought the light of that Savior, Jesus Christ, to hundreds of people in Pasadena and Deer Park. We remember with gratitude the godly men who have served through the years as our pastors and other ministerial staff. We thank God also for the countless lay leaders who have helped build a true lighthouse for the Kingdom of God right here in North Pasadena.

A lot has changed in 60 years. Our city has changed, and so has our neighborhood. South Avenue became Preston Road in 1997. Like all churches, we continue to seek new ways to reach new generations and different kinds of people. But the most important things are as true today as they were in 1953. Our mission hasn't changed. Thousands still live in spiritual darkness within walking distance of our church, and we are called to bring them the Light of the World. Our message hasn't changed. All who call on the name of the Lord are still saved by His wonderful grace.

Best of all, our Messiah hasn't changed. Jesus Christ is still the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is still the head of the Church, and we are supremely honored to be His people, His army, His servants. We thank Him for His faithfulness in the past, and look forward to His mighty works in and through us in the future.

#### Pastors of South Avenue Baptist Church

<b>Rev. J. R. Pearce</b>	<b>July 1953 - December 1964</b>
<b>Rev. Lewis McDonald</b>	<b>May 1965 - March 1971</b>
<b>Rev. Tommy Kimball</b>	<b>June 1971 - May 1977</b>
<b>Rev. A. Duane Spikes</b>	<b>January 1978 - May 1982</b>
<b>Rev. Meredith Hair</b>	<b>October 1982 - March 2000</b>
<b>Dr. Jeff Berger</b>	<b>June 2001 - August 2007</b>
<b>Rev. Scott Brewer</b>	<b>October 2008 - December 2010</b>
<b>Dr. J. E. Hail, Jr.</b>	<b>June 2012 -</b>

#### The Current Pastor of South Avenue Baptist Church

J.E. Hail has been in the ministry since 1975. He has pastored churches in Kentucky and Indiana before coming to Texas. He also served as a North American missionary in Northern Illinois for 6 years. Pastor J. has over 26 years of experience as a senior pastor. He has been at SABC since June 2012. He received his Bachelor's degree from Cumberland College, Williamsburg, KY with a major in religion and a minor in business administration. Pastor J. received his Master of Divinity (Theology) from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, TX. He later went on to the Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, GA to receive a Doctor of Ministry degree. Pastor J. has been married to Bonnie Laub from Miami, FL since 1978. They have three children; Melissa, Mark, and Matthew.

The senior Pastor is responsible for leading the church in its mission.

## The Staff of South Avenue Baptist Church

Ministerial Staff - Dr. Jim Overton - Associate Pastor  
Bill Ingram - Minister of Music  
Carson Jones - Youth Pastor

Secretarial Staff - Debbie Brooks  
Cathy Jones

Our Deacon Body - A servant body who serve with the pastors to give direction and insight and wisdom in ministering to the needs of the fellowship. They are not a decision making body but most key church decisions that are placed before the church have been discussed and prayed over by the deacons. The deacons meet together once a month and they also have responsibility of ministering to 15 to 20 families who are members of SABC.

### Business Meetings

We have monthly business meetings on the third Wednesday night after the third Sunday each month. Financial reports are received. New members are voted into the fellowship and reports are given about the various programs of the church. Important business matters are brought before the entire church.

### Church Budget

A church budget is adopted each year. It is the responsibility of the pastor and staff and committees to stay within the parameters of the budget and give report to the church body when changes need to be made in the budget.

### Our Affiliation

SJBA - San Jacinto Baptist Association- \_\_\_\_\_ congregations networking together to transform lives, communities and the world through the love of Jesus Christ through encouragement, education and resources all to the glory of God. SJBA covers the areas of Pasadena, Houston, Channelview, La Porte, Huffman, Crosby, Baytown, Deer Park, Highlands and Mt. Belvieu.

BGCT - Baptist General Convention of Texas- \_\_\_\_\_ congregations across the state of Texas.

SBC - Southern Baptist Convention - \_\_\_\_\_ congregations across the US.

We are the largest non-Catholic denomination in the USA at the SBC level.

We support 6 \_\_\_\_\_.

We support approximately \_\_\_\_\_ missionaries in the US in 2013.

We supported \_\_\_\_\_ missionaries engaging 874 \_\_\_\_\_ groups around the world in 2013.

**We support financially the mission work done at all three levels.**

We give \_\_\_\_\_ of our undesignated budget to BGCT and to the Southern Baptist Convention through a missions program called the \_\_\_\_\_. We give 2% to \_\_\_\_\_.

The Cooperative Program was designed approximately 90 years ago, so missionaries could receive regular financial support without having to go around to churches and ask for it. Missionaries could spend more time doing the Lord's work and less time raising money for missions.

Our church supports approximately 7500 missionaries; approximately 5000 overseas missions personnel and approximately 2500 missions personnel here at home.

At all three levels, we have support staff that can help us fulfill our purposes of:

- evangelism
- discipleship
- worship
- service
- missions
- fellowship

### Our Programs

#### **Small Groups**

- discipleship groups
- fellowship groups
- prayer groups
- support groups
- SS groups
- recreational groups
- mission groups
- music groups

#### **Church Ministries**

- Deacon Ministry
- Outreach Ministry
- Prayer Ministry
- Music Ministry
- Men's Ministry
- Women's Ministry
- Children's Ministry
- Preschool Ministry

**We want you involved in a small group and we want you involved in ministry.**

**Ways SABC will be driven by its purpose**

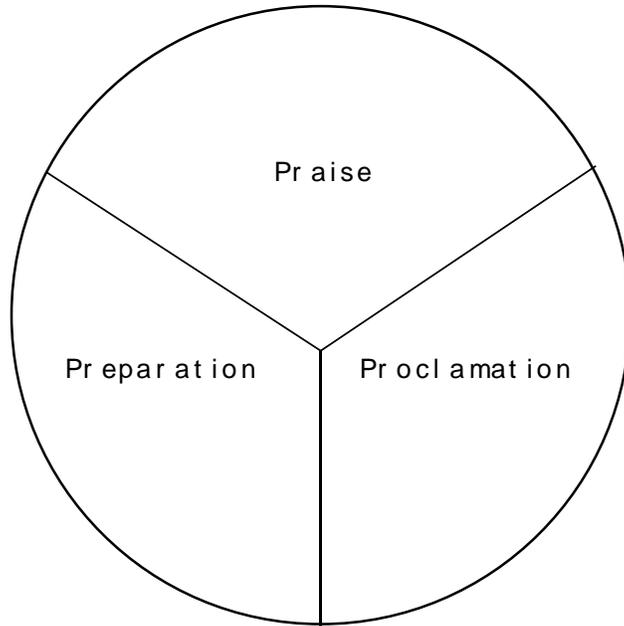
1. We will \_\_\_\_\_ according to purpose.  
Each group will be targeted through some program during the year.
2. We will \_\_\_\_\_ according to purpose.  
We start where people are and take them where they need to be.
3. We will \_\_\_\_\_ according to purpose.
4. We will \_\_\_\_\_ according to purpose.
5. We will \_\_\_\_\_ according to purpose.
6. We will \_\_\_\_\_ according to purpose.
7. We will \_\_\_\_\_ according to purpose.
8. We will \_\_\_\_\_ according to purpose.
9. We will \_\_\_\_\_ according to purpose.
10. We will \_\_\_\_\_ according to purpose.

**The Priorities of South Avenue Baptist Church**

- Priority #1: God's \_\_\_\_\_  
Priority #2: \_\_\_\_\_  
Priority #3: \_\_\_\_\_  
Priority #4: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Strategies of South Avenue Baptist Church

SABC wants to be a balanced church that faithfully advances God's kingdom on earth.



## The Membership Commitment of SABC

Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior and been baptized, and being in agreement with South Avenue's statements, strategy, and structure, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the SABC Church family. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members to do the following:

### **1. I WILL PROTECT THE \_\_\_\_\_ OF MY CHURCH**

- ...By acting in love toward other members
- ...By refusing to gossip
- ...By following the leaders

*"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."*

Romans 14:19 (NIV)

*"...so see to it that you really do love each other warmly, with all your hearts."*

1 Peter 1:22 (TLB)

*"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."*

Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)

*"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."*

Heb 13:17 (NIV)

## 2. I WILL SHARE THE \_\_\_\_\_ OF MY CHURCH

- ...By praying for its growth
- ...By inviting the unchurched to attend
- ...By warmly welcoming those who visit

*"We always thank God for you and pray for you constantly."*

1 Thessalonians 1:2(TLB)

*"'Well, then,' said his master, 'go out into the country lanes and out behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full.'"*

Luke 14:23 (TLB)

*"So warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified."*

Romans 15:7 (TLB)

## 3. I WILL SERVE THE \_\_\_\_\_ OF MY CHURCH

- ...By discovering my gifts and talents
- ...By being equipped to serve by my pastor and staff
- ...By developing a servant's heart

*"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."*

1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)

*"It was He who gave . . . some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."*

Ephesians 4:11-12(NIV)

*"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who...[took on] the very nature of a servant."*

Philippians 2:3-4, 7 (NIV)

#### 4. I WILL SUPPORT THE \_\_\_\_\_ OF MY CHURCH

- ...By attending faithfully
- ...By living a godly life
- ...By giving regularly

*"Let us not give up meeting together...but let us encourage one another."*

Hebrews 10:25 (NIV)

*"Whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of gospel of Christ."*

Philippians 1:27 (NIV)

*"Each one of you, on the first day of each week, should set aside a specific sum of money in proportion to what you have earned and use it for the offering."*

I Corinthians 16:2 (NIV)

*"A tenth of [all your] produce...is the Lord's, and is holy."*

Leviticus 27:30 (NCV)

### WAYS WE COMMUNICATE

- The Herald is a monthly publication that contains announcements for the coming months and reports from the previous month. It can be picked up in the lobby of building #1. It can also be sent electronically to you each month. Just let our secretary know that you want an electronic copy and that we have your email address.
- Text messaging is another way we communicate important information to our church family. You can text j18gcd to 902-10 on your phone and hit send. You will receive a text message that you must reply to and opt in to the various messages you would like to receive. You must reply with a Y to each of the categories to be in our list for text messaging. So this is a double opt in list.
- We also correspond via email so make sure we have your current active email address so we can contact you about important events or activities.
- Phones are still used as a means of communication and if this is how you want to be contacted make sure we have your cell phone as well as your home phone number in our files.
- We often will send out reminders via US postal service, so it is important that we have your up to date mailing address.