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LAUNCHING AN ASSIMILATION PROCESS AT
BALLARDSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH,
CRESTWOOD, KENTUCKY

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the Faculty of
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by
Tony Ray Wolfenbarger, Jr.
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APPROVAL SHEET

LAUNCHING AN ASSIMILATION PROCESS AT
BALLARDSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH,
CRESTWOOD, KENTUCKY

Tony Ray Wolfenbarger, Jr.

Read and Approved by:

Joseph C. Harrod (Faculty Supervisor)

Shane W. Parker

Date _____

I dedicate this project to my faithful and loving wife, Emily, without whose support and patience none of this would have been possible. I am also grateful and humbled by the love and support of our three sons, Caleb, Joshua, and Josiah, throughout this journey. Use us, dear Lord, Jesus Christ. Use our family, our lives, and all our endeavors for your glory and our good. Grant us abundant love, peace, and blessing. Amen.

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PREFACE

When I initially realized that God was calling me to vocational ministry, I only knew that I desired to help local congregations fulfill the Great Commission and see God do in others what he had done in me. This project emanates from that calling. It is my prayer that readers will find within these pages both the encouragement to grow in their walk with Christ and personal understanding of what it means to be a healthy church member, and practical steps and instruction to launch an assimilation process in a church. Furthermore, demonstrating the impact that fruitful Christians from healthy churches can have on someone's life, God has used numerous people to help me serve him. Assimilated church members make future disciples, of which I am one.

I am indebted to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, its faculty, and staff who have guided me throughout my theological education and without whose help I would not have earned this doctorate. I am especially grateful for the guidance and patience of Joseph C. Harrod and Shane W. Parker, whose suggestions and input improved the quality and value of this project.

It was the faithfulness of a small group of Christians in East Tennessee where I grew up that brought me to Christian maturity. Their impudence to teach Sunday school, to provide vacation Bible school, and to serve God wholeheartedly made a lasting impact on my life. Although many of the older members have entered the presence of Jesus Christ by now, their witness lives on in me and my ministry today. Thank you to my friends and family at Faithway Baptist Church. I must also thank Dr. Ron Stewart and the ministry of Grace Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tennessee, who helped me recognize the call of God upon my life, directed me to Southern Seminary, and gave me the privilege to serve on staff when I graduated. His influence on my life is evident every

day. I am thankful for the financial support of Ballardsville Baptist Church and the encouragement of godly men like Dell Schultze, Hartley Winters, Lester Demaree, Wayne Milligan, and Terry Gossom, whose leadership and backing made this doctorate possible. I am also grateful for the support of Darlene Blackford, Don Wright, Greg Schwab, Neal Green, and the members of Ballardsville Baptist Church, past and present, who have allowed me the privilege to serve alongside them since 2008.

I give a special thanks to Darlene Schuff, who edited the early stages of this project, and whose persistent encouragement, questions, and excitement also helped me see it to completion. Likewise, I appreciate the editing assistance of Betsy Fredrick, who ensured I met the formatting and grammar requirements of this project. I am eternally grateful for Steven Montgomery, my brother in Christ, whose accountability, friendship, and various streams of support have reminded me that God loves me, I am not alone, and that God has provided.

My mother, Vickie Martin Harris, has been my biggest supporter and inspiration to persevere in godliness and hope throughout my lifetime. Her endless encouragement, relentless drive to see me succeed, and most of all her love, is a testament of Christ's unfailing love for me. She has driven me to be my best for the glory of God. My uncle and aunt, Gene and Terry McKinney, were essential to my Christian development, guiding me through adolescence and early adulthood, and providing stability to a young boy whose family was falling apart; their love is coveted. I am thankful for my father, Tony Ray Wolfenbarger, Sr., who worked hard to provide for me, whose advice I desire, and whose words of wisdom bring comfort to this day. I am eternally grateful for my grandmother, Bernice Wolfenbarger, and departed grandfather, Ben Wolfenbarger, whose witness on my young impressionable life led me to trust Jesus Christ and set me on a course for Christ upon which I still walk today.

My wife, Emily, and our children, Caleb, Joshua, and Josiah, are the most loving, patient, and supportive family a man could have. I owe Emily countless dates and

the boys hundreds of camping trips. It is their sacrificial love for which I am so thankful. I could not serve Christ's church without a wonderfully understanding and equally serving family as them. A healthy church family with assimilated members is essential to our lives. I trust this project will help provide my family a church in which to thrive for Christ and his Glory.

Finally, I want to thank my God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for calling me to grace, transforming my life, and giving me the opportunity to serve him and his church. It is entirely a work of his grace and mercy that I have the blessing of being his child and serving him. May I do it faithfully as a vessel of honor for his glory.

Tony Wolfenbarger

Crestwood, Kentucky

December 2016

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to launch an assimilation process at Ballardsville Baptist Church, Crestwood, Kentucky.

Goals

This project pursued the attainment of three goals. The first goal was that members of Ballardsville Baptist Church would understand the church's expectations of its members. The second goal was for members to gain knowledge of the church's vision statement. The last goal of launching an assimilation process was to move people from guests to committed members who would fully engage in the discipleship process of the church.

Ministry Context

The context of a church is crucially important to the implementation of any strategy. The staff and leaders of Ballardsville Baptist Church prepared the church for several years before the implementation of this assimilation process. During this time, the church context, people, and leaders changed. At times, the church grew numerically. At other times, church attendance stood still, or experienced decline. These times were opportunities to demonstrate love, patience, and pray earnestly for God's help. If we had implemented this project or a similar assimilation process three years before, the church would have rejected it, the staff would have felt discouraged, and the cycle of staff turnover would have continued.

Community

Ballardsville Baptist Church is located at 4300 South Highway 53, Crestwood, Kentucky, where it has been since moving from a nearby location in April of 2000. Crestwood is in Oldham County, Kentucky. The church is located at the intersection of two state highways in the rural community of Ballardsville. The United States Postal Service places the community of Ballardsville in the city of Crestwood; however, it is just outside LaGrange city limits. The church campus consists of twenty-two acres of property, which includes a worship center, family life center, a missions building, and a parsonage.

Demographics

At the time of this project, Ballardsville Baptist Church had an active membership of approximately 350 people. In 2011, the average weekly Sunday morning worship attendance was 240 people. This average was up from the 2010 average of 208 people. In 2012, the average weekly worship attendance grew to 256 people and remained consistent throughout 2013. Average Sunday morning worship attendance fell by 20 in 2014 and an additional 20 in 2015 to 222. By summer 2016, the average Sunday morning worship attendance declined to 186 people.

In the 2009 calendar year, the church added 29 members, 15 of whom were by baptism; in 2010, it added 29 members, 11 of whom were by baptism; and in 2011, it added 44 members, 16 of whom were by baptism; in 2012, it added 59 members, 29 of whom were by baptism; and in 2013, it added 37 members, of whom 22 were by baptism, for a five-year total increase of 227 members of whom 93 were by baptism. As evident by these figures, the church was reaching new people; nevertheless, attendance totals remained stagnant. In 2014, the church saw another 46 additions, but overall attendance actually declined by 19. The same thing happened in 2015 with 21 additions and a loss of 18 in overall attendance. The church saw continued decline throughout the first six

months of 2016 and no additional members were added either by baptism, or transfer of membership.¹

Table 1. Ten year attendance and additions with Sunday school

Year	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15
Attendance Avg.	304	279	228	218	201	208	240	256	259	240	222
Member Additions	20	49	36	19	29	29	44	59	37	46	21
Attendance Change		-25	-51	-10	-17	7	32	16	3	-19	-18
Sunday School Avg.	190	190	159	142	146	149	154	167	165	165	145

Sunday school attendance in 2009 and 2010 was 73 percent and 72 percent of worship attendance respectively; however, as worship attendance grew in 2011, Sunday school attendance remained consistent at 150 people causing the average Sunday school attendance in 2011 to drop to 64 percent where it remained through 2013. During 2014 and 2015, Sunday school attendance declined. Nevertheless, fluctuating worship attendance resulted in a 69 percent and a 65 percent Sunday school to worship service attendance ratio respectively. While worship attendance had dropped to 186 people by June 2016, the Sunday school percent of worship rose slightly to 68 percent.

The church called its Wednesday night programming Life University. Life University consisted of a fellowship meal and discipleship classes for children, teenagers, and adults. Life University also included an outreach ministry that visited church prospects and consistently absent members. Life University experienced tremendous growth, and weekly attendance climbed from 117 people when it began in August 2009 to 192 people in 2012 where it remained throughout 2013. In 2014, Life University attendance fell to 187. Likewise, in 2015 attendance dropped to 184. Through the first semester of Life University in 2016, attendance declined to 151.

¹See appendix 1, “Project Justification Summary Report.”

The church was debt-free and located in a growing upscale community; nevertheless, it operated on a deficit budget five years from 2007 through 2012. A budget surplus accumulated prior to 2007, provided the church with the ability to spend more than it received. In the 2007 to 2008 budget year, the church spent \$61,000 more than it received. In the 2008 to 2009 budget cycle, the difference between receipts and expenses was negligible. However, in the 2009 to 2010 and 2010 to 2011 budget cycles, church spending outweighed its receipts by \$34,000 and \$69,000 respectively. The budget for 2011 to 2012 was also in arrears with spending at \$446,000 placing it above receipts by \$59,000. However, this trend of over spending and using reserves was reversed in the 2012 to 2013 budget year, where the church exceeded its budget of \$435,000 with a total of \$479,000 in receipts and only spending \$424,000 for expenses. Beginning in the 2013 to 2014 budget, the church began operating with a balanced budget of \$474,000. In 2014 to 2015, the budget was increased by 3 percent to \$487,907. The budget for 2015 to 2016 remained the same at \$486,683, but it fell to \$440,000 in the 2016 to 2017 budget.

At the time of this project, the church employed a senior pastor, an associate pastor of children, and a music pastor in a full-time capacity. The church had been without a full-time youth pastor for a year prior to this project, but had plans to hire one in August 2016. It also had an administrative assistant and an interim youth pastor serving in a part-time capacity. The church contracted a cleaning service to help maintain its facilities. In the winter of 2011 to 2012, the senior pastor led the church to form a strategic planning team and charge them to, among other things, present the church with a balanced budget. The strategic planning team formed a task force to address the financial concerns of the church. One of the outcomes from the task force was a pledge campaign where church members pledged to support the church through tithes and offerings. During this time, the pastor also preached a sermon series on financial stewardship, which along with the pledge campaign, helped turn the church's financial picture around.

Within a one-mile radius of the church, the median household income was \$83,000 annually in 2010.² This income level is up \$10,000 from its year 2000 level of \$73,000. The income falls to \$61,000 within the three-mile radius and \$58,000 at the five-mile radius.³ The community's income has been increasing for years.

Ballardsville Baptist Church was the only Southern Baptist Church within a three-mile radius; however, there were three Southern Baptist churches just outside the three-mile mark and seven Southern Baptist churches within five miles of Ballardsville. The 2010 population in the three-mile radius was 7,074 people, up 25 percent from 2000. The 2010 five-mile population was 25,000, up 19 percent from 2000. Sixty percent of the families in the community did not have children; of those who did have children, 56 percent were in elementary and middle school.⁴ The membership of Ballardsville Baptist Church followed closely with these statistics, although the church's population of families with elementary age children was increasing faster than it was with families without children in the home.

Church History

Established in 1827, the church has had thirty-four pastors in its 182 years of ministry. The church's historical record laments, "Ballardsville Christians knew trials of many kinds, sometimes being without a pastor."⁵ Indeed, a smallpox outbreak hit the church in 1861; it survived the great depression of 1929; the entire church building was

²ESRI, "Census 2010 Profile: Latitude: 38.3628, Longitude: -85.34573," accessed August 25, 2011, <http://redlandsbao93.esri.com/BAO93/previousorder.map?id=MjY4NTE4LWFjdGlvb jlwZGY=>.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Historical Committee of Ballardsville Baptist Church, "Church History" (Ballardsville Baptist Church 4300 South Highway 53, Crestwood, KY 40014: unpublished).

lost to fire in 1946; the church lost a pastor in 1969; and lost both a pastor and a music intern in 2002, all in fatal automobile accidents. The church has been through rough times.

The church experienced great difficulty between 2004 and 2008. In 2004, the beloved pastor of nine years resigned to be the director of missions in a nearby association. The next pastor came in 2005. This pastor brought with him several progressive ideas to grow the church and change its polity; however, the church body did not accept his plans or methods. During this troublesome time, in 2007 the previous pastor returned to the community to pastor Dehaven Memorial Baptist Church just four miles away from Ballardsville Baptist Church. Many unsatisfied parishioners moved their membership from Ballardsville Baptist to Dehaven Memorial Baptist Church. When Ballardsville eventually took action to remove their unpopular pastor, he received a lucrative severance package and began a new church only eight miles away from Ballardsville. Several of his supporters followed him to his new church. Ballardsville Baptist Church, a one-time growing, missions-minded, ministry-focused, vision-filled congregation had transitioned to a declining, broken, confused, and skeptical people by the spring of 2008.

In September 2008, Ballardsville Baptist Church hired me as their senior pastor. One week prior to my arrival, the church's music minister of twelve years resigned. In large part, pressure from the congregation to move the worship ministry of the church to a dynamic blend of traditional and contemporary music led to his resignation. After his resignation, the church was without a permanent music minister for three years. In January 2011, Ballardsville Baptist Church hired a part-time music minister who eventually became full-time in 2015.

During the four-year period from 2004 until 2008, the church only had a senior pastor for eighteen months. The lack of senior pastor leadership during this time had a three-fold effect on the church. First, the senior pastor's absence necessitated that the church's committees take stronger leadership roles in the affairs of the church. These leadership roles proved difficult to relinquish once I arrived. Second, the church's

confidence in me to lead and my authority to make decisions declined substantially. Third, the church lost sight of its original vision and purpose. The goal of the church became to stop the decline of membership and maintain the status quo. There was little vision for the future. Several groups within the church each had their own ideas about correcting the problem; however, no group would step out and lead nor would they allow leadership to rise up in fear of causing problems or bringing problems to the surface. These dynamics led the church into its latest round of difficulties.

Prior to the implementation of this project, Ballardsville Baptist Church experienced more staff turnover and declining attendance numbers in all areas of its ministry. Several factors led to this decline. I was unsuccessful in moving the church from a majority vote polity to an elder-led model. The children's minister resigned in May 2015 when her husband graduated from seminary and accepted a senior pastor position in another state. During this transition, the associate pastor of fourteen years became the associate pastor of children. The youth pastor resigned after having differences with me in August 2015. These factors created a perfect storm and several families left the church for many reasons. Many key families who supported my leadership, desired elders, and held prominent rolls in the church also left during this time because of the conflicts and dysfunction in the decision-making process of the church. By June 2016, Sunday morning church attendance had declined to 186 people, Sunday school to 127 people, and Life University ended its spring semester in May with 151 persons.

Rationale for the Project

In Matthew 28:18-20, the Lord Jesus calls on his authority and commands his followers, "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."⁶ The reason

⁶Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references will be from the English

Ballardsville Baptist Church needed a process of assimilation was to orient members and prospective members on the discipleship process of the church and to challenge them to enter that process. Specifically, the assimilation process answered the questions, “How will Ballardsville Baptist Church make disciples that fulfill the Great Commission?” and “What is expected of me at Ballardsville Baptist Church?”

Throughout this project, it was important to maintain the distinction between the assimilation process and the discipleship process of the church. The assimilation process was part of the discipleship process, but it was not itself the discipleship process. The assimilation process was the entry point into the discipleship process; it was how a person discovered and entered the discipleship process of the church. The goal of the assimilation process was to move people from guest to committed members who fully engage in the discipleship process of the church.

The last seven years have been rebuilding years for Ballardsville Baptist Church. I worked to move slowly and gain the trust of many who had been hurt in the years prior to my arrival. The Sunday worship services had room to grow in attendance. The church’s Sunday school strategy was sound and making progress with 65 percent of worshipers participating in Sunday school on a weekly basis. The church’s Wednesday night discipleship classes, Life University, were reporting consistent numbers with as many in attendance as 74 percent of Sunday morning services. Many of the committees dissolved and people were opting for ministry positions over committee positions. People who had not previously been on mission trips were going on missions trips, the church had adopted a new missions funding strategy, and the entire church was embracing local missions’ projects.

On June 9, 2013, Ballardsville Baptist Church adopted a vision and mission statement. Prior to then, the church did not have a stated vision or mission. In large part,

Standard Version.

it was by design that we went several years without a concise vision statement—the church was not ready for a new direction. The church was not ready to follow a new pastor because of the turmoil associated with the last two pastors. The church needed to heal. With a vision in place, it was important for the church leadership to teach the congregation how the ministries of the church were advancing the church’s attainment of its vision. Implementing an assimilation process would unveil the intentionality of the discipleship process to the church and would show how the pieces fit together. The assimilation process would help existing members and new members know what the church does, why it does it, and how they could be a part of it. The assimilation process allowed the church to communicate the vision of the church and challenged guests and members to participate in the realization of that vision.

For a process of assimilation to be meaningful, there must be something to which people can assimilate. The church leadership and staff made several adjustments to church programs and processes as they prepared the church for an assimilation process. In a slow process of informally following Thom Rainer’s teachings in *Simple Church*, every church ministry underwent evaluation. To summarize, *Simple Church* calls churches to clarify the discipleship process, position each program in a way that creates movement, align ministries to that process, and focus only on those things that promote the discipleship process by eliminating those that do not.⁷ The church was ready to take its next step by formally introducing the discipleship process and inviting everyone to be a part of it.

Ballardsville Baptist Church adopted the terminology and philosophy of Bret Robbe and Dwayne McCrary’s *Connect, Grow, Serve, Go: Moving toward a Balanced Approach to an Adult Ministry*, which along with supporting materials served as the

⁷Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God’s Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: Broadman, 2006).

major components to Ballardsville Baptist Church's discipleship process.⁸ To facilitate the assimilation process, the church planned to offer four distinct orientation classes. Each class corresponds to the major components of the discipleship process: connect, grow, serve, and go. This project focused on the implementation of the Connect class.

The Connect assimilation class, while not required, was strongly encouraged for everyone interested in joining the church. It served to orient prospective and new members to the church's beliefs, vision, staff, and the expectations of its members. The Connect class introduced the discipleship process of the church and encouraged attendees to take their next step with God and the church. It served as the new members' class of Ballardsville Baptist Church.

The class also served to educate potential and new members to both church and denominational distinctives. It gave the church an opportunity to discuss the importance of baptism and the Lord's Supper giving special attention to the symbolism of both ordinances. Additionally, the assimilation class discussed the importance of membership and commitment to the church body and allowed attendees the opportunity to make a commitment to membership at the end of the class.

From 2009 to 2016, the church added 265 new members. During the same period, the ratio of Sunday school to worship attendance had fallen from 73 percent to 65 percent. This disparity was because new members were not connecting to the ministries of the church, not making relationships in the church, and only partially committed to the church. Sunday school was the main component of Ballardsville's discipleship process when it came to making lasting relationships. Since Sunday school was not growing at the same rate as worship attendance, helping new members understand the importance of Sunday school to the discipleship process of Ballardsville Baptist and asking them to

⁸Bret Robbe and Dwayne McCrary, *Connect, Grow, Serve, Go: Moving Toward a Balanced Approach to an Adult Ministry* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2010).

commit actively to Sunday school involvement set the church's expectations upfront and facilitated a deeper connection to the church's people and ministries.

Additionally, the church did not have a history of starting new Sunday school classes. Failing to expand the capacity of Sunday school by creating new units allowed attendance to remain stagnant. The assimilation process allowed the church to communicate the primary objective of Ballardsville's Sunday school philosophy, which was disciple-making reproduction.⁹ The church encouraged each Sunday school class to launch a new class every two years.¹⁰ In order to start new classes, the church had been training its teachers, outreach leaders, and care group leaders to identify and equip apprentices who could begin new classes and serve in other areas when the need arose. Introducing the Sunday school philosophy in the assimilation process set the stage for launching new classes and maintaining an environment of new groups to which people could connect.

Without the assimilation process, the church had difficulty connecting members to the ministries of the church. Members did not understand the church's direction, the purpose for the church's structure, or their purpose in the church. The members lacked a way to gauge maturity and spiritual growth in their lives, and church services had a tendency to be merely religious exercises. Ballardsville's assimilation process gave the church a clear way to communicate, equip, train, and ask for commitment to the church's vision. It allowed the church to communicate its vision clearly. The church finally had a venue to clearly define the discipleship process and encourage members to commit to it. Members knew how the church helped them grow in their faith, where and how to

⁹Ballardsville Baptist Church reserved the core teachings of its Sunday school strategy for the Grow 201 class, which fell outside the scope of this project. Nevertheless, the Connect 101 class presented an overview of that philosophy as it pertained to connecting to God and the people of God.

¹⁰Allan Taylor, *Sunday School in HD: Sharpening the Focus on What Makes Your Church Healthy* (Nashville: B & H, 2010).

connect with other believers, how to measure spiritual growth, and they would become fruit-bearing disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Definitions and Limitations

The following definitions apply to these terms throughout this project, unless otherwise noted. The limitations were those external factors that limited the scope or nature of this project. The delimitations were the boundaries placed on the scope and nature of this project.

Definitions

Assimilation is the process of connecting people to the church. It involves education by the church and a commitment to act upon that education by the people being assimilated. It involves making meaningful relationships. Assimilation is the entry point into the discipleship process of the church. It is the movement of guests and marginally connected members to adopt ownership of the church's vision.

Discipleship is the process of spiritual growth that promotes becoming more like Jesus Christ. Many models of discipleship fall short when they focus solely on the learning aspects of discipleship. According to James 1:22, a disciple does "not merely listen to the word, and so deceive" himself, he actually does what the word says to do. Discipleship involves both knowing and doing.

A *discipleship process* is the intentional alignment of church programs and ministries to facilitate discipleship and the accomplishment of the church's vision. The process helps the disciple grow and be more like Christ, and the disciple helps the church make disciples of all the nations.

Limitations and Delimitations

This project was limited to fifteen weeks.

This project had one delimitation concerned with the project's evaluation. The evaluation also fell within the limited fifteen-week period; therefore, the long-term

effectiveness of the assimilation process was not included in this writing. Nevertheless, this project used careful analysis and focus groups to give a preliminary evaluation as to the effectiveness of launching the assimilation process.

Research Methodology

This project surveyed two focus groups before and after the actual assimilation class. The pre-project survey established a baseline of information about how well or poorly the church had communicated and connected members and potential members without an official assimilation class.¹¹ The post-project survey¹² sought to ascertain if the project was successful by comparing the post-project focus group responses¹³ to the pre-project focus group responses.¹⁴

The pre-project survey utilized three sections to establish the baseline of information. The first section asked “yes” and “no” questions to ascertain the participants’ membership status, attendance duration, salvation status, and general knowledge about the church and their perception about it. Section 2 utilized a ten-point Likert scale to measure the importance of various topics when making membership decisions. The last section asked open-ended questions about how participants viewed membership and making membership decisions.

The post-project survey had two sections, the first utilizing a ten-point Likert scale measure how well the Connect 101 class answered various questions pertaining to church membership, doctrine, salvation, vision, history, and missions among other topics. The second section asked open-ended questions about their impression of the class, its value, and the attainment of class goals.

¹¹See appendix 2 for the “Pre-Project Survey.”

¹²See appendix 3 for the “Post-Project Survey.”

¹³See appendix 16 for the “Post-Project Survey Results.”

¹⁴See appendix 13 for the “Pre-Project Survey Results.”

The names of focus group participants were not retained or tied specifically to a survey. Rather, each survey was given a survey number and the answers for each survey were recorded according to the survey number. The pre-project focus group had eighteen participants completing surveys. The post-project focus group had eight participants.

Focus group members were individually selected by me. Both focus groups included church members and non-members. The two surveys used in this project were approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to their use in this ministry project. The surveys were also conducted compliance with the guidelines of the research ethics committee.

Conclusion

This project contends that assimilating people into the local church is vitally important to the mission and purpose of the church and of Jesus Christ. Chapter 2 describes the biblical and theological perspectives on assimilation.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ASSIMILATION

Assimilation is the process of connecting people to the church. It is uniting people from various backgrounds who have different expectations, different spiritual maturity levels, and diverse religious and secular experiences, into a single spiritual family called the church. Assimilation occurs in cooperation with the Holy Spirit and with participation in the ministry of a local church. The church represents the mission and purpose of Jesus Christ on earth until he returns at the end of the age to gather the church to himself (Eph 1:22-23, John 20:21, Matt 16:15-19; 28:19-20). As such, assimilating people into the local church is vitally important to the continuation of the mission and purpose of Jesus Christ. Making a case to support this project, this chapter examines several biblical texts pertaining to the process of assimilation.

Ephesians 2

In Ephesians, the apostle Paul demonstrates how Jesus Christ died to save rebellious people from different cultural backgrounds and religious traditions and how they are now one in Christ converging into the household of God, which is the church. The goal of the church is to “shape believers by reminding them how wonderful God’s work in Christ is, how significant their unity with Christ is, and what living for Christ looks like.”¹ The biblical text begins by explaining the extent to which people are separated from God and answers the question, “Why is an assimilation strategy needed?” Ephesians 2: 1 begins saying, “You were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once

¹Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Commentary, vol. 45 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 23.

walked.” Paul’s point here is that people *were* isolated from God. He gives two key statements showing the severity of this quarantined existence. The first key statement says, “You were dead in the trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). This statement explains the human problem. O’Brien writes, “It was in these transgressions and sins that the readers formerly lived their lives.”² Romans 3:23 communicates this same truth: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” These passages tell that the problem is universal in that all people have sinned, and therefore all people are dead spiritually because of that sin. Spiritual death occurs when people are “cut off from the life of God and controlled by their own selfish desires.”³

The second key statement is in verse 3, which says we “were by nature children of wrath.” Likewise, Romans declares, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23). While physical death is a result of sin, the term “death” in Romans 6:23, refers primarily to spiritual death. In Revelation 20:11-15, spiritual death is referred to as the second death—it is everlasting separation from God, his grace, love, provision, and his people.⁴ Spiritual death is synonymous with God’s wrath that was mentioned in Ephesians 2:3, we “were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” O’Brien explains that “the ‘wrath’ in view is God’s holy anger against sin and the judgment that results.”⁵ As seen in these two Ephesian passages and their Romans’ equivalents, the severity of the human condition without Christ is dire. Without Christ, people are “alienated from the commonwealth of

²Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 157.

³David S. Dockery, “The Pauline Letters,” in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 577.

⁴Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids; Carlisle, Cumbria: W. B. Eerdmans; Paternoster, 1999), 1035.

⁵O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 163.

Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12).

However, just as Romans 6:23 contains the conjunction *but*, δε in the Greek, to quickly remind readers of God’s gift of life through Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2:4 does the same and the balance of the chapter elaborates on the idea: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved” (Eph 2:4-5). The person and work of Jesus Christ was for the sole purpose of connecting people to God the Father. That is, Jesus takes a spiritually dead and otherwise rebellious people and gives them life and union with God by transforming them by his grace.⁶ When the angel of the Lord announced the incarnation of Christ, he said, “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, *for he will save his people from their sins*” (Matt 1:21, emphasis added). Jesus said that it is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick (Luke 19:10). He maintained that he had come to seek and save the lost (Luke 5:31). Jesus’ purpose was to bring honor and glory to the Father by assimilating lost people into the family of God.

Paul points out that Jesus is saving lost people, but more importantly to the proper understanding of this text is why he saves them and the means by which he saves them. The text “emphasizes that he acted on our behalf simply because of his own gracious and merciful character.”⁷ Paul maintains, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:8-9). Arnold maintains, “Salvation is a gift from God’s abundant kindness and his lavish grace. There is nothing at all within us that has inclined

⁶Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 2309.

⁷O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 164.

God to choose us. There is absolutely nothing we have done to catch God's attention and earn his favor. It is entirely a 'gift.'"⁸ O'Brien agrees: "The gravity of their previous condition . . . serves to magnify the wonder of God's mercy. The past is recalled not because the emphasis falls upon it, but in order to draw attention to God's mighty action in Christ."⁹ Jesus takes people who were otherwise isolated from his presence and brings them close to him.

Expounding the idea, Paul highlights five realities about their lives before Christ, before salvation, beckoning the Ephesians and consequently all Christians to "remember that at that time you were [1] separated from Christ, [2] alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and [3] strangers to the covenants of promise, [4] having no hope and [5] without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). These realities show that people are separated from the presence of God, the things of God, and the people of God; however, Christ died to bring those people from various backgrounds, who have different expectations, spiritual maturity levels, and diverse religious and secular experiences into a single spiritual family called the church. There is a "vivid contrasts between believers' previous condition outside of Christ and their current privileged experience of salvation."¹⁰ The next verse, Ephesians 2:13, encapsulates this idea: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." It is the blood of Christ that made possible the assimilation of otherwise sinful people into the family of God.

Jesus Christ reconciles diverse pagan Gentiles, legalistic Jews, and the Holy God together into one body, his church, by means of satisfying the requirements of God's law (Eph 2:14-16). Arnold points out, "Christ's purpose went beyond creating a climate

⁸Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 139.

⁹O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 158.

¹⁰Ibid., 155.

where Jews and Gentiles could get along. He exerted his divine creative power to form an entirely new class of humanity in which race means nothing. In essence, he created a new society.”¹¹ He created a new group of people. This group is the church. Peculiarities such as race, status, and gender no longer divide.¹² The key distinction to be made is that the Gentiles were not becoming Jews and the Jews were not becoming Gentiles.¹³ Neither was there a Jewish church on one corner and a Gentile church on the other corner. As seen in Ephesians 2:19 where those in Christ are no longer aliens, but rather, have become fellow citizens and members of God’s house, both were becoming one church. The new temple is not built using bricks and mortar, but rather it is built of Christians who down throughout the ages have trusted in Christ and repented of their sins, and now become members of God’s house (Eph 2:20-21). Moreover, this new temple is a place where God now lives by his Spirit. In verse 22, “Paul says that by union with Christ, redeemed people form a corporate body that is the dwelling place of God.” In contrast to the Old Testament temple, which was an actual building, the new temple is made up of the people of God, and the people of God have a special purpose, as stated in Ephesians 2:10: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” As members of God’s family, Christians are no longer strangers to God and working against him, but rather are instrumental in what he is doing to redeem lost humanity. Christians are involved in assimilating new people into the household or family of God.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18, Paul identifies the work God has given his followers as the ministry of reconciliation. That is, Christ assimilates people into the family of God so

¹¹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 164.

¹²F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 307.

¹³O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 200.

he can use them to help assimilate others into the family of God. Christ's followers become ambassadors for Christ whereby they implore people to be reconciled to God (Eph 2:19-20). From the worldly point of view, some people are better than others; some people are nicer, more moral, more loving, more deserving, and godlier. However, when people compare themselves not to one another but rather to Christ Jesus, as aforementioned in Romans 3:23, everyone befalls the same judgment: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." But thanks be to God the Father of Jesus Christ, not only does everyone befall the same judgment, but as the next verse indicates, anyone who has faith can be "justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24). As Jesus lived, died, and rose again to assimilate lost people into the family of God, so too are Christians compelled to live their lives in such a way as to assimilate lost people into the family of God. That is, Christians are ambassadors to the reconciliation of lost people to Christ.

The first priority of assimilation at Ballardsville Baptist Church is to give every man, woman, boy, and girl the opportunity to hear, see, and respond to the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ The first step of becoming a part of the local church at Ballardsville is becoming a part of the universal church. When a person responds in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit to accept the salvation of Christ, the Holy Spirit begins a transforming work to make him Christ-like (2 Cor 3:18). It is that transforming work that enables people from diverse backgrounds and affiliations to conform to a common belief and purpose, and to function as one church body (Eph 4:1-6).

¹⁴This priority is derived from the mission statement of Summit Church, "Our Mission," accessed February 15, 2013, <http://spartanburg.summitupstate.org/our-mission>. A variation of the Summit Church statement was adopted as the mission statement of Ballardsville Baptist Church on June 9, 2013.

Ephesians 4

In Ephesians 4:1, the apostle Paul exhorts Christians to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which” they have been called. His instruction implies that Christians have a new life. This new life is made manifest by a change in one’s life purpose and their behavior.¹⁵ O’Brien explains, “Relationships within the body of Christ, especially conduct characterized by harmony, are the first issue Paul addresses as an essential element in their living consistently with this calling.”¹⁶ In verse 2, Paul directs Christians to possess “humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.” The inclusion of *one another* indicates that Paul is pleading with Christians to mature in Christlikeness within the context of the local church. Lincoln writes, “This type of ethical exhortation demonstrates that [Paul’s] . . . visionary conception of the church and its role is accompanied by a realism about the problems of community life with its inevitable clashes of character, attitudes, and actions.”¹⁷

Assimilation into the local church begins with ensuring potential members are saved. Then, when there is sufficient reason to believe a person is a believer, the second aspect of a healthy assimilation process focuses on membership in the local church. If a local church were not in view, then there would be no ‘one another’ with which to be humble, gentle, patient, and loving. In the New Testament, the church is “the visible expression of the gathered followers of Jesus Christ who have been grafted into a community created by God, under the banner of Jesus Christ, embodying in an anticipatory way, the life and values of the new creation.”¹⁸ After a person joins the

¹⁵John Bunyan, “Justification by an Imputed Righteousness,” in *The Works of John Bunyan*, ed. George Offer (London: Blackie and Son, 1853; repr., Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2006), 1:301.

¹⁶O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 276.

¹⁷Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 236.

¹⁸Allen C. Myers, “Church,” in *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Atrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 252.

universal church through salvation, it is necessary for him or her to unite with a *local* community of believers, the *local* church. An effective assimilation strategy helps move potential members toward making membership decisions in the local church.

The distinction between the universal church and the local church is also seen in Ephesians 4. When Paul says there is one body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, God, and Father, he is using the believer's union with the church *universal* as motivation for him to live in spiritual harmony and peace with those other believers within his church *local* (Eph 4:4-6). The implication is that they should live in unity and peace with an identifiable assembly of people. Therefore, the process of assimilation requires a particular commitment to a specific group of Christians, membership in a *local* church. Furthermore, Ephesians maintains that Jesus Christ gave the church particular leaders whose ministry it is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 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 4:11-13). The idea in this passage is that God gave the church pastors and teachers to prepare the *local* church for the work of ministry and to assist in the maturing process of believers.¹⁹ Paul exhorted Timothy to "fulfill your ministry" for this very purpose (2 Tim 4:5). Similarly, Paul had Timothy make a list of certain widows who would fall under the care of his local church (1 Tim 5:11). Therefore, local assemblies of believers must be identified in order for pastors to know which people they are to serve and prepare for works of ministry. If local churches were not implied, then pastors and teachers would not know who they are responsible to teach, train, and serve.

Likewise, if local assemblies of Christians were not in view, Christians would not know the leaders and teachers to which they are accountable. As seen in Ephesians 4:13, the ministry of pastors and teachers is to help Christians attain the "measure of the

¹⁹O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 303.

stature of the fullness of Christ.” In 1 Timothy 5:17, Paul gives an exhortation concerning the compensation of local pastors. If local church membership were not in view, then Paul’s exhortation is meaningless. In Titus 1:5, Paul commands Titus to appoint elders in every town. The expectation of Scripture is that believers within certain geographically identifiable areas would congregate and covenant together to help one another live the Christian life and mature in Christlikeness.

Paul continues Ephesians 4 by explaining the benefits of being assimilated into the discipleship process of the church. Christ gave the church its leaders to mature members in the faith and help them guard against heresy and evil plots against the church (Eph 4:14). The apostle Paul says that without the local church to teach, guide, and mature Christians by speaking the truth in love and building one another up, Christians would be susceptible to various types of false teachings, deceptions, and the malevolent motives of wicked men. The implication of verse 14 is that without a local church within which to grow and develop into Christlikeness, Christians are as helpless as infants.

O’Brien explains,

The introductory clause, “so that we may no longer be children . . .” which is subordinate to v. 13, provides general comments about their present circumstances (cf. “no longer”), at the same time indicating what should occur if genuine progress is to be made.²⁰

The book of Hebrews confirms these findings. In chapter 10, the author compels Christians to draw near to God through Christ (v. 22), hold fast to their confessions of faith (v. 23), and let each person in the church “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near (vv. 24-25). Paul Ellingworth writes, “The mutual care which the author has commended to his readers . . . cannot be sustained unless members of the Christian community meet to encourage and

²⁰O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 308.

exhort one another.”²¹ It is no accident that the author marries one’s vertical connection with Christ to his or her horizontal connection with the church. In fact, this is not the only place in the Bible one sees this connection. The connection is seen in the Ten Commandments where commandments 1 through 4 pertain to one’s relationship with God and commandments 5 through 10 pertain to one’s relationship with others (Exod 20; Deut 5). It is seen in the Greatest and Second Greatest Commandments where Jesus said the first and greatest commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt 22:27). Jesus adds that the second greatest commandment is like the first in that “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39). Vertically, the Christian must draw near to Christ and hold onto him and have faith in him. Horizontally, the Christian has a responsibility to other Christians. Hebrews 10:24 encourages Christians to “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.” In addition to the Christian’s corporate responsibility to help restore fellow brothers and sisters who stumble and falter, Christians are responsible to help one another love and serve properly. The mutual care which Christians share “cannot be sustained unless members of the Christian community meet to encourage and exhort one another.”²² As each member builds up another, the whole church is strengthened. Within the local church, each member is responsible to bring out the best in another.

Confirming the aforementioned discussion of Ephesians 4:11-13, Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” Ellingworth writes, “Paul develops the theme of submission within the Christian community.”²³ Local church membership is

²¹Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster, 1993), 527.

²²Ibid., 527-28.

²³Ibid., 723.

advantageous to Christian maturity and spiritual well-being because it defines the identity of one's leaders. Should the Christian obey all leaders who claim Christianity? Most certainly not. The clear implication of Scripture is that one has joined a local congregation of believers and willingly subjected themselves to the leadership of that congregation. Without devoted leaders in the Christian faith, people are left to the musings of empty philosophies and in danger of being misled, as warned against in Colossians 2:8: "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."

Like an abandoned child who dies on the doorstep of an orphanage during the night, so is the vulnerability of Christians without the protection and leadership of a local church. An effective assimilation process will educate people on the importance of church membership to their Christian maturity and will expose them to church processes that facilitate such maturity and accountability in their lives. Because the local church is vitally important to the spiritual health of any Christian, the second priority of assimilation at Ballardsville Baptist Church is to encourage Christians to make membership commitments to the church.

Membership at Ballardsville Baptist Church can happen only if certain conditions are met. The Great Commission commands the church to make disciples and baptize them (Matt 28:18-20). In the New Testament, baptism visually represents the goal of assimilation in that it symbolizes "death to the old life and the beginning of the new life in Christ."²⁴ Membership requirements, therefore, hold that a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ and have been baptized by emersion. The assimilation process helps ensure potential members have met these requirements. When potential members do not meet the requirements of membership, the assimilation process provides opportunities for people to take their next steps toward faith in Christ or toward scriptural baptism (i.e., after

²⁴R. J. Utley, *Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison*, Study Guide Commentary Series, vol. 8 (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997), 110.

salvation and by emersion in water). In Ephesians 4:3-6, stressing the importance of church unity, Paul reminds the Ephesian believers that they share the same baptism (cf. 1 Cor 12:13). Doing so, Paul indicates that emersion baptism not only represents a person's union with Christ, but also represents their union with other Christians;²⁵ therefore, a person is often considered a member of the local church where he or she is baptized.

After a person makes a membership commitment to a local church, it is important for the maturing process to continue. In Ephesians 4:17-19, the apostle Paul delivers a stark rebuke insisting that the Ephesus Christians no longer live like the rest of the world. The command in verse 17 is to walk no longer in the way the rest of the world walks, in the futility of their thinking. The word *futile* carries the idea of pursuing things that are temporal. It means uselessness, and meaninglessness.²⁶ Elwell and Comfort maintain that *futile* "points to the uselessness of all human endeavors that seek to bring lasting satisfaction in and of themselves."²⁷ First John 2 makes the same assertion in that everything in the world is passing away, therefore it is futile, but the person who does the will of God remains forever (v. 15-17).

In Ephesians 4:11-16, the implication is that Christian maturity is a result of pastors and teachers equipping the saints (v. 12), the saints responding to the Spirit (v. 14), and the church building itself up (v. 16). The result is Christians who live differently than they once did. The Christians in Ephesus, however, had either not been taught correctly about their commitment to Christ or were being disobedient to that which they knew. Paul believes that they had been taught correctly when they initially believed and that they were acting out of rebellion, which clearly gave occasion for him to address the

²⁵O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 281.

²⁶Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, eds., *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*. Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), s.v. "futile."

²⁷Ibid.

problem.²⁸ Ephesians 4:20-21 says, “But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus.” Paul placed emphasis on the *way* in which they came to know Christ in verse 20. In verse 21, he assumes that not only did they hear the gospel, but also that they were *taught* what living for Christ entails.²⁹ According to Carson, “The readers were taught that Jesus embodies the truth, and that if they wished to live in it they needed to put off their former life and embrace one like his.”³⁰ This passage stresses the importance of learning and being taught how to live for Christ by virtue of an assimilation process.

In chapter 1, assimilation is defined as the process of connecting people to the church. It involves education by the church and a commitment to act upon that education by the people. Ephesians 4:22–24 says, “To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” Clearly, Paul is referring to some type of assimilation process that they had received when the Ephesians first became Christians. He is reminding them that they were taught about being transformed from the old way of life to a new way of life. Since the local church plays a crucial role in assisting people in their transition out of the world and into Christian maturity it is important that Christians find a community of Christians with which to connect.

Likewise, Paul’s command in Ephesian 5:1-2 to “be imitators of God, as beloved children and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God,” is predicated on the idea of assimilation. The word *therefore* in Ephesians 5:1 refers back to Ephesians 4:32, which says, “Be kind to

²⁸Arnold, *Ephesians*, 284.

²⁹O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 324.

³⁰D. A. Carson et al., eds., *New Bible Commentary*, 21st century ed., 4th ed. (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1994), 1239.

one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Connecting people to the church is much more than connecting them with the teaching of the church. Teaching is indeed a large and important part of assimilation, but assimilation is also forging relationships within which to live and practice the teachings one has learned.

The main teaching of Ephesians 5 is submission. Summing up the entire chapter, Paul laconically commands Christians to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (v. 21). As Christians yield themselves to one another they begin to exhibit the attitude and actions of Christ. They begin to transform from what they once were without Christ and his church into new people who exhibit Christlikeness. As Christians genuinely participate in their church’s discipleship process, they move not only from being lost to saved, but they begin a process of discipline and sanctification to become more like Christ. The third priority of Ballardsville Baptist Church’s assimilation process is to connect members with church ministries that promote Christlikeness.

First Corinthians 12

First Corinthians 12 explains the importance of assimilating Christians into the ministry of the church. Chapter 12 is specifically about spiritual gifts and how each member of the church (i.e., each Christian) has been given special gifts of the Holy Spirit.³¹ Furthermore, in explaining this teaching, Paul is advocating the assimilation of Corinthian Christians into the ministry of the church: “Now concerning spiritual gifts brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed” (v. 1). He then eagerly proceeds in order to dispel their ignorance.

Paul says that every Christian is given a “manifestation of the Spirit” for the “common good” (1 Cor 12:7). There are two aspects to his declaration. The first is that the gift is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. When a person becomes a Christian, he or

³¹David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 561.

she receives the Holy Spirit of God as a Helper (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). In verse 13 of the same chapter, Paul reveals that all Christians were baptized by one Spirit. He does not exclude any group of Christians, but to the contrary emphatically adds whether “Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were made to drink of one Spirit” (v. 13). Garland explains, “His main concern is how their distorted view of spiritual gifts contributes to their lack of social cohesion.”³² Paul writes to stress the importance of Christian unity established upon everyone having the same Holy Spirit as their Helper. As a result, the gifts of Spirit that each person possesses will complement one another rather than compete with one another. Garland continues, “Diversity is necessary for a body to function, but the body is unified as each member is interrelated and interdependent.”³³ The implication is that every Christian has the Holy Spirit and therefore every Christian possesses the gifts or manifestations of the Spirit.

Similarly, Romans 8:9 maintains that “anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.” While the context encourages Christians to follow the Spirit of God rather than the desires of the flesh, the assertion is that everyone who belongs to Christ has the Holy Spirit of God guiding and helping them. Likewise, Ephesians 1 encourages Christians: “In him [Christ] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (vv. 13-14). It stands to reason that if the Holy Spirit is the seal guaranteeing that a person belongs to Christ, then all Christians must receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion. In other words, all Christians have received the Holy Spirit of God.

The second aspect of Paul’s declaration in 1 Corinthians 12:7 is that the gifts are given for the “common good.” Each gift, or manifestation of the Spirit, is endowed so

³²Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 588.

³³Ibid.

that the recipient can use it in the ministry of the church.³⁴ Peter supports this understanding: “Each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Pet 4:10). Peter makes the use of one’s spiritual gifts a matter of Christian stewardship. A steward is “one entrusted by God with spiritual authority and administration.”³⁵ God has entrusted each Christian with spiritual gifts to be used in serving other Christians.

First Peter 4:10 also reveals a special nuance to the nature of spiritual gifts. The gifts are referred to as God’s “grace.”³⁶ This special designation for gifts also appears in Romans 12:6: “Having *gifts* that differ according to the *grace* given us” (emphasis added). The Greek word for grace is χάρις, and its Greek root means making glad by gifts.³⁷ The Greek word for gift is χάρισμα, meaning the result of grace, or proof of favor.³⁸ Paul’s usage of χάρις for *grace* and χάρισμα for *gifts* is more than a coincidental pun. The benefit of salvation, (i.e., grace), is much nearer than a future in heaven. According to Paul, the result of grace is special gifts that enable Christians to serve God by virtue of serving the church on this side of heaven. This is what he means when he says that the gifts are for the “common good” (1 Cor 12:7). Therefore “a spiritual gift is a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ, according

³⁴Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 578.

³⁵Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker’s Greek New Testament Library, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 279.

³⁶Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 297.

³⁷Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 9, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), s.v. “χάρις.”

³⁸*Ibid.*, s.v. “χάρισμα.”

to God's grace, for use within the context of the Body."³⁹ Failing to use one's spiritual gifts in the ministry of the church is a failure of the believer to fully experience God's grace.

Moreover, not only does a Christian experience God's grace more fully when using his or her gifts, but the church itself also benefits. First Corinthians 12:7 and 1 Peter 4:10 indicate that each Christian is gifted to enhance the ministry of the church. As such, each person is important. Conversely, the church is deficient of some vitally important work of ministry when Christians withhold their gifts of the Spirit.

To illustrate the importance of each member to the ministry of the church, Paul compares the church to the human body: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Cor 12:12). Paul maintains that just like the human body has many parts, so does the body of Christ, the church. Each part is also important to the whole because the whole cannot function properly without its individual parts. For this reason, a person cannot remove himself from the body claiming he is not needed, any more than someone's ear can decide it is not needed and remove itself from the body (1 Cor 12:14-21).

The context of 1 Corinthians 12 suggests that some Corinthian Christians did not feel valued, while others thought too highly of themselves. Hughes and Laney argue, "The nature of the church demands a variety that leads to interdependence and appreciation, not schism."⁴⁰ Clearly the emphasis is on the importance of each individual member to the whole. Garland writes, "Grace-gifts are to be exercised for the well-being of the whole body."⁴¹ Because each part of the body relies on the other parts of the body for fulfillment, the success of the individual is tied to the success of the whole, and the

³⁹C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Venture, CA: Regal, 1979), 42.

⁴⁰Robert B. Hughes and J. Carl Laney, *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 556.

⁴¹Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 578.

success of the whole is tied to the success of the individual (1 Pet 4:10). Success is Christlikeness and the fulfillment of the church's mission.

Assimilation is the process by which a Christian becomes part of the body. However, it is more than simply routine participation in the programs of the church. Assimilation requires the work of the Holy Spirit to transform a person into Christlikeness through that person's participation in the ministry of a local church. As such, God is working through the Holy Spirit to bring the Christian to spiritual maturity. The church is working to equip, train, and involve its members in discipleship ministries. Then the member must engage the church's discipleship process and commit to using his spiritual gifts in the church. The intersection of these three is where assimilation takes place. Therefore, a healthy assimilation process facilitates the discovery of spiritual gifts and the use of those gifts in ministry. The fourth priority of Ballardsville Baptist Church's assimilation process is to help members both discover and use their spiritual gifts in church ministry.

Matthew 28:18-20

Set within the larger context of Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the Great Commission is the Messiah's final words as recorded in Matthew's gospel. Fulfilling the Great Commission is the reason an assimilation process is needed. It is here that the risen Christ commands his original disciples (not including Judas) to make new disciples, in all nations, baptizing them and teaching them everything Jesus had personally taught them. As such, the Great Commission concisely details the essential elements of a healthy assimilation process and commands Christians to follow its dictates. The risen Christ appeals to his authority as the basis of his command. Several passages throughout the New Testament bear witness to Christ's authority. After Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Mount, the people "were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes" (Matt 7:28-29). Following his miraculous healing of a paralytic, Jesus asserts of himself, "The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive

sins” (Matt 9:6). In John’s gospel, Jesus declares that the Father has given him authority to exercise judgment (John 5:26-27). In Revelation, John discovers that the only one worthy to open the scroll and usher in the end of the age is none other than the “Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David,” Jesus in the form a “Lamb standing as though it had been slain” (Rev 5:6).

Likewise, in Philippians 2:9, Paul testifies that God has highly exalted Christ and given him a name above every name. This is the language of authority. Jesus Christ has the authority to command his people. Writing to the Christians in Ephesus, Paul confirms the resurrection and Christ’s authority, maintaining that he was raised from the dead and seated at the Father’s right hand (Eph 1:20). In verse 22, the Father put all things under his feet (v. 22). When Jesus appeals to his authority in the Great Commission, he is stressing the importance of his impending command to make disciples. Moreover, “because of this authority, Jesus has the right to issue his followers their ‘marching orders.’”⁴² The Great Commission is Christ’s authoritative command to his church.⁴³ Although it should not be confused with what Christ calls the first and great commandment, to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” the Great Commission finds its fulfillment when the greatest commandment is combined with the second greatest commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:37-40). It is the love one has for God and his neighbor that compels obedience to the Great Commission.

In John 14:15, Jesus asserts, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” To Christ, one’s obedience to his commands and their love of him go hand-in-hand. Flowing from one’s love for Christ and obedience to his commands come

⁴²Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 431.

⁴³H. L. Willmington, *Willmington’s Bible Handbook* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1997), 547.

one's love for others. The Great Commission is not optional for Christians. It stands at the intersection of love for Christ and love for one's neighbor. As such, to understand the Great Commission as speaking to the activity of assimilation is to understand that assimilating new people into the church is not simply the ideas of an ambitious pastor, nor the musings of those espousing church growth theories, but rather, connecting new people to the body of Christ is the authoritative command of the risen Christ Jesus.

Similarly, speaking of his death and pending resurrection, Jesus declares, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). For Jesus, there is no doubt or uncertainty in the success of his mission or of the church's mission, for he says, "I will draw all people to myself." Borchert writes, "Strategically this work would also require the work of those who believe because their task would be to communicate to the world the forgiveness of sins" and everything that Christ taught the disciples (i.e., the Great Commission).⁴⁴

The context of John 14 pertains to Christ's authority and continued presence with his disciples after he ascends to the Father and is similar to the context in which Christ delivers the Great Commission in Matthew's gospel. Concerning his authority, John has Jesus telling his disciple that he was going to the Father (vv. 1-3). He declares that no one comes to the Father except through him (v. 6), if you know him, you know the Father (v. 7), and if you have seen him, you have seen the Father (v. 9). He maintains that his authority is not his own, but his authority is the authority of the Father (v. 10), and challenges his disciples to "believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves" (v. 11).

Jesus continues in John 14:12: "Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."

⁴⁴G. L. Borchert, *John 12-21*. The New American Commentary, vol. 25B (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 116.

According to Carson, this promise to do greater works “anticipates the need for enabling power,” which we subsequently discover is the “manifestation of God himself by his Spirit.”⁴⁵ The presence of the Holy Spirit is the means by which Jesus can fulfill his Great Commission promise to be with his disciples until the end of the age.

In order to understand what is meant by *greater works* in John 14:12, it is important to remember that “Jesus’ earthly ministry was limited in time and space. He served the Father for three and one-half years and never outside the boundaries of Palestine. On the other hand, Acts clearly attests that, in terms of numbers of people reached and long-lasting effect, the disciples carried out ministry that was greater geographically.⁴⁶ Thus, after his resurrection “Jesus was still active in mission; but although he was with God, he was now working in and through the church,” fulfilling the promises of sending the Holy Spirit, and being with his disciples until the end of the age.⁴⁷ Carson explains, “In consequence many more converts will be gathered into the messianic community . . . than were drawn in during Jesus’ ministry.”⁴⁸ Consequently, the disciples’ ministry lives on in the church today through present day disciples and is evidence to both the disciples’ obedience to the Great Commission and Christ’s faithfulness to keep his promise to be with his people “always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20). Assimilation then aims at being faithful to the authoritative command of Christ, (i.e., the Great Commission,) until the end of the age.

In order to faithfully follow the Great Commission imperative, it is necessary to properly understand what it says. The principal command of the Great Commission is

⁴⁵D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester: Inter-Varsity; Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1991), 498.

⁴⁶Kenneth O. Gangel, *John*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000), 266-67.

⁴⁷Borchert, *John 12-21*, 116.

⁴⁸Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 496.

to *make disciples*.⁴⁹ In the Greek, the word for make disciples, μαθητεύσατε, is the only imperative in the Great Commission.⁵⁰ That is, among the last word's Jesus spoke to his disciples was the command to make disciples. Weber maintains that at the heart of Christian mission is the reproduction in others of what Jesus has produced in a Christian: faith, obedience, growth, authority, compassion, love, and a bold, truthful message as his witnesses.⁵¹ The command was self-perpetuating—the command was to make more disciples and teach them to make more disciples. Fulfilling the Great Commission is analogous with assimilation.

Extant in the Great Commission are three participles: going, teaching, and baptizing. These participles describe the manner in which Christians are to make disciples. *Going* refers to the expansion of the gospel to divergent geographical regions and subsequently the different peoples of those regions. The disciples were to get their new disciples by *going* to other peoples, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and *teaching* them everything Jesus had taught them. Acts 1:8 supports this understanding: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Assimilation is about fulfilling the Great Commission. It is about making disciples through reaching people, converting them, and teaching them to do the same. It is to give every man, woman, boy, and girl in Oldham County and around the world the opportunity to hear, see, and respond to the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, and to become fruit bearing disciples in the church. The last priority of Ballardsville Baptist Church's

⁴⁹Barclay Moon Newman and Philip C. Stine, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 886.

⁵⁰Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1996), 107.

⁵¹Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000), 484.

assimilation process is to teach members how they can fulfill the Great Commission and help the church do the same, (i.e., to teach them to be fruit bearing disciples in the church).

Summary

In summary, the assimilation process of Ballardsville Baptist used the biblical principles discussed in this chapter to connect people to Christ and his church. The first priority of assimilation at Ballardsville Baptist Church is to give every man, woman, boy, and girl the opportunity to hear, see, and respond to the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, the Connect 101 membership class clearly articulated the gospel and gave participants an opportunity to accept Christ.

The local church is vitally important to the spiritual health of any Christian; therefore, the second priority of assimilation is to encourage Christians to make membership commitments to Ballardsville Baptist Church. People attending the Connect 101 class were given opportunities after the class to have membership interviews with the pastor, staff, or lay leaders to determine their membership eligibility based on the aforementioned biblical principles.

The third priority of Ballardsville Baptist Church's assimilation process is to connect church members to discipleship ministries that promote Christlikeness and Christian maturity. These ministries include Sunday school and midweek Bible study classes that are specifically designed to help Christians mature in their faith. As the assimilation process is developed, additional assimilation classes focusing on discipleship, ministry, and eventually mission will be added. The discipleship class will be called Grow 201.

The fourth priority of the assimilation process is to help members both discover and use their spiritual gifts in church ministry. The assimilation class corresponding to this priority will be called Serve 301. New members will be interviewed one-on-one to determine which church ministries best suit their unique gifting, personality, and interests.

New members will receive regular encouragement and direction until they have discovered their gifts and fully engaged with a suitable ministry.

A significant aspect of assimilation is the work of the Holy Spirit to transform a person into Christlikeness through participation in the ministry of a local church. The church represents Jesus Christ on earth until he returns. As such, assimilating people into the local church is vitally important to the continuation of the mission and purpose of Jesus Christ. The last priority of Ballardsville Baptist Church's assimilation process is to teach church members how they can fulfill the Great Commission and then to give them opportunities to do so. This class will be titled the Go 401 class.

CHAPTER 3

SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES ON ASSIMILATION

Components of an Assimilation Class

There is no shortage of books, articles, and blogs in the Christian marketplace on the topic of assimilation and church membership. Moreover, Christian opinion on revitalization, church growth, and discipleship inevitably includes the need for effective assimilation strategies. Since this discussion cannot examine all such writings, it primarily utilizes the works of Chuck Lawless, Jonathan Leeman, and Thom Rainer, among others. This chapter considers the necessary components, both topically and doctrinally, of an assimilation class and became the basis for the development of the Connect 101 class curriculum at Ballardsville Baptist Church.

Relationships

It is cliché, but the saying may be true: “People are not looking for a friendly church; they are looking for friends.”¹ In his research, Lawless discovered that among the top five reasons people participate in new member classes (a.k.a., assimilation classes or an assimilation process), three “point to the more relational benefits of membership classes.”² Participants in his study report the first relational benefit is they are “more willing to invite friends to church now”; second, they “would be more comfortable talking to [their] pastor now”; and third, they “know more people in the church now.”³

¹Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville: B and H, 2007), 130.

²Charles E. Lawless, *Membership Matters: Insights from Effective Churches on New Member Classes and Assimilation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 24.

³Ibid.

When God's Spirit is working in someone's life, he will desire relationships with other Christians. First John 4:20 says, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." When the Holy Spirit calls a person to love God through faith in Christ and repentance of sin, accompanying that call is the call to love others.

The Great and Second Great Commandments compel people to love God, and similarly, to love others as oneself.⁴ Assimilation classes help answer the questions associated with developing a relationship with God through salvation and with developing relationships with others through church membership and ministry. In *Comeback Churches*, Stetzer goes as far as to write, "People need to connect in community to consider the truth claims of the gospel."⁵ While this statement highlights the importance of Christian community to accepting Christ and living out the Christian faith, it also advocates man-centered theology and produces extremely pragmatic results.

Leeman mocks the newfound attention given to relationships as man-centered. He maintains that in our individualistic culture, churches have made relationships the glue that holds people together rather than obedience to the authority of Jesus Christ.⁶ His point is that churches can avoid asking people to glorify God by submitting to his Son Jesus Christ for salvation, and submitting to his church for accountability as the basis for church membership, and focus instead on the man-centered benefits of relationships.

⁴The First and Second Great Commandments, Matt 22:36-40, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 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. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

⁵Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 120.

⁶Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love: Introducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 131.

For Leeman, the primary relationship a person must seek when joining a church is with Christ through a “holy obedience to God’s loving and life-giving authority.”⁷ He maintains that proper relationship with Christ will impact the sum total of all other relationships in a person’s life: “That’s why, as we read through the Bible, we won’t find references to “relationships”; we’ll find references to obedience, holiness, and lordship. When the theologian or pastor talks the talk of relationship and community rather than the talk of obedience and holiness, he just might be hawking a postmodern prosperity gospel.”⁸ Leeman highlights the similarities between the poor man’s prosperity gospel and what he calls postmodern prosperity gospel. The poor man is told “Never mind all that stuff about obedience and holiness; Jesus wants to make you rich and happy.”⁹ However, that does not really work for many people in the west because they are not financially poor. Rather, the burden is a lack of meaningful relationships because people in the west suffer from

ennui, angst, and media overload. The relationships we do have are shallow and unsatisfying, so the intellectual sophisticate offers a postmodern prosperity gospel instead: “Never mind all that stuff about obedience and holiness; Jesus will give you relationships, purpose, community.”¹⁰

Confirming Leeman’s insights, relationships are so important to attenders and new members, research suggests that the more friends people make in church, the less likely they are to drop out of that church. McIntosh and Arn state, “Newcomers who make fewer than two friends in the first six months are more likely to drop out.”¹¹ Since relationships are vitally important to a person’s longevity in the church, assimilation must

⁷Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 168.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know: 101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 75.

include a focus on the development of those relationships, albeit as Leeman warns, the bases of those relationships must be for the glory of God and not to satisfy the discontentment of modern man.¹² Lawless notes, in his research that the “most effective [new member] classes we studied not only promoted dialogue but also allowed members to get to know each other, pray for each other, and offer encouragement to each other.”¹³ Lawless suggests using an assimilation class to intentionally build human relationships through activities such as “having a meal together outside the class, setting up a prayer chain among class members, providing photos and contact information of all members, and utilizing “sponsors” who accompanied new members to the class.”¹⁴

However, Rainer’s research leads him to the opposite conclusion. In *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, he writes that the role of a new members’ class “in strengthening relationships and engendering involvement in ministry . . . is minimal.”¹⁵ Rainer also marginalizes the sponsor approach to relationships that Lawless advocates, stating, “Rarely did we hear of this approach as the only way a church was attempting to assimilate new members. Indeed we rarely heard that this approach was the lone method used to help establish relationships.”¹⁶ He then quotes a pastor participating in his study as saying, “Most of the time . . . the impact is negligible.” McIntosh and Arn adamantly disagree, claiming, “One hundred percent of new members should have a sponsor.”¹⁷

¹²Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 137-38.

¹³Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 52.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Thom S. Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches: Successful Churches Reveal What Works, and What Doesn’t* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 179.

¹⁶Ibid., 180.

¹⁷McIntosh and Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know*, 84.

In his significantly greater theological and less pragmatic treatment of church membership, Leeman highlights the downfalls of making relationships the center of the church's appeal to the unchurched: "Many church leaders and pastors today present us with a vision of the loving community of relationships that downplays the idea of authority."¹⁸ Furthermore, Leeman maintains this focus on relationships is the result of post-modernity's appeal to individualism: "Individualism has left us detached, which sends us searching for a love that makes us feel complete. We want churches to do the same."¹⁹

Lawless' research indicates Leeman's assertion is correct in that people are looking for relationships in the church. To be fair, Leeman is not against relationships in and of themselves, but rather, he is against relationships for the sake of relationships. He emphasizes instead the importance of joining a church in order to submit to it and Christ. Leeman views church membership and relationships more from God's perspective and what he desires from membership than from a man-centered perspective: "Theologically, God is not interested merely in relationships, but in particular kinds of relationships. He created humanity to image and enjoy the pleasure of his glory. Therefore, he calls humanity into a relationship of obedience or conformity to that image."²⁰

The future of the church is at stake. Lawless, Rainer, and Stetzer would agree with Leeman theologically; however, the nature of their work is based in research that poles the opinions of man. In other words, the research is man-centered and seeks to know what man desires when it comes to church realities. Leeman is writing from a theological perspective and highlights, not what man wants, but rather and according to the Bible,

¹⁸Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 129.

¹⁹Ibid., 42.

²⁰Ibid., 138.

what humanity needs. Leeman suggests that in man-centered churches, Christian distinctives vanish:

A church that worships a man-centered God will begin to downplay and eventually erase the Bible's boundaries, such as the boundaries between heaven and hell, the church and the world, or this world and the next. Probably, ethical boundaries will dissolve as well, such as the boundaries between male and female leadership or homosexual and heterosexual lifestyles. New ethical boundaries will emerge in their place, boundaries more than likely to accord with the ethical boundaries of political and popular culture. Eventually, the church will look just like the world, and the reason for this should be plain: man-centeredness is the cardinal moral principle of the kingdom of this world. The very thing that constitutes fallen humanity is fallen humanity.²¹

For these reasons, a healthy assimilation process will not simply hold relationships up as the goal of uniting with Christ or his church. Instead, it will see relationships as a means to honor God and submit to him and his people for the purpose of growing in Christlikeness for his glory. This distinction is the difference between the relationships based upon certain affinities, such as sports, hobbies, life-stage, and various other life experiences, and those relationships that exist to foster Christlikeness and holiness in an otherwise sinful people. Assimilation activities can only do this when they properly emphasize the responsibilities of members.

Communicating Expectations

Communicating membership expectations, or member responsibilities, is also an essential element of assimilation and it should be. When ranking participant responses on the benefits of attending their church's assimilation classes, Lawless' research suggests that "above everything else, they gained knowledge of the church and its expectations."²² The initial place that expectations manifest in many churches is the requirement to attend a new members/assimilation class before joining the church. Stetzer and Dodson reveal that 93 percent of the comeback churches they studied reported having added a new

²¹Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 121.

²²Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 24.

member class.²³ They define ‘comeback churches’ as those who have “recently experienced renewed growth after a significant period of plateau and/or decline.”²⁴

The number of churches *requiring* attendance in membership classes is also increasing. Lawless’ research shows that in 1997, only 18 percent of surveyed churches *required* a membership class, but in a 2002 study, that number had grown to 31 percent. Likewise, the number of churches that simply *expected* new members to attend the assimilation class, but not requiring it, had decreased from 54.5 percent to 39.4 percent.²⁵ Rainer confirms the effectiveness of mandatory membership classes prior to joining a church, saying, “Churches that *require* membership class attendance *prior* to membership have significantly higher retention rates than other churches.”²⁶ The retention rates to which he refers are the number of new members who remain in the church as opposed to those who dropout over a two-year period. The increase may be the realization that communicating expectations helps close the backdoor of the church.²⁷ According to Rainer, churches that did not require or expect participation in a new member class only retained 72 percent of their new members over a two-year period; those churches expecting attendance in the new member class, but not requiring it, retained 89 percent of its members; and those churches that required membership in the new members class before joining the church retained 112 percent.²⁸ This means churches that *require*

²³Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 124.

²⁴*Ibid.*, x.

²⁵Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 23.

²⁶Thom Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville: B and H, 1999), 106.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 104.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 105.

membership classes are not only keeping new members, but they are also increasing their overall attendance by keeping their existing members.

Making the new member class mandatory should not be out of the question. Lawless, Rainer, and Leeman agree that *requiring* the new member class is preferred. Leeman explains, “Christ calls believers to submit to the authority of the local church. I don’t believe it’s a biblically unwarranted imposition to make on prospective members to ask them to attend a new believer class or membership class.”²⁹ Nevertheless, pastors in Rainer’s research reported two primary reasons for *not requiring* the new member class. The first reason is that many laypersons were simply resistant to change.³⁰ The second reason is mostly the concern of pastors: “These pastors feared that raising the requirement levels for membership would reduce the number of new members added to the church, and this would reduce the church’s overall growth rate.”³¹ Rainer confirms their fears but insists that the reduction is only temporary and after two years the church’s overall growth rate will actually increase.³² Concerning these fears, Leeman writes, “I have heard Christians object to being required to take a membership class, yet, I’ve never heard of new believers objecting. New believers are usually happy to learn all they can and quickly submit themselves to such opportunities.”³³

According to Leeman, older members who reject required membership classes do so because it is either a new concept or because they are simply rebellious. “Insofar as

²⁹Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 295.

³⁰Rainer, *High Expectations*, 106.

³¹Ibid., 106-7.

³²Ibid., 107.

³³Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 295.

that's the case, they are demonstrating the lack of submission that is contrary to the very heart of biblical church membership and Christianity.”³⁴

The fear of the pastors in Rainer's research underscores the need for communicating expectations. If pastors are afraid that people will not join the church because of the church's expectations, then it is fair to say, those members will be of little benefit to the church or its mission. The impression Rainer gives is that these pastors who oppose requiring a new member class because it might lower overall additions are more concerned with the quantity of members in their churches than they are with the quality of members in their churches.

Nevertheless, churches with seemingly effective assimilation processes communicate more expectations than simply attending the new member class. The content of the new member class or the actual expectations communicated in that class constitutes the impetus for the class. Lawless discovered that attendance in the new member's class was only the first of several expectations that churches would ultimately communicate to prospective members. His research reveals that of the seventy-one churches surveyed, “All but two (96 %) specifically indicated expectations of members in their membership class, and they did so because they believe that membership matters.”³⁵ Rainer concludes from his research, “Effective assimilation churches [churches whose new members become and stay active in ministry] had high expectations of all their members.”³⁶ However, only 58.7 percent of the churches surveyed by Rainer teach those expectations in the new member class. Yet, the research of Lawless and Rainer does show that having and communicating church expectations is an essential component of assimilation. Rainer

³⁴Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 295.

³⁵Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 80.

³⁶Rainer, *High Expectations*, 23.

advocates for the inclusion of expectations in a new member class upfront before people have been members for many months.³⁷

While communicating church expectations of its members is an essential element of assimilation, the question remains, “What expectations should be communicated?” An even greater question is, “Does the church even have expectations of its members?” After all, Rainer laments, “We have dumbed down church membership to the point that it means almost nothing.”³⁸ Leeman maintains that the reason churches have so dumbed down membership is that Christians have adopted a perverted view of love. He states that people today do not get their opinions of God and his love from God himself, but rather, “we begin with our own self-defined concept of love and allow this self-defined concept to play god.”³⁹

He gives four faulty assumptions about love that play themselves out today both in the world and in the church. “Assumption one is that no boundaries can be placed on love.”⁴⁰ Leeman means that requirements and expectations (i.e., boundaries) are legalistic and unloving to most people because they impose, in the case of Christian disciplines, objective truth, holiness, and structure. As applied to a new member class, this assumption would say that it is unloving to hold someone accountable to certain beliefs and behaviors. Someone holding this assumption would say, “If you loved me, you would accept me the way I am.”

The second assumption states,

Love is disassociated in our minds from institutional structures and institutional acts of judgement. At best, the idea of an institution is a cold, impersonal, and

³⁷Rainer, *High Expectations*, 113.

³⁸Ibid., 12.

³⁹Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 24.

⁴⁰Ibid.

bureaucratic idea. Structures have inflexible scaffolding and hard edges. Love, we all know, is flexible yielding and personal.⁴¹

Under this faulty assumption, the church is institutionalized and all about power and control. Any attempt to guard its teaching, set membership expectations, or restrict membership, is unloving. The result is that churches have jettisoned expectations, requirements, and discipline from its *carte du jour* and succumbed to what Rainer asserts is dumbed down.

The third assumption states, “Love and church don’t go together particularly a church with sharp boundaries and authoritative pronouncements.”⁴² The idea here is that hearing the word love does not conjure thoughts of the church, but rather of romantic love, parental love, or even divine love, but not church love, not institutional love. The reason pastors and churches have a difficult time requiring membership classes, expecting holiness, and promoting faithfulness is because modernity views such ideas as legalistic, demanding, and yes, unloving.

Faulty assumption 4 is the underpinning of all the others assumptions: “Love and authority have nothing to do with one another.” Leeman writes,

Authority restrains. Love frees. Authority exploits. Love empowers. Authority steals life. Love saves life. This disassociation between love and authority is nothing new. They have been divided ever since the serpent suggested to Adam and Eve that God’s love and God’s authority were incommensurate.”⁴³

Leeman bemoans the “spate of books released in the last few decades by evangelical and so-called post-evangelical writers within or sympathetic to the emerging church or the missional church that echo this same call for less institution and more community.”⁴⁴ Readers should note the hint of such calls in the first section of this chapter highlighting the importance of relationships when choosing a church.

⁴¹Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 25.

⁴²Ibid., 24.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., 26.

Obviously, Leeman advocates for a more biblical definition of love, of which, the limits of this project will not allow me to explore save for one biblical reference and a brief explanation. In John 14:15, Jesus Christ says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Perfect love and absolute authority merge in the person and work of Christ, who lends his presence and authority to the church to represent his kingdom until he returns.⁴⁵ Perfect love is abhorrent to modernity because God’s perfect love is a love for himself and his glory. It is a love that Leeman refers to as a boomerang love that extends from God for his glory and captures believers on its return for God’s glory.⁴⁶ Leeman writes, “God’s God-centered love mercifully pours itself out to rebellious sinners in order to mark them off from the world, reform them into the obedient image of his Son, and display them before the watching universe.”⁴⁷

Leeman’s assumptions demonstrate the biblical understanding that merges love and authority is not commonplace in western society. His premise was evident in that older Christians have difficulty accepting requirements and expectations on new or perspective members. Therefore, the membership class should clearly articulate the biblical understanding of love and authority, which will be the underpinning of everything that follows.

From his research, Lawless notes the *expectations* communicated in the assimilation classes varied by church, but five were unmistakably present in most churches: identifying with the church through proper means (i.e., baptism and Lord’s Supper), attendance in worship and small groups, giving of finances, serving in ministry, and protecting the unity of the church.⁴⁸ If church leaders have expectations of church members

⁴⁵See Matt 16:18-19; 18:15-20; and 28:18-20.

⁴⁶Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 115.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 338.

⁴⁸Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 81.

in these areas, then it is important to communicate those expectations to prospective members up front in the new member class. Leeman writes, “The important point to understand about such classes is that they promote shared understanding across a range of topics and, therefore, unity. In that sense, they facilitate love.”⁴⁹

In addition to the aforementioned list of expectations communicated in the new member class, Lawless’ research revealed a more exhaustive list of *topics* frequently included in the class.⁵⁰ He adds doctrine of the church, expectations of members after joining, explanation of the church’ mission and/or vision, polity and government of the church, requirements for membership, and the plan of salvation, and the history of your church among topics regularly included in membership classes.

McIntosh and Arn suggest that churches have a list of characteristics that describe a fully assimilated member.⁵¹ To Lawless’ list, they add that a fully assimilated member attends worship service regularly, is growing spiritually, has friends at church, prays, and participates in the Great Commission. Such a list helps the church know what expectations to communicate during the new member class. McIntosh and Arn also suggest periodic evaluations of individual members based on their list to determine the church’s disciple making effectiveness.⁵²

Rainer’s research revealed twenty-one topics that churches included in new member classes. Among the 285 churches surveyed, the top ten topics included in membership classes are similar to both Lawless’ and McIntosh and Arns’ list. Rainer’s

⁴⁹Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 295.

⁵⁰Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 65. See appendix 4 for a full list of twenty-one topics, “Lawless—Topics Addressed in a New Member Class.”

⁵¹McIntosh and Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know*, 86-89. See appendix 5, “McIntosh and Arn’s Sample Characteristics of an Assimilated Member.”

⁵²McIntosh and Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know*, 88.

list does differ in that it includes denominational information, the church's history, and a tour of the church's facilities among the topics covered.⁵³

Leeman has a slightly different impression of such lists and the responsibility to love and shepherd one's congregation. He maintains that lists are helpful, but they miss the point of Christian submission, as modeled by Christ. He says church membership "involves giving ourselves to the church, not just giving of ourselves while remaining at a safe distance."⁵⁴ Nevertheless, he does advocate using membership classes, in most contexts, to explain "what entering the covenant of the church membership through baptism and the Lord's Supper means."⁵⁵ He also recommends utilizing "many of the tools that churches one hundred years ago used, such as membership interviews, statements of faith, written church covenants, membership rolls, even letters of transfer and membership packets."⁵⁶

Leeman explains that in the Great Commission, "Christ charged the church to teach disciples everything he commanded, including what it means to be united to Christ's Body. A new believer class or a membership class is a prudential tool for teaching believers about several aspects of life in the local church."⁵⁷ While Leeman does not suggest an official list of topics to include or expectations to communicate in the new member class, he does offer benefits of a new member class from which class content is evident. He says that membership classes

1. Are useful for clearly teaching what a church believes about Jesus and his gospel.

⁵³Rainer, *High Expectations*, 110. See appendix 6 for Rainer's full list, "Topics Included in the New Member Class."

⁵⁴Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 340.

⁵⁵Ibid., 287.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., 294.

2. Are useful for teaching newcomers everything that a church believes, thereby promoting unity among all who join.
3. Are useful for teaching how the church expects members to live toward one another. This promotes mutual care and concern.
4. Can be used for distinguishing a particular church theologically and denominationally from other churches.
5. Can be used for explaining matters of polity and how decisions are made in a particular church. Doing so promotes unity in the body. When disagreements and disputes come in the life of the body, everyone knows how they will be resolved.⁵⁸

For church plants and house churches that may not have a formal membership class or new believer class, Leeman suggests informal, but deliberate, conversations “that mimic the structure of a membership class” and explain the church’s statement of faith, how will decisions are made, how accountability happens, and with whom will the church affiliate.⁵⁹

Stetzer and Dodson similarly observe that

membership classes include [1] a clear presentation of what it means to be a Christian, [2] the church’s organizational structure, [3] church ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s Supper), and [4] the churches vision and mission, the church’s significant historical events, and other appropriate topics.⁶⁰

The bottom line is that for membership commitments of those joining the church to be truly viable, it is important that they understand the church’s expectations prior to joining so that prospective members will have a proper understanding of their commitment.

Deuteronomy 23:21-23 indicates that making a vow and failing to keep it is sin. When churches ask for membership decisions without thoroughly explaining the requisites of membership, expectations, and direction of the church, people are liable to

⁵⁸Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 294-95.

⁵⁹Ibid., 295.

⁶⁰Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 126.

make membership commitments without all the facts. Rainer sums up the argument in favor of membership expectations rather well, declaring,

One of the reasons the back door of many churches is so wide open is because front door issues were not properly addressed. . . . Most Rotary Clubs require higher levels of commitment than most churches! It is little wonder that the drop-out rate in churches across our nation is so high.⁶¹

Church Doctrine

Another important aspect of new member assimilation classes pertains to the church's doctrine. Lawless' research discovered that 100 percent of surveyed churches covered church doctrine in their membership classes.⁶² Rainer confirms Lawless' findings: "Higher-assimilation churches were much more likely to ask prospective members to agree to a basic doctrinal statement of the church."⁶³ Rainer's study reveals that 88.6 percent of high expectation churches either expected (59.3 percent) or required (29.3 percent) new members to adhere to a particular doctrinal position to be eligible for membership.⁶⁴

In order for people to become a part of the mission and ministry of the church, they must know and affirm the teaching that is important to that mission and ministry. While it may be antidotal, MacArthur dirges, "Many Christians today are vague about doctrine. Many pastors offer 'sermonettes for Christianettes.'"⁶⁵ Likewise, Rainer cries, "Doctrine has become a ridiculed word by some church leaders."⁶⁶ It is often premature

⁶¹Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches*, 184.

⁶²Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 69.

⁶³Rainer, *High Expectations*, 57.

⁶⁴Ibid., 58.

⁶⁵John MacArthur, *The Master's Plan for the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 27.

⁶⁶Rainer, *High Expectations*, 58.

to expect new or immature Christians to know and agree with every particular doctrinal distinctive of the church, nevertheless, basic elements of that doctrine should surface in the new member assimilation class and be insisted upon as requisites for membership. Otherwise, new members will bring their own understandings, and repeated cycles will pull the church away from her long-held core beliefs. Thabiti Anyabwile concurs, and believes “every Christian is meant to be a theologian in the best and most intimate sense of the word. If churches are to prosper in health, church members must be committed to being biblical theologians in whatever capacity they can.”⁶⁷

As Southern Baptists, Ballardsville Baptist Church affirms the Southern Baptist’s *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. More specifically, however, Ballardsville Baptist Church has its own doctrinal position that is consistent with the Southern Baptist’s *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* which is entitled, *Articles of Faith* that comprises the mainstay of doctrinal teaching in the Connect 101 class.⁶⁸ Potential members will learn many distinctives of the Baptist faith especially as it pertains to nearby churches and religious groups with differing beliefs. Leeman affirms the practice of contextualizing the format of the new member assimilation process, but he maintains that fundamental issues transcend culture. For example, he writes, “Different churches have different idols, but we’re all idolatrous to the core.”⁶⁹

It is important for new members to understand the differences between what they are leaving, if they are transferring membership, and what Ballardsville Baptist Church, and for that matter what the Southern Baptist Convention, believes, and most importantly, what the Bible teaches. The contextualization of specific doctrinal teaching

⁶⁷Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *What Is a Healthy Church Member* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 27-28.

⁶⁸See appendix 7 for “Articles of Faith: What We Believe, Ballardsville Baptist Church.”

⁶⁹Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 275.

in Ballardsville Baptist Church’s Connect 101 membership class, relates to the nature of Christ and his atonement, salvation, the nature of baptism, and eternal security. These doctrines also help new Christians understand the doctrine of the church as they grow in Christian maturity and fellowship with the church.

Salvation

In *Membership Matters*, Lawless highlights the importance of evangelistically sharing the gospel during the new members’ assimilation class: “Eighty percent of the surveyed churches taught the plan of salvation in their membership classes. Several churches,” he insists, “told us, in fact, that it was unusual to have a membership class *without* someone getting saved.”⁷⁰ In 2 Corinthians 13:5, people are encouraged to examine themselves “to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?” Ensuring perspective members are truly saved must be at the core of any new member class, interview, or discussions. Yet, only 49.1 percent of Rainer’s high expectations churches reported the plan of salvation as a topic in their new member class.⁷¹

Leeman, in both *The Church and the Surprising Offence of God’s Love* and in the companion book *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus*, stresses the idea that the church represents Jesus. His assertion has much biblical warrant as is evident in Matthew 28:18–20 when Jesus sends his disciples out to make disciples and teach them everything Jesus had taught them. In John 20:21, Jesus said that in the same way the Father sent him, he was sending out the disciples. Then he gave them the very presence of God in the Holy Spirit (v. 22).

⁷⁰Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 70.

⁷¹Rainer, *High Expectations*, 110.

Church membership is “a declaration of citizenship in Christ’s kingdom. It’s a passport. It’s an announcement made in the press room of Christ’s kingdom. It’s the declaration that you are an official, licensed, card-carrying, bona fide Jesus representative.”⁷² This view of the church underscores the importance of regenerate church membership. Leeman explains,

People need to understand and believe the gospel to join a church. People cannot always explain the gospel well, but in one way or another they must be able to explain it. They must be able to say who they represent before we will officially call them Jesus representatives.⁷³

Stetzer and Dodson agree saying that membership classes should include a clear presentation of what it means to be a Christian.⁷⁴

The membership class is a natural time to ask perspective members to examine themselves. Moreover, the doctrine of salvation must be among those presented in the new member class. If perspective members have not submitted their lives to Christ, then they will certainly not submit themselves to his surrogate on earth, the church. Therefore, it is critical for the church to examine prospective members to determine the authenticity of their salvation before they join the church. Leeman argues that Christians have officially been granted a charter to represent Christ and his kingdom on the earth and that non-Christians know it:

When someone starts calling himself a Christian, non-Christians will associate him with Christ. For this reason, churches should take great care when affirming someone as a Christian through baptism and the Lord’s Supper [church membership]. Doing so gives them licensure, as it were, to publically represent Christ.⁷⁵

The Connect 101 membership class of Ballardsville Baptist Church clearly presents the gospel and seeks to ascertain the salvation status of those desiring to join.

⁷²Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 64.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 85.

⁷⁴Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 126.

⁷⁵Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 234.

Having considered the research and writings on the matter, the pastor or staff will conduct follow up interviews after the Connect 101 to ensure salvation before presenting the prospective member to the congregation for membership.

Church Covenant

The church covenant “is an agreement members make with each other and with God to live out the Christian life together in a local church.”⁷⁶ Lawless states, that a church covenant is “important because it puts expectations in writing.”⁷⁷ He reports that 57 percent of the churches surveyed included an examination of their membership covenant.⁷⁸ Rainer’s numbers are slightly higher, having 63.2 percent of churches including details of the church covenant and church discipline in their new member classes, which he cites one pastor as saying, reduces the number of prospective members.⁷⁹

Although the terminology may not be contemporary, the idea of covenants is nothing new. Robertson writes that throughout history, “God has entered repeatedly into covenantal relationships with particular men.”⁸⁰ God entered into covenant with Noah (Gen 6:18), Abraham (Gen 15:18), Israel (Exod 24:8), and David (Ps 89:3). Robertson continues, “Israel’s prophets anticipated the coming of the days of the ‘new’ covenant (Jer 31:31), and Christ himself spoke of the last supper in covenantal language (Luke

⁷⁶Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 172.

⁷⁷Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 89.

⁷⁸Ibid., 65.

⁷⁹Rainer, *High Expectations*, 110.

⁸⁰O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 3.

22:20).”⁸¹ Covenants serve as the basis of God’s promises to his people and, depending on the type of covenant, his people’s obedience to him.

Robertson defines a covenant between God and man: “A covenant is a *bond in blood sovereignly administered*. . . . When God enters into a covenantal relationship with men, he sovereignly institutes a life-and-death bond.”⁸² In Luke 22:19-20, Jesus indicates as much at the Last Supper: “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” In Matthew 26:28, Jesus says, “For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” The language of pouring out blood underscores the commitment Jesus made to the covenant. Jesus established the community of forgiven people by satisfying the demands of the old covenant. Demonstrating unimaginable commitment, “Jesus offers his blood as the basis for deliverance from the curses of the covenant.”⁸³ He sealed the covenant with his life.

Leeman maintains that church membership is a particular “kind of covenant between a people who already belong together by virtue of the new covenant and the apostolic charter.”⁸⁴ Leeman explains that church membership, or the covenant of church membership, is a “bending or bowing of the whole person around these other people in love.”⁸⁵ He explains, “I place my discipleship to Christ under them, and they under me and the others because we love one another with the affection of Christ. We intend to unite and give ourselves to one another.”⁸⁶

⁸¹Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 3.

⁸²Ibid., 4.

⁸³Ibid., 144-45.

⁸⁴Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 248. The apostolic charter is how Leeman refers to the commissioning of the apostles, and then by virtue of the apostles, the church, to *bind and loose* people as church members. See Matt 16, 18, and 28.

⁸⁵Ibid., 249.

⁸⁶Ibid.

Dever argues that the language of covenant is unlike some theologians claim as sounding cold and dry, but rather it is the language of personal relationship. He maintains that “covenant commitments you make are the most important, deep, tender relationships in your life.”⁸⁷ The uniting and giving of one’s self is the essence of commitment and church membership. Christ’s great commitment to his followers informs and even makes possible their commitment to one another in his church, which after all is a representation of him. Dever writes,

Church membership begins when Christ saves us and makes us a member of his body. Yet his work must then be given expression in an actual local church. In that sense, church membership begins when we commit to a particular body. Being a Christian means being joined to a church.⁸⁸

The covenant of church membership happens when two or more “people come together to say, ‘Let us submit to one another. Affirm my profession and keep watch over my soul on behalf of Christ. I, together with others, will do the same for you. All of us together then will speak for Christ.’”⁸⁹

The actual wording of church covenants may vary from congregation to congregation, but the written covenant expresses the commitment that members make to one another when entering into membership. Lawless provides a sample of a membership covenant including topics such as attendance, unity, serving in ministry, and outreach responsibilities.⁹⁰ Dever explains that Capitol Hill Baptist, along with many other churches, asks their new members to express their commitment by actually signing the church’s statement of faith and church covenant.⁹¹ While it may not be sealed with one’s blood,

⁸⁷Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 71.

⁸⁸Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* 5th ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 94-95.

⁸⁹Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense*, 248.

⁹⁰Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 89.

⁹¹Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 172. See appendix 8 for “Capitol

when men enter into covenants, they are committing themselves to one another under the lordship of Christ.⁹² Such commitments should focus members' attentions on the goal of Christlikeness and begin to close the back door of the church.

Ballardsville Baptist Church presents new and prospective members with a copy of the articles of faith and the church's membership covenant.⁹³ The Connect 101 membership class ensures that every prospective member has a copy of the articles of faith and membership covenant. The class covers the expectations of its members and asks for a signed copy from anyone desiring to join the church, providing they have met other membership requirements pertaining to salvation, baptism, and the affirmation of the church's articles of faith.⁹⁴ Moreover, the church reads the covenant aloud whenever the church observes the Lord's Supper. These initiatives help ensure that the church's membership stays attuned to their commitments and responsibilities to one another.

Summary

Throughout this chapter, the opinions and insights into assimilation of many authors have been expressed. Their writing, based upon research and experience, served to shape the Connect 101 membership class at Ballardsville Baptist Church. Relationships are important to most people when joining a church; nevertheless, the church bears a responsibility to ensure those relationships have at their end the glory of Christ. A significant benefit to employing a new member class is communicating the church's expectations and requisites for membership. Covering topics such as salvation, baptism, attendance guidelines, discipleship opportunities, giving expectations, and missions support are among those most often expounded in such classes. The class is also an ideal

Hill Baptist Church, Church Covenant.”

⁹²Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 6.

⁹³See appendix 9 for “Ballardsville Baptist Church, Church Covenant.”

⁹⁴See appendix 7 for “Articles of Faith.”

time to share church doctrine and denominational distinctives so that prospective members will clearly understand what the church teaches and how it differs from other churches. Finally, the membership class presents a prime opportunity to ask for commitment to Christ, his church, and the church's membership covenant.

CHAPTER 4

LAUNCHING AN ASSIMILATION PROCESS

Introduction

Chapter 1 of this project included a discussion of contextual factors affecting Ballardsville Baptist Church. Chapter 2 considered the biblical warrant for assimilation and church membership. Chapter 3 examined the ideas of contemporary Christian authors pertaining to assimilation and church membership classes. This chapter outlines the steps Ballardsville Baptist Church implemented in order to launch its assimilation process, including challenges and surprises encountered along the way. The implementation of this project follows these steps over a fifteen-week period; each step corresponds to a week.

Week 1

Week 1 of the project began on March 13, 2016. This week was used to draft a summary report drawing upon the research in this project.¹ The purpose of the report was to provide justification for the assimilation project. Since staff, lay leaders, and church members were less likely to read the entire project, the summary report presented a snapshot of the plan, showed why the timing was right for the project, and provided the outline of the fifteen weeks.

In creating the summary report, it was necessary to disclose the church's attendance numbers for the last several years and to show the up and down cycle in attendance the church had experienced. The church's member retention problem had to be exposed if we wanted to implement a solution. The summary report disclosed that, in

¹See appendix 1 for "Project Justification Summary Report."

many cases, church members were unhappy with what was happening in the church and chose to leave. Throughout the years, the reason for membership decline included disagreements over church leadership, music styles, children's programs, missions emphasis, church schedules, church polity, hiring processes, roles of men and women in the church, and Sunday school curriculum. Nearly all of these reasons originated with differences of opinions about the direction of the church and who should influence that vision.

The report sought to explain that an assimilation class would afford church leaders the opportunity to address many critical issues such as the church's vision, strategies, doctrine, polity, pending changes, and member expectations. Covering these topics before prospective members make membership decisions would help them make informed decisions and ideally prepare them for the road ahead.

Week 2

The objective for week 2 was to train the church staff concerning the various elements of the project. The nature of the training was less instructional and more informational; therefore, it was more like a review and justification for the project. This training took place on Tuesday, March 22, 2016, during the weekly staff meeting, which began at 9:00 a.m.

The staff training sought to solicit input, support, and participation concerning the schedule, teaching curriculum, and the roles each staff member would take in the preparation, teaching, and evaluation of the Connect 101 assimilation class. The staff received the "Project Justification Summary Report" and asked a few questions concerning the practical aspects of when the class would be taught and its duration.

The Connect 101 class was written to be taught on Sunday afternoons and last three hours plus time for breaks and questions. The staff asked if the Connect 101 class could be taught on Wednesday evenings as one of the church's Life University discipleship options and if it could be taught over multiple days rather than in one 3 to 4

hour setting. Lawless reports that some churches had membership classes lasting multiple days, with one church using as many as sixteen weeks. Nevertheless, 24 churches in his study had membership class(es) that were five hours or less.² After presenting the staff with Lawless' findings, we agreed to utilize one three-hour period to teach the class.

Week 3

Week 3 began on March 27, 2016. It focused on preparing and printing the focus group questions for the initial and follow-up surveys. The survey instruments were initially written and designed during the early stages of this project before the official fifteen weeks began. There were typos, duplicate questions, and formatting issues that needed to be corrected prior to their distribution. The church secretary and staff received a copy of the survey instruments for their evaluation and feedback.

During this time, we began drafting a "Connect Brochure" that would take a few weeks to complete.³ The brochure's primary use was to promote the church and the Connect 101 class. The brochure was distributed during the church's outreach ministry on Wednesday evenings when church guests from the previous week were visited by a two-member outreach team. The teams also visited people who had moved into the area during the previous month. The new movers list was purchased monthly from Outreach, Incorporated, although similar lists were available from other companies.⁴ Several copies of the brochure were also placed at the church's welcome center and in other prominent locations throughout the church building.

²Charles E. Lawless, *Membership Matters: Insights from Effective Churches on New Member Classes and Assimilation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 37-38.

³See appendix 10 for the "Connect Brochure."

⁴For more information about the Outreach, Inc., visit www.outreach.com. The specific New Mover webpage address is Outreach, accessed November 12, 2008, https://www.outreach.com/print/New_Movers.aspx.

Week 4

During week 4 of the project, beginning on April 3, 2016, all printed church publications were evaluated, revised, and republished to reflect the new process of Connect, Grow, Serve, and Go. For example, the bulletin was organized under the headings of Connect, Grow, Serve, and Go. Welcome information, fellowship opportunities, and church membership announcements were printed under the “Connect” heading. Discipleship opportunities such as Sunday school classes and Wednesday evening discipleship classes were reported under the “Grow” heading. Opportunities to serve in the various ministries of the church were placed under the “Serve” heading. In the same manner, missions announcements and opportunities were listed under the “Go” heading. The rebranding effort highlighted the assimilation process and set the stage for additional assimilation classes to be taught in the future. These additional classes were outlined as the priorities of assimilation in chapter 2 and explained next under “Week 5.” These additional classes serve as an orientation to the other key elements of Ballardsville’s assimilation and discipleship strategy.

Week 5

During week 5, which began on April 10, 2016, church leaders were trained on the project. The training was held after the 10:45 a.m. church service at 12:15 p.m. Lunch was provided and a total of thirty-five Sunday school teachers, deacons, and Wednesday evening discipleship leaders were present.

The purpose of the training was to review the various elements of the project with church leadership, to provide justification for the project, and to solicit leadership support for the Connect 101 class. “The Project Justification Summary Report” was distributed to participants and reviewed as a part of the training.⁵ Everyone supported the Connect 101 class and agreed that it was needed. The only question asked pertained to

⁵See appendix 1 for “Project Justification Summary Report.”

the length of the class. One person supposed that three to four hours was too long for most people. A few people made suggestions that the class be conducted over several weeks. The concern and suggested solutions were similar to the concerns and solutions expressed by the staff during their training in week 2 of this project. I acknowledged the concern and shared that research revealed that churches used various formats and durations for their membership classes.⁶ The duration of the class was initially planned to be three hours and then monitored to ensure maximum participation and accessibility to potential members.

The leadership training was also used to explain the Connect, Grow, Serve, Go strategy and to preview the additional assimilation classes associated with each component of the strategy. I explained that the Grow 201 class will pertain to Christian education. This class will seek to educate members on the importance of personal spiritual disciplines such as daily Bible reading and quiet times, prayer, and financial giving. It will also highlight the areas where church programming helps facilitate spiritual growth, such as in hearing the Word through sermons, and participating in Sunday school and discipleship classes. This class will ask participants to commit to daily Bible reading and quiet times, prayer, and financial giving, as well as asking them to commit to faithful participation in a Sunday school class.

Likewise, church leaders were taught that the Serve 301 class will be for members who have completed the 101 and 201 classes. They learned that this class will focus on the importance of serving in ministry and the biblical mandate to use spiritual gifts doing so. This class will assist participants in identifying their own spiritual gifts, personality types, and areas of passion and interest. This information will be used to help participants identify two or three church ministries in which to serve. A coach will be assigned to each person to help him or her connect with ministry leaders and get plugged

⁶Lawless, *Membership Matters*, 37-38.

in to the applicable ministries. The participants will be asked to commit to ongoing ministry of the church.

Lastly, leaders were taught about the future Go 401 class, which will be for members who have completed all the previous classes. This class will teach the church's mission philosophy and why we do what we do in the area of missions. It will challenge participants to live daily on mission for Christ. It will teach them how to use tracts, which the church provides for its members to use in evangelism. It will teach them how to share their faith with others and how they can disciple new converts. The Go 401 class will also educate the participants on the Southern Baptists Convention's missionaries around the world. This class will ask participants to commit to financially supporting the missions fund and going on at least one mission trip each year.

Week 6

Week 6, which began on April 17, 2016, was reserved for sending focus group invitations. The invitations were written and sent on Wednesday, April 20, 2016. Participants were asked to return the surveys the following Sunday, April 24, 2016. Focus group members were people who would participate in a Pre-Project Survey⁷ during week 7 of the project, in the Connect 101 class on week 11, and in a Post-Project Survey⁸ on week 14.

The original plan called for three to six-member focus groups. The groups would be comprised of church visitors, members with little commitment to the church, and committed church leaders. That plan was abandoned as it was unnecessary, and finding three acceptable meeting times throughout the week was proving impossible. As an alternative, one focus group was established.

⁷See appendix 2 for "Pre-Project Survey."

⁸See appendix 3 for "Post-Project Survey."

The purpose of the focus group was to have its members meet and complete the questionnaire. However, meeting physically was not necessary since the goal of the focus group did not include member interaction. Therefore, the participants did not physically meet together until the actual Connect 101 class on May 22, 2016. The questionnaires were distributed by hand and email. The focus group contained church visitors, members, and leaders.

I personally selected group members to participate in the project. Each participant was given a letter explaining the project and the nature of their commitment in detail. The letter explained the length of the class, purpose of the class, and the desired outcomes of the class. Two letters were created. One letter aimed at soliciting the involvement of *potential* church members who had been visiting the church.⁹ The second letter sought the participation of church *members*, including key leaders.¹⁰ The Pre-Project Surveys were distributed with the invitation letters and participants were asked to return them during week 7 of the project.

Week 7

A total of 18 Pre-Project Surveys were completed and returned during the week of April 24, 2016.¹¹ I assigned each returned survey a respondent number, and the results were recorded.¹² Of the 18 respondents, 8 were not members. Of those who were not members, all but 2 respondents had been attending Ballardsville for more than one year. The 2 respondents who had been attending less than a year had been attending for three weeks.

⁹See appendix 11 for “Invitation Letter, Guests.”

¹⁰See appendix 12 for “Invitation Letter, Members.”

¹¹See appendix 2 for “Pre-Project Survey.”

¹²See appendix 13 for “Pre-Project Survey Results.”

The survey revealed precisely why an assimilation process was needed and how it could help add members to the church. One question was asked, “Do you know what steps you need to take to join this church?” Two people left the question unanswered, and 7 people answered, “No.” Two members actually answered “no” to this question and 5 non-members answered “no.” Two non-members answered “yes,” and then cited, “Ask to join, letter, and transfer of church” as the steps they would follow. If the process a person must take to join the church is ambiguous or difficult to discover, membership additions will be inhibited. These results show that an assimilation process that begins with a membership class is necessary at Ballardsville Baptist Church.

One of the goals of this project was to move people from guest to committed members who would fully engage in the discipleship process of the church. This goal was needed for no other reason than 7 out of 18 people did not know the steps to take to join the church.

A second goal of this project was to teach potential church members the church’s expectations of them. This goal was critical to the project’s success because 10 respondents, including 2 members, said that the church had not made them personally aware of member expectations. One of those 2 members has been a member for more than 5 years and the other for more 1 year. Only 8 participants affirmed that the church had made them aware of the financial responsibilities of its members. These responses reveal the church has not made its members aware of their responsibilities.

Moreover, only 8 people were confident they knew the vision of the church, leaving 10 respondents who were not confident about the vision. A third goal of this project was that participants in the class would gain a knowledge of the church’s vision. The assimilation class was needed to convey not only the expectations of the church, but also the vision of the church. The survey results reinforced the necessity of an assimilation process at Ballardsville Baptist Church.

Week 8

Week 8 of the project, beginning May 1, 2016, was used to prepare Connect 101 class materials. Originally, the writing of the curriculum was expected to be outside of the fifteen-week project; nevertheless, during week 8 of the implementation schedule, I developed the curriculum incorporating ideas presented in chapters 2 and 3 of this project. Moreover, activities such as making student handout booklets, inviting additional participants, and reminding guests and new members of the class occurred in this week. I also worked with staff and key volunteers during week 8 to ensure that arrangements for childcare, meeting space, and food were progressing properly.

The curriculum content was a combination of newly written material and previously written church documents, such as the church's Articles of Faith, Church Covenant, and Our Shared Calling. I created additional sections of the curriculum to address topics such as salvation, ordinances, church purpose and strategy, church affiliations, worship, and membership. The curriculum's forty pages were printed double-sided, black and white, and bound using a 1/4 inch black comb, with a color printed 65 pound cardstock front cover and a blank back cover. Thirty copies of the class curriculum were produced, which contained fill-in-the-blank and notes sections so students could take notes throughout the class. A teaching guide for the Connect 101 Curriculum was also produced.¹³ It contained the answers, highlighted in yellow ink, to the corresponding fill-in-the-blank sections of the curriculum. The teacher's notes were printed single sided and placed in a three-ring binder.

I formatted the material in a visually appealing manner to convey the importance of the topic. Furthermore, since we were asking participants to spend three hours on a Sunday afternoon learning more about the church, the quality of content and the physical document itself should reflect a professional presentation that valued the

¹³See appendix 14 for "Connect 101 Curriculum." The curriculum located in the appendix contains all the information provided in the class—all answers for the fill-in-the-blanks are given.

participants' time investment and demonstrated the importance we place on church membership.

Weeks 9 and 10

The project timeline allowed two weeks to promote the actual Connect 101 class. During this time, May 8-21, 2016, church leaders confirmed the commitments of those who had previously signed up for the class and promoted it to new church guests who had not previously been invited to participate. The primary means of promotion was through church and Sunday school announcements, on video displays in the building, inclusion in the church's weekly bulletin, and through emails.¹⁴

The church staff called everyone who had previously committed or indicated interest in the Connect 101 class. Nine of the original commitments were broken when called and asked to confirm. Each person who backed out had also completed the Pre-Project Survey and had indicated that they would be at the class.

Week 10 was also used to ensure all preparations had been made and each ministry team knew their role, had ample resources, and were comfortable moving forward. The associate pastor of children arranged to have childcare for children in fourth grade and under. Since the duration of the class was estimated to be three hours, childcare had to encompass many activities. Furthermore, the invitation letter sent to the participants explained the length of the class in regard to childcare. It read,

We will have childcare, including lunch, videos, and outside playtime (weather permitting) or gym play, for birth through 4th grade. Of course the younger ones will not be going outside or to the gym. Please dress your children casual so they can play. If you feel your children will struggle with the duration of the class, you may choose to make alternate arrangements with a friend or relative to keep them for the afternoon. We understand.¹⁵

¹⁴See appendix 15 for "Connect 101 Email Promotion."

¹⁵See appendix 11 for "Invitation Letter to Guests."

The church's hospitality team also provided lunch and snacks for both the adult participants and the children. Each group received clear instructions, and expectations were set high. Children, other than infants, dined in a separate room from the adults so that the adults would have time for fellowship before the class began.

Week 11

The Connect 101 class was taught on May 22, 2016, after the 10:45 a.m. service. Participants were asked to meet in the church's fellowship hall where greeters and key leaders gave instructions and got lunch started. Lunch began at 12:20 p.m. The plan was to serve everyone lunch and after fifteen or twenty minutes begin the actual class. Adults and children were served in different areas, and the children were further divided into age two and under and age three and up.

I desired to begin the actual teaching time at 12:30 p.m., but we did not get started until 1:05 p.m. The meal was actually a deterrent to beginning the teaching because participants had their lunch-related items on the table and did not have room for the class materials. However, the participants were enjoying the conversations and fellowship during this time. In chapter 2 of this project, I outlined the importance of making new relationships in new member classes. Therefore, I did not rush the lunch or end it prematurely. At 12:50 p.m., I began addressing the group. I thanked them for coming, ensured everyone had writing instruments, distributed the class materials, and discussed the introduction and overview on pages 3 and 4 of the curriculum.

During the overview, I shared the necessity of session 1: Connecting with God, since people from many different backgrounds and religious experiences come to our church. This session was designed to help everyone know what the church believes regarding salvation and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. I shared that we would be covering session 2: Our Shared Calling, which explains the church's vision and mission and the strategy to accomplish them. Moreover, we would examine our Five

Great Passions and our church's Articles of Faith.¹⁶ I concluded the overview explaining that session 3: Connecting with Others, is where we examine how to join the church, the responsibilities of membership and how decisions are made. After that brief introduction, I prayed and gave the participants a five minute break to transition from lunch, use the restrooms, and gather again for session 1.

Session 1: Connecting with God

The first session, Connecting with God,¹⁷ began at 1:05 p.m. Seventeen people, excluding me, were in attendance, 7 of whom were not members of the church. Two of the participants, 1 who was a member, and 1 who was not, had to leave early. The man who was not a member had come forward to join the church in the first service earlier that day and I encouraged him to come to the class. Due to prior commitments, he had to leave after session 2. The member who left early was a realtor and she had a work appointment and left after lunch, but her husband, who is a leader in the church, remained throughout the duration of the class.

Salvation. I opened the session explaining that as extremely important as it is, the most important decision people will make is not to which church they will belong. The most important decision they will ever make is how they respond to Jesus Christ. I explained the good news of Christ beginning with "God's Plan" in creation and "The Problem" of sin and the fall of humanity. I used Ephesians 2:1-3 to explain that the default position of humanity is separation from God showing that verse 1 reveals that people are separated by trespasses and sins; verse 2 shows that people are following the course of the world; and verse 3 declares that everyone is by nature is a child of wrath. Then we examined Romans 3:23 realizing that everyone has sinned and is guilty. Romans 6:23

¹⁶See appendix 7 for "Articles of Faith: What We Believe, Ballardsville Baptist Church."

¹⁷See appendix 14 for "Connect 101 Curriculum."

was used to show that the result of sin is death, and Revelation 20:14-15 was used to demonstrate that there is a second death for those who do not know Christ. I explained the second death as everlasting separation from God, his grace, love, provision, and his people. Using Hebrews 9:27, participants learned that everyone will die physically and then face judgment.

At this point, I introduced “The Solution,” using Ephesians 2:4-7 to prove that Jesus Christ took our place so that God could save us. I explained verse 4, 5, and 7, which respectively speak of God’s love and mercy toward people, that he makes people alive in Christ, and that he demonstrates immeasurable grace and kindness. We moved to Romans 5:8 to learn that “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” I then explained Ephesians 1:7, which says, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,” and John 14:6, where Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Moreover, we read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, where the apostle Paul outlines the gospel:

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

We moved next to “The Response,” where I used Ephesians 2:8-9 to argue for salvation by grace alone, in Christ alone, by faith alone. During this section, I brought up good works, baptismal regeneration, eternal security, and compared the Bible to what other churches and denominations believe is required to gain salvation. We turned to John 1:12, which reads, “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” I explained that they must believe that (1) Jesus Christ is the only begotten son of God; (2) he is God in flesh, and lived a sinless life; (3) he died on the cross to pay for their sins; and (4) he rose from the grave on the

third day. Second, I explained how to receive (1) His forgiveness by accepting it through faith; and (2) accept his ruling authority over every aspect of their lives.

I invited anyone who realized that they were not born again to receive Christ. I explained that if they believed this message, were ready to trust in Jesus Christ for forgiveness, and ready to commit to live for him, then they were ready to be saved. Furthermore, I explained that it is Jesus Christ who saves someone based on Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and the person's personal belief in him. I gave them an opportunity to express trust in Jesus and accept his forgiveness by praying to him.

Participants who were already Christians were asked to summarize, in writing, their conversion experience using key details about how they heard the gospel, what they heard, how they responded, and if and how they were baptized. Non-members were asked to bring a copy of their written testimony to their membership interview.

I am not aware that anyone accepted Christ during this session, but I am confident that the session is necessary and helped participants understand the gospel more clearly. I encouraged all the participants to use the presentation coupled with their testimonies when sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others.

The gospel presentation followed the biblical exposition of Ephesians 2 presented in chapter 2 of this project and fulfilled the first priority of assimilation at Ballardsville Baptist Church to give every man, woman, boy, and girl the opportunity to hear, see, and respond to the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁸

Ordinances. Session 1: Connecting with God, also covered the Baptist ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The section on baptism explained why it is important. I shared that (1) Jesus was baptized; (2) baptism properly represents being

¹⁸This priority is derived from the mission statement of Summit Church, Greenville, SC, accessed February 15, 2013, <http://spartanburg.summitupstate.org/mission>. A variation of the Summit Church statement was adopted as the mission statement of Ballardsville Baptist Church on June 9, 2013.

born again; (3) Jesus commands us to be baptized; and (4) baptism demonstrates that the person is a Christian. Several basic facts about baptism were given and explained, such as the fact that it does not save a person, is for believers, by immersion, and means that a person is joining a local church.

The importance of the Lord's Supper was also covered in session 1. Participants were taught using many Scriptures that (1) Jesus instituted it; (2) it reminds Christians of their sin; (3) it symbolizes Jesus' atonement for sins; (4) it reminds us of Jesus; (5) it proclaims the gospel and anticipates Jesus' return; and (6) it provides an opportunity to renew one's personal commitment to Christ. To address a question that I am commonly asked by members and visitors, I explained the frequency with which Ballardsville Baptist Church takes the Lord's Supper.

Session 1 required exactly forty-five minutes and concluded at 1:50 p.m. Participants were given a fifteen minute break. Snacks and drinks were provided during this time. Participants appeared to enjoy the class and fellowship with others during the breaks.

Session 2: Our Shared Calling

Vision. Session 2: Our Shared Calling, began at 2:05 p.m.¹⁹ The second goal of this project was for members to gain knowledge of the church's vision statement. This session began with a presentation of "Our Vision," which is "Loving God, loving others, and making Him known in our community and around the world." I read and explained both the Great Commandment from Matthew 22:34-40 and the Great Commission from Matthew 28:18-20, and explained that "Our Vision" came directly from Scripture.

Mission. Next, class members learned the mission of the church: "The mission of Ballardsville Baptist Church is to give every man, woman, boy, and girl, in Oldham

¹⁹See appendix 14 for "Connect 101 Curriculum."

County and around the world, the opportunity to hear, see, and respond to the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, and to become fruit-bearing disciples in the church.”

I pointed out the various elements of the mission statement and the importance of each. First, the mission includes *every* person a church member meets. Second, giving people the *opportunity to hear, see, and respond* to the saving gospel includes our ministries, lifestyles, and the proclamation of the gospel. Third, the mission is to give people an opportunity to *respond* to the gospel as succinctly demonstrated by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:20: “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” The mission is to implore people to be reconciled to God.

Fourth, the mission of Ballardsville Baptist Church includes the *saving gospel* of Jesus Christ. That is his deity, his perfect life, sacrificial death, victorious resurrection, glorious reign in our lives through the Holy Spirit, and position at the right hand of the Father to make intercession for his people. Fifth, the church’s mission includes discipleship in that we want to give people an opportunity to become *fruit-bearing disciples*. The great commission makes clear the importance of disciple making and Jesus demonstrated its importance throughout his earthly ministry. Last, the mission of Ballardsville Baptist Church includes the *church*. Specifically, this is the local church. Our aim is to plug people into healthy local churches in their own communities.

Strategy. I used this opportunity to explain the church’s strategy to accomplish the aforementioned vision and mission. In this section, I outlined the *Connect, Grow, Serve,* and *Go* priorities of our assimilation process. I explained that they were the freshman class going through the Connect 101 class, but soon there would be three more orientation classes designed to help them understand how the church is structured to *Grow* them closer to Christ through discipleship, *Serve* Christ and his church through ministry, and *Go* with the gospel to all the world. I explained that each class will have its own set of commitments, similar to how this class desired participants to commit to

Christ for salvation and to the church for membership.

Five great passions. Session 2 also contained an explanation of “Our Five Great Passions.”²⁰ These five passions are the heartbeat of the church in that whether we are together or apart, our church body strives for *biblical truth, godly character, fruitful living, intentional relationships*, and to *embody unity*.

Affiliations. This session also included a section entitled “Our Affiliations.” I taught the group that Ballardsville Baptist Church is an autonomous gathering of believers in Jesus Christ who affirm the same core beliefs and covenant together for common purposes. In one sense, the church is independent in that there are no outside entities or organizations controlling or offering leadership to the church. The church does, however, voluntarily affiliate with the Southern Baptist Convention and its affiliates for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. I explained that the Southern Baptist Convention is an affiliation of over 45,000 like-minded Baptist churches that cooperate for the purpose of missions and Christian causes in local communities, states, North America, and the world. Furthermore, the affiliation is completely voluntary and consists of a church’s affirmation of “The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message,”²¹ and contributing financially to the Cooperative Program.

Articles of faith: What we believe. Session 2 also contained an explanation of the church’s Articles of Faith.²² While the curriculum contained the full Articles of Faith document, only certain topics were covered in the class. Students were encouraged to thoroughly read the Articles of Faith and contact a staff member if any disagreement

²⁰See appendix 14 for “Connect 101 Curriculum.”

²¹*The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message* can be downloaded from <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.

²²See appendix 7 for “Articles of Faith.”

existed. In the class, we covered the supremacy of Christ and the Scriptures and how we unapologetically follow the Bible. The class explained the Trinity including the deity of Jesus Christ. Because Session 1: Connecting with God, extensively covered the condition of mankind, the doctrine of salvation, and the ordinances, the exposition of those topics were omitted from this section. The section entitled “The Christian Family” was read in its entirety in order to clearly present the church’s position on the biblical understanding of marriage and when life begins.

Session 2 required exactly one hour to teach and concluded at 3:05 p.m. It was the hardest portion to teach and seemed to have the least interest from the learners. My impression is that most of the participants expected this section and already knew the church’s position on these topics. The only exception would be the couple who had only been visiting the church for three weeks. Participants were given a fifteen minute break and refreshments were provided.

Session 3: Connecting with Others

The last session, Session 3: Connecting with Others, began at 3:20 p.m.²³ This session was devoted to explaining the purpose of the church, the church covenant, membership requirements, and the church polity. The Constitution of Ballardsville Baptist Church outlines the church’s purpose:

Ballardsville Baptist Church affirms that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. The purpose of this church is to be a body committed to believing and following the Bible. The Bible serves as the authoritative guide for this New Testament church providing its beliefs, practices, ordinances, and purposes. This church strives to develop all members to maturity in Jesus Christ through: *Worship, Discipleship, Ministry, Evangelism and Missions, and Fellowship*. (emphasis added)

Session 3 explained each of the priorities for maturity giving special attention to the first and last: worship and fellowship. These two priorities were emphasized over the others because the Connect 101 strategy is concerned with connecting people with

²³See appendix 14 for “Connect 101 Curriculum.”

God through Christ and with one another. Worship and fellowship encompass this strategy element.

Discipleship, ministry, mission, and evangelism. Along with worship and fellowship (Connect), the church’s purpose, as listed in the constitution, also mentioned discipleship (Grow), ministry (Serve), and mission (Go). Since the third goal of the project was to move people from guest to committed members who would fully engage in the discipleship process of the church, the Connect 101 class encouraged attenders to participate in the discipleship opportunities at Ballardsville Baptist Church, which include Sunday school classes, Life University, sermons, and one-on-one discipleship mentoring relationships. Participants also received a list of all the church ministries in which members can serve and use their gifts and talents. Likewise, attendees were told of the many missions and evangelism opportunities available for both members and guests.

The Church Covenant

Next, session 3 presented the church covenant.²⁴ The first section of the covenant lists the expectations Ballardsville Baptist Church has of its members. The first expectation is that members will grow in their faith. Second, members are expected to participate in the vision and goals of the church. Third, members are expected to practice biblical stewardship with their time, talent, and treasure. Fourth, church members are expected to grow the church through evangelism, discipleship, and ministry. Last, members are expected to preserve the unity of the church.

After explaining the covenant to the participants, I encouraged them to sign the covenant and bring it with them to their membership interview. When teaching subsequent Connect 101 classes, I will present the membership qualifications first and then the church covenant.

²⁴See appendix 9 for “Ballardsville Baptist Church, Church Covenant.”

Church Membership

Qualifications. Next, I explained that the qualifications for membership were first that a person must make a profession of faith in Christ as savior and Lord, and second, be baptized by immersion.²⁵ If someone already meets the first qualification, and has previously belonged to a Baptist church, he can join by transferring membership from a previous church to Ballardsville Baptist church. In some cases, if church records have been lost, a church closes down, or if previous church membership records are unavailable, then prospective members who have met the first qualification can join by making a statement of prior conversion experience and that they have been scripturally baptized by immersion.

Responsibilities. I also presented additional member responsibilities and expectations in this section of the class:

1. Participate in the church's Connect 101 Membership Class
2. Affirm the Constitution and Articles of Faith
3. Strive to live a life in obedience to God's Word
4. Regularly participate in worship and the life of this church
5. Be involved in Sunday school (small groups)
6. Be involved in ministry in the church
7. Financially support the ministry of this church with a tithe and offerings
8. Protect the unity of this church

Church Organization

The next section of the Connect 101 class pertained to church polity. I explained that the membership of Ballardsville Baptist Church delegates certain authority and responsibility to the pastor, staff, and committees that serve to lead the church toward the attainment of our vision. As such, the pastor and ministerial staff serve as overseers,

²⁵See appendix 14 for "Connect 101 Curriculum."

shepherds, and administrators of the church. The deacons serve as ministers and support physical needs of the church. The church also delegates certain responsibilities to committees to help administer the business of the church and ensure accountability between all the members. The committees are (1) Buildings and Grounds, (2) Finance, (3) Nominating, (4) Personnel, (5) World Missions, and (6) the Committee on Committees.

Before closing the meeting, I told the participants about specific topics the church would be addressing in the future. The first topic was hiring a new youth minister and the second was the church's governance model. I explained my desire, which has biblical warrant, that we consider moving to an elder-led model of church polity. I explained that we studied the topic in 2015 and will be working in that direction.

Closing

Before closing, I asked if anyone had questions. The husband of the couple who had been visiting for three weeks asked the only questions. His first question pertained to the church's view on abortion. I referred him to our Articles of Faith and answered saying that we believe abortion is sin and that life begins at conception.²⁶ He also asked about our views on divorce. I explained our church's position on divorce is that we believe that all divorce is sin and should be repented of even when the divorce is allowed biblically for adultery and abandonment. There were no other questions.

In closing, I thanked everyone for their attendance and the investment of their time. I encouraged them to make membership interview appointments on the spot, but no one signed up. The class ended at 4:05 p.m. When the class was over, but before I dismissed, I explained that I needed volunteers to complete a "Post-Project Survey" and to return them to me by Sunday, June 12, 2016.²⁷ Everyone left with a survey.

²⁶See appendix 7 for "Articles of Faith."

²⁷See appendix 3 for "Post-Project Survey."

Weeks 12 and 13

Weeks 12 and 13, Sunday, May 29, 2016 and Sunday June 5, 2016, were intended to be response weeks. The objective was to observe the results of the class. Ideally, some of the visitors who attended the Connect 101 class would schedule a membership interview and join the church. A desired secondary outcome was that those participants who were not already in a Sunday school class would begin attending one regularly.

The Memorial Day holiday was on Monday, May 30, 2016, and many people were out of town that week and the week after, which may have resulted in the lack of response. Nevertheless, 5 of the participants who were not church members have expressed interest in having interviews and proceeding with church membership. Conflicting schedules have prevented all but one of those meetings. Moving forward, I will enlist the staff's assistance with future membership interviews to ensure timely completion.

Week 14

Week 14 of the project began on Sunday, June 12, 2016. The purpose of this time was to conduct follow-up interviews with the focus group members asking their opinions of the Connect 101 class. The follow-up surveys were designed to ascertain whether or not the objectives of the project were met. Originally, the plan was to have focus group members assemble for a meeting where I would conduct, interview, and administer the survey. Since I had abandoned that idea for the Pre-Project Survey, I did likewise on the Post-Project Survey. I handed the surveys out after the Connect 101 class to everyone in attendance.

Nevertheless, I informally polled a few participants during week 14 and heard encouraging remarks. One man, a member, said that he wished he would have known this information when he was first saved. He felt that it would have saved him several years of floundering as an infant Christian. I asked two key leaders their opinions of the class, and they were very encouraged by the class and did not offer any corrective feedback

other than everyone needs to take it. I spoke with a man who had previously, but recently, joined the church, and he felt that I did not allow enough time for questions and answers throughout the class which was evident by the amount of people waiting in line to speak with me after the class. I agree with his assessment and will add additional time in subsequent classes.

By Sunday, June 12, 2016, I had received 8 returned Post-Project surveys. I assigned each survey a respondent number and the results were recorded for each respondent on the Post-Project Survey Results.²⁸ Of the 8 respondents, 4 were not members. Of those who were already members, 2 had been members less than a year and 2 had been members for many years. Overall, the responses spoke favorably of the Connect 101 class and indicated successful attainment, as far as could be determined, of the project goals, which will be discussed in chapter 5. The class helped people know key information that would be crucial to making informed membership decisions. To ensure maximum participation, subsequent classes will include an evaluation form to be completed and gathered at the end of the class.

Week 15

Week 15 began on Sunday, June 19, 2016, which was Father's Day. This time was used to prepare the evaluation results focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the Connect 101 class. Furthermore, the evaluation sought to ascertain opportunities to improve the class in the future. The evaluation of the Pre-Project Survey,²⁹ Post-Project Survey,³⁰ and the creation of appendices 13 and 17 were created during this time. The appendices were shared with church staff and key leaders in order to solicit their input into future classes.

²⁸See appendix 16 for "Post-Project Survey Results."

²⁹See appendix 13 for "Pre-Project Survey Results."

³⁰See appendix 16 for "Post-Project Survey Results."

The class went much better than I expected, and many of the participants voluntarily said it was very beneficial. Future classes will not include a meal because it took too much time to eat and transition to actual teaching. People felt like they were at church all day and for good reason, because they were. Future classes will begin at 3:30 p.m. and the church will provide snacks for the breaks.

Subsequent classes will spend less time on the affiliations in Section 2: Our Shared Calling, to allow more time for discussion and questions pertaining to the church covenant, member expectations, and next steps. Lastly, subsequent classes will allow a specific time to schedule membership interviews and complete class evaluation forms. These findings will be incorporated into the next Connect 101 class, which is scheduled for Sunday, October 16, 2016, at 3:30 p.m.

Conclusion

The church embraced the membership class as a means to launch an assimilation process and experienced a renewed atmosphere of excitement and commitment during and following the fifteen-weeks of this project. While the project quantified the cycle of up and down church membership, it also provided a solution for member retention with a vision for the future and a path to get there. Church members who participated in the project grew in their understanding of the church, her importance to their spiritual maturity, and the direction the church was moving. Likewise, prospective members received the necessary information required to make informed membership decisions.

This project sought to accomplish a specific set of goals for Ballardsville Baptist Church. Chapter 5 evaluates the attainment of these goals and the effectiveness of this project. It further explores the strengths and weaknesses of the project and offers both a theological and personal reflection.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

This final chapter evaluates the effectiveness of the project by measuring the attainment of three specific goals and by examining the project's strengths and weaknesses. This chapter and this project conclude with a theological and personal reflection.

Evaluating the Purpose

The purpose of this project was to launch an assimilation process at Ballardsville Baptist Church. The purpose was limited to the launch of an assimilation process because fully implementing an entire assimilation process would exceed the time limitations of this project. Throughout the project, I referenced and even explained certain elements of subsequent assimilation classes that correspond to the church's strategy of Grow 201, Serve 301, and Go 401. These subsequent classes will further the work begun in this project.

The project was necessary to improve member retention in the church. In the ten years preceding this project, the church had added 389 people in membership, while total Sunday morning attendance declined by 82 people. The church not only lost everyone it reached, it also lost an additional 82 people it already had. While the 2016 summer attendance totals do not demonstrate this project had a positive impact on member retention rates, based on the research herein, a healthy assimilation process will, over time, help the church retain more of its members. As outlined in chapter 4, the assimilation process was successfully launched with the Connect 101 class on May 22, 2016.

Evaluating the Goals

The first goal of launching the assimilation process was that members of Ballardsville Baptist Church would understand the church's expectations of them. The second goal was for members to gain knowledge of the church's vision statement. The last goal of launching an assimilation process was to move people from guests to committed members who would fully engage in the discipleship process of the church.

Goal 1

The first goal of this project was for members of Ballardsville Baptist Church to understand what expectations the church had for its members. I strongly anticipated the accomplishment of this goal because church members surveyed in Lawless' research maintained, "Above everything else, they gained knowledge of the church and its expectations" in a membership class.¹ The Connect 101 class was effectively a membership class that communicated the church's expectations of its members.

Goal 1 was measured by comparing the results of two surveys, one administered before the Connect 101 class and the second administered after the class. Measuring this goal proved problematic because no relationship existed between pre- and post-project focus group members. Ideally, the same people would be surveyed before and after the class and then their individual answers compared to determine if those participants who lacked knowledge before the class possessed it after the class. Nevertheless, as the following analysis demonstrates, the surveys did reveal that the church had a deficiency in communicating member expectations before the class and those who took the class believed they gained knowledge of those expectations in the class.

¹Charles E. Lawless, *Membership Matters: Insights from Effective Churches on New Member Classes and Assimilation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 24.

The goal was necessary because 10 out of 18 people surveyed before the class, including 2 members, said that the church had not made them personally aware of member expectations.² Of those members, 1 had been a member for more than five years and the other for more than a year. The first goal was aimed at correcting this problem by creating a venue in which, among other things, member expectations could be clearly communicated. Seven of the 8 participants who completed a Post-Project Survey reported that the class did a very good job of communicating member expectations.³

The goal was realized not only because the class was conducted, but because of the content and personal instruction given to participants. Participants were actually taught that being a member of Ballardsville Baptist Church means affirming the church's doctrine; being committed to maturing as a Christian; advancing the vision and goals of the church; practicing biblical stewardship of time, talent, and treasure; and preserving the unity of the church. The Connect 101 class succeeded in teaching members and prospective members the church's expectations. To help remind members of the expectations, the church covenant, additional member responsibilities, and a statement on maintaining unity will be recited by the congregation in certain services when the Lord's Supper is observed.⁴

Goal 2

The second goal was for members to gain knowledge of the church's vision statement. This goal sought to build on the first goal by encouraging members and potential members to learn the vision of the church. Furthermore, if members faithfully meet the expectations of the church in the areas of membership, Christian maturity, ministry, and missions, the natural outcome will be the fulfillment of the vision: "Loving

²See appendix 13 for "Pre-Project Survey Results."

³See appendix 16 for "Post-Project Survey Results."

⁴See appendix 17 for "Commitments We Make."

God, loving others, and making him known in our community and around the world.”

The class emphasized this connection between strategy and vision and encouraged participants to be actively engaged in both.

The attainment of this goal was vital as only 8 out of 18 people in the Pre-Project Survey⁵ were confident they knew the vision of the church. On the Post-Project Survey,⁶ all 8 respondents reported that the vision was clearly communicated; and all respondents but 1, who was already a member, indicated that they had enough answers to decide whether or not to join the church. These responses reinforce the necessity of an assimilation process at Ballardsville Baptist Church and therefore reinforce the validity of this goal.

Due to the fifteen-week time limitations of this project, the impact of members who know the vision of the church cannot be fully determined. The preferred impact is that the church’s membership will grow with people who both support and help attain the vision of the church.

Goal 3

The third goal of launching an assimilation process was to move people from guests to committed members who would fully engage in the discipleship process of the church. The purpose of this goal was to help incoming members know how the church facilitates their spiritual maturity and to give them the necessary information to make membership decisions. Measuring the attainment of this goal proved problematic and revealed the goal was not appropriate for the limitations of this project. Moreover, the goal was too complex to measure with pre and post project survey instruments.

⁵See appendix 13 for “Pre-Project Survey Results.”

⁶See appendix 16 for “Post-Project Survey Results.”

One aspect of the goal pertained to *moving* people from guests to members. This goal presupposes that people will join the church after attending the class. However, the research in chapter 3 revealed that raising “requirement levels for membership would reduce the number of new members added to the church, and this would reduce the church’s overall growth rate.”⁷ Rainer’s research confirmed these findings but insists that the reduction is only temporary and after two years the church’s overall growth rate will actually increase.⁸ Therefore, measuring the movement of people from guest to member within the timeframe of this project was unrealistic.

Furthermore, in order to accomplish the *moving* of guest to member’s aspect of this goal, this project asked prospective members to (1) attend the Connect 101 class, (2) have a membership interview, and then (3) be presented to the church for membership at any normal service. These three steps have actually inserted a bottleneck into the membership process. That is, once potential members attend the Connect 101 class, they must have a membership interview with a staff member or key leader before they can be presented for membership. Of the 7 non-members who took the class, only 1 person had their membership interview within four weeks of the class. Four of the 7 non-member participants indicated a desire to schedule a membership interview but had yet to do so at the writing of this chapter. Two of the 7 did not return to the church after the class.

Additionally, an unintended consequence of this project emerged. Subsequent to the implementation of this project, as the pastor, I found it difficult to extend an invitation at the end of services to those who desire church membership because we strongly encourage the Connect 101 class as a requisite for membership. To overcome this hurdle, I decided to continue extending the invitation for those who desire to join the membership of the church, but when people who have not taken the Connect 101 class

⁷Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectations* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 106-7.

⁸*Ibid.*, 107.

respond to that invitation, we plan to (1) use their decision as a catalyst for the membership interview, (2) enroll them in the next Connect 101 class, and (3) introduce them as desiring membership and planning on taking the Connect 101 class to learn more about the church and how they can become members. This will allow us to emphasize church membership in the service, rejoice with people coming forward to join, and remain faithful to the assimilation process.

The second aspect of this goal was equally challenging. It sought to add members who were *fully engaged* in the discipleship process of the church. A person's commitment level to the church is determined not by what he says or marks on a survey, but rather by what he does and how he lives over time. Such a goal cannot be measured in a few weeks or even a few months. Its evaluation will require time to discern the health of the church and her members therefore this goal was not suitable for the scope of this project.

The third goal was also misguided because it omits or ignores an acceptable outcome of a membership class. It is acceptable and even preferred that potential members cull themselves out of the membership process if they disagree with the church's doctrine, are unwilling to meet the church's expectations, and are unable or unwilling to meet the church's membership requirements. Therefore, it should be expected that some and maybe even many people will opt out of the church membership process after participating in such an assimilation class. Also, such an outcome is precisely the reason to offer the class. That is, the membership class allows people to make informed decisions about church membership and subsequently helps build the church with likeminded people who embrace the vision and beliefs of the church.

Therefore, a better goal that would be measurable with surveys would have been that launching an assimilation process would give people considering church membership the information they need to definitively decide whether or not to join Ballardsville Baptist Church.

Strengths of the Project

The most prominent strength of this project is that it effectively transitioned the church's membership process. Before the project, the church accepted into membership people who simply walked down the aisle in a service and indicated they were saved and desired membership. The previous method did not allow sufficient time to hear the person's testimony, explain the church's belief, or answer their questions. The project created a process that thoroughly educates prospective members on many topics, including a biblical understanding of salvation, church membership, and member expectations. Moreover, the process required the evaluation of potential members to ensure, as much as humanly possible, the validity of their salvation and their alignment with church doctrine.

A second strength of this project was that the project created an opportunity for the church to communicate, educate, and call for a response to a *specific set* of ideas and teachings. The specifics are set in the Connect 101 curriculum. While the original timeline did not allow time to write the curriculum, it was written within the fifteen weeks. The curriculum is a succinct explanation of the church. The instruction contained in the curriculum, some of which was not previously written in a formal format or communicated in a formal manner hereunto now, had, before the project, simply been expected of church members. Members had no way of knowing this instruction, and the church had no way of communicating the instruction outside of taking the Sunday morning preaching time to do so. This project created a venue within which to have important conversations about the church with perspective members. Furthermore, the curriculum can be adjusted in future sessions to emphasize specific areas that need attention in the church.

A third strength of this project was that it clearly and precisely presented the gospel of Jesus Christ and important theological distinctions of Baptists to class participants. It explained the church's positions on baptism and the Lord's Supper as well as its position on topics such as the Trinity, marriage, and sexuality. Having these conversations before membership decisions are made will preemptively cull the church's

membership down to those who are actually Christians, who agree with the church doctrine and vision, and who know and desire to meet membership expectations.

A fourth strength of the project is that it allows the pastor to frame church membership in terms of God's desires for Christians rather than in Christians' desires for their church. It transitioned the conversation from a consumer mentality of church membership to a God-centered mentality of church membership. The class allowed me to help participants see church membership as less about asking, "Is this church right for me" and more about asking, "Am I right for this church?"

Weaknesses of the Project

One of the primary weaknesses of this project was that the surveys were based on a small sample group. As a result, conclusions about the project have been derived from the thoughts of relatively few people. The conclusions may have changed with a larger sample, especially of those questioned after taking the class. Future classes will not have a survey, but will include an evaluation to be completed before participants are dismissed from the class.

A second weakness of this project is that it created a bottleneck in the membership process. That is, becoming a member is dependent upon taking the Connect 101 class and having a membership interview with the pastor, staff, or key church leaders. Moreover, in addition to a bottleneck in the process, the overall quantity of new members could be reduced as indicated in chapter 3 and in the analysis of goal 3 in this chapter.

Removing church attenders from the influence of the church is a third weakness of this project. When attenders are directed to participate the class in order to facilitate membership decisions, church attenders may determine that Ballardsville Baptist Church is not where they belong. On the surface, such decisions are exactly what the class is about as previously discussed under goal 3; however, if the church guests were not Christians or simply wrong in their understanding of doctrine, they may decide to stop attending and therefore remove themselves from their only source of truth, thus

preventing them from future opportunities to respond in faith to the teachings of Christ and his church.

A fourth weakness of this project is the potential perpetuation of unbiblical or unhealthy elements in the church. Any unbiblical or unhealthy elements of the church that are taught in an assimilation class, whether intentionally taught or not, will perpetuate those elements into future generations of the church. Therefore, churches that follow unhealthy practices or unbiblical doctrine should either avoid teaching those elements in their membership classes or more appropriately draw attention to those problem areas and explain the need for change in the future. Drawing attention to such flawed elements in the membership class will, over time, build member support for making changes when the appropriate time comes. Changing the church's doctrine and/or practices is often difficult and, depending on how the assimilation process is utilized, can facilitate or impede changes in the church.

Theological Reflection

Throughout this project, my theological convictions have, at times, been both affirmed and challenged. My ecclesiology has been affirmed and strengthened through the research completed in chapters 2 and 3 of this project. I set out to write a theology of church membership in chapter 2. Having done what I thought was a thorough job, I began chapter 3 questioning the theological and practical intentions of contemporary authorship on the topic of assimilation. However, knowing the theological convictions of authors such as Lawless and Rainer, I proceeded knowing their intentions were good and consistent with my observations. While writing chapter 3, I discovered the works of Leeman and Anyabwile on the topic of church, God's love, and membership. Their writings on the theology of church challenged my thoughts and their exposition left me realizing that I have been theologically lacking in my understanding of the church, her authority, and my submission to her and Christ.

The result of this research was a newfound commitment to focus this project away from assimilating people based on the consumer satisfying aspects of the church and more toward the God-pleasing aspects of church membership and spiritual maturity. In other words, I was challenged theologically to make this project about Jesus Christ and his church not about how the church satisfies the latest demands of consumer and cultural Christianity. Moreover, my conviction that church membership is vitally important to Christian development and maturity has been renewed, and as such, I feel more compelled than ever to call people to Christ, church membership, and Christian discipleship.

Personal Reflection

Throughout this project, my personal convictions have also been both affirmed and challenged. While prior to this project, I would have argued that my reason for launching an assimilation process was not numerical growth. Having worked my way through the biblical foundations and research contained herein, I would have been wrong. This project confronted my motives and actions on the topic of church growth and the result is an unwavering desire for church health instead.

Throughout this project, I saw an assimilation process, especially a membership class, as the opportunity to explain church authority and to assist members and potential members to see their obligation to submit to such authority. This understanding was further developed in chapter 3 and my interaction with the writings of Leeman. However, the result was so much more than simply telling others of their responsibility to the church; it was an overwhelming realization of the church's authority over me, its pastor. As a member of the church, I am also under the authority and accountability of the church. The result was a new respect for church committees, leaders, and traditions that are intended to help me grow in Christlikeness.

Once I realized my responsibility to submit to the church, my role as leader and pastor began to emerge in ways, hereunto now, that have gone unnoticed. I have more compassion on the flock. I desire all the more to protect the teaching of the church. I

enjoy preaching and teaching more now than ever. I even have a newfound hope in the church and her future. This project has effectively assimilated me.

Conclusion

Launching an assimilation process at Ballardsville Baptist Church has proved to be much more difficult than I ever imagined. It took much longer than I anticipated, and I grew in ways I did not think were possible. Nevertheless, I would strongly recommend that every North American church develop a formal process of assimilation. Doing so will help churches work through their own convictions, identify deficiencies in their discipleship processes, and give them an opportunity to make the necessary adjustments. Moreover, it will help the church build a membership of highly committed Christians who embrace their responsibility to the church and most importantly to Christ.

Every membership class should include a clear presentation of the gospel of Christ and explain church and denominational distinctives, such as beliefs about baptism, the Lord's Supper, security of the believer, and church member expectations. And finally, the process must include an invitation to respond to Christ and his church. Such an assimilation process will initiate the building of healthy Christians and subsequently healthy churches.

In conclusion, I am extremely grateful to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for the faithful witness and unwavering commitment to the Word of God; the patience, guidance, and support of the seminary's faculty and staff; and the brothers and sisters in Christ who have, through their friendship and love, shown me Jesus Christ every step of the way. Most of all, I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the opportunity to serve him and his church. Amen.

APPENDIX 1

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION SUMMARY REPORT

Looking at the Numbers

Historically, Ballardsville Baptist Church did a good job of reaching people for the Lord and adding new members to the church. Nevertheless, Sunday morning church attendance has not reflected the increases. The church has a backdoor problem because it is losing members as fast as it can add them. The numbers below illustrate this phenomenon. Overall Sunday morning attendance is not keeping pace with the number of new members added to the church’s membership roll.

Table A1. Ten year attendance and additions

Year	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15
Attendance Avg.	304	279	228	218	201	208	240	256	259	240	222
Member Additions	20	49	36	19	29	29	44	59	37	46	21
Attendance Change		-25	-51	-10	-17	7	32	16	3	-19	-18

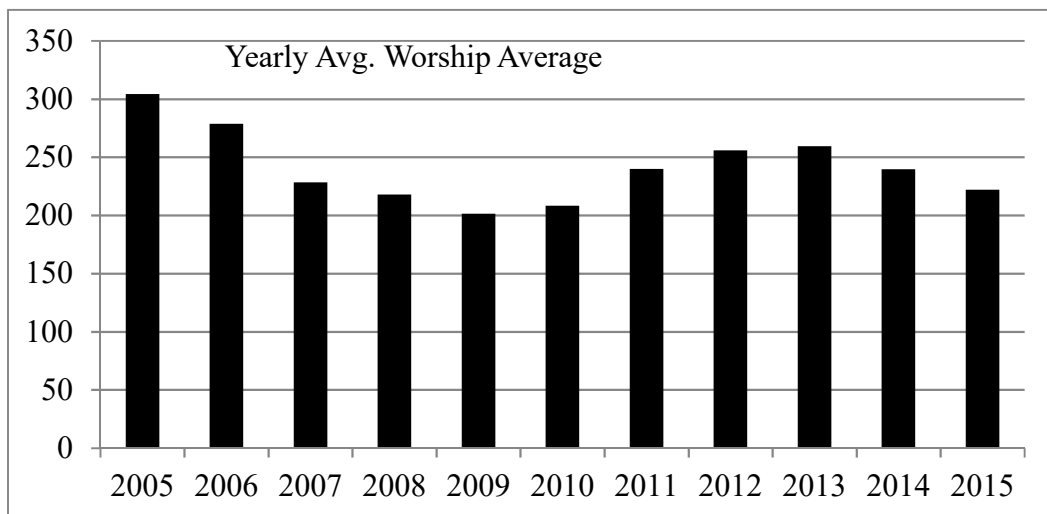


Figure A1. Average worship attendance 2005 to 2015

Justification

The church is losing members as fast, and in some cases faster, than it can add them. Besides normal attrition for reasons such as relocation and death, the pastor and staff can list several reasons for losing members each year. In most cases, members were unhappy with what was happening in the church and choose to transfer their memberships to other nearby churches. Throughout the years, the reason for their unhappiness has included disagreements over church vision, music styles, children's programs, missions emphasis, church schedules, church polity, hiring processes, roles of men and women in the church, and Sunday school curriculum just to mention a few. Nearly all of these reasons originated with differences of opinions about the vision of the church and who should influence that vision.

It will prove impossible to include every topic in an assimilation class and foresee every such reason that disenfranchises members. Nevertheless, discussing issues such as the church's vision, strategies, doctrine, polity, pending changes, and member expectations before prospective members make membership decisions will help them make informed decisions and ideally prepare them for the road ahead. Prospective members that do not agree with the church's direction, methods, purpose, and such will know so upfront before making a membership decision. The result of covering these topics upfront should result in members who agree with the various particulars of the church, who want to help the church accomplish those outcomes, and who remain connected to the church during the process.

Why Now

Sunday morning attendance has dipped from 233 people on average in August 2015 to 186 people in June 2016. While several factors contributed to this decline, the most apparent reasons are the resignation of the children's minister, the resignation of the youth pastor, and general unrest in the church caused by the pastor's leadership. The pastor unsuccessfully attempted to move the church from a majority vote to an elder led polity. Several families who were upset for a variety of reasons, both for and against the pastor's

leadership, used the occasion to leave the church. Moreover, additions to the church, both in new converts and membership transfers has stopped during this period.

To overcome these various issues, and ideally to prevent their recurrence, the pastor and staff are working on team building and communication exercises which will help facilitate greater unity and better communication in the future. The anticipated and upcoming addition of a youth pastor and the realignment of the associate pastor to serve as the children's pastor will give the church a full staff and quality leadership at all levels of the church. The church is poised to begin adding new members once again.

The timing is perfect for launching an assimilation process, and specifically a new member class, because the church anticipates adding several new members in the coming months and years. As those new members join the church, properly assimilating them into vision, direction, expectations, and ministries of the church is crucial to their tenure at the church. A failure to address these concerns and educate prospective members on the future of the church and their part in it is a recipe to repeat the past and continue the revolving door of church membership.

Fifteen Weeks

The implementation of this project follows these steps over a fifteen-week period. Each step corresponds to a week.

- I. Comprise a summary report for the church drawing upon the research herein to justify the need of establishing and launching an assimilation process at this time.
- II. Train the church staff (ministerial and administrative) concerning the various elements of the project including the schedule, teaching curriculum, and the roles each will take in the preparation, teaching, and evaluation of the Connect assimilation class.
 - A. Explain the purpose of the Connect class, the scope of the class, and the plan to develop the additional assimilation classes of Grow, Serve, and Go.

- B. Explain the changes to the printed church materials and website that will be happening during the coming weeks. Ask for suggestions and enlist the staff's help in making the changes.
- III. Prepare and print the focus group questions for both the initial and the follow up interviews. The research outlined in chapters 2 and 3 of this project supply the impetus for the focus group questions.
- IV. Ensure all printed church publications reflect the new process of Connect, Grow, Serve, and Go.
 - A. Worship guide
 - B. Welcome center literature
 - C. Hallway bulletin boards
 - D. Church's webpage(s)
- V. Assemble the key leaders and relevant volunteers of the church and review the project. The attendees of this meeting will be the Sunday school teachers, deacons, greeters, and staff. During this meeting, we will discuss the need for a new member class, the name of the new member class, and the scope of the new member class.
- VI. Invite focus group members to participate in the focus group meetings during weeks seven and fourteen and to attend the assimilation class in week eleven. The focus groups will be comprised of three to six people. One group will consist of people who are visitors of the church. Another group will contain members who demonstrate little commitment to the church. The last group will be committed leaders of the church.
- VII. Interview the focus groups.
- VIII. Prepare class materials. Make copies and class invitations for church guests, new members, and focus group members. Draft and finalize an email campaign reminding guests and new members about the class and asking them to attend.

- IX. Promotion week 1: Send invitations, make announcement in worship services and Sunday school classes.
- X. Promotion week 2: Make phone calls to those who have not committed to attending, announce the class in worship services, allow potential attendees to complete the connect card in the worship bulletin indicating they will attend, and launch the email campaign finalized in week 8.
- XI. Teach the class on Sunday afternoon. The class will be approximately four hours in length including two breaks and a time for fellowship and refreshment.
- XII. Response week 1: Allow participants time to respond to the Connect assimilation class by joining the church or attending a Sunday school class.
- XIII. Response week 2: Allow participants time to respond to the Connect assimilation class by joining the church or attending a Sunday school class.
- XIV. Conduct follow up interviews with the focus group asking their opinions of the Connect class.
- XV. Prepare evaluation results focusing on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Connect class. Report the results to the staff and key leaders. Develop a timeline for incorporating the evaluation results into the next Connect class. Schedule the next Connect class.

Implementation Schedule

The dates below outline the exact implementation schedule.

Table A2. Implementation schedule

Week #	Date	Church Events	Project Action
1	March 13, 2016		Comprise Report
2	March 20, 2016		Train Staff
3	March 27, 2016	Easter	Prepare Focus Group Interviews
4	April 3, 2016	Spring Break Begins	Ensure all publications are correct
5	April 10, 2016	SS Leadership	Train Church Leaders on Project
6	April 17, 2016	Honduras Potluck	Send out Focus Group Invitation
7	April 24, 2016		Interview Focus Groups
8	May 1, 2016		Prepare all invitations, send letters
9	May 8, 2016	Mother's Day	Promotion Week 1
10	May 15, 2016	Worship Night	Promotion Week 2
11	May 22, 2016		Teach Connect 101 Class
12	May 29, 2016		Response Week 1
13	June 5, 2016		Response Week 2
14	June 12, 2016		Focus Group Follow-up Interviews
15	June 19, 2016	Father's Day/ Youth Camp	Evaluate Project, compose Chapter 5

APPENDIX 2
PRE-PROJECT SURVEY

Pre-Project Focus Group

Ballardsville Baptist Church

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine the assimilation needs of guests and new members of Ballardsville Baptist Church. This research is being conducted by Tony Wolfenbarger for purposes of project research relating to his doctoral studies.

This research will utilize three methods to gather information about how well Ballardsville Baptist Church helps new people connect to the church through salvation, membership, relationships, ministries, and missions.

- 1) To rate various areas of interest on a scale of 1-10.
- 2) To give your opinions or experiences by recording your answer to questions.
- 3) To state your opinion in open discussion about the topic of connecting to Ballardsville Baptist Church.

Any information you provide will be held *strictly* confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, and checking the box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

Section I: Written Comments

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. If you feel you need to leave a question unanswered, please give a reason for doing so in the margin or below that question.

1. How much time passed between the time you started attending and the time you decided to join?

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have not joined yet | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 12 weeks | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 12 months |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fewer than 2 weeks | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 6 months | <input type="checkbox"/> More than a year |

2. How long should it take for someone to decide if they will join a church?

_____ weeks, months, years (*circle one*)

3. How long have you attended Ballardsville Baptist Church? _____ weeks, months, years (*circle one*)

What originally attracted you to this church?

4. When did you feel accepted in this congregation?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> After my first visit | <input type="checkbox"/> After attending a Sunday school class |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After several visits | <input type="checkbox"/> I still do not feel accepted |

5. Is there something this church has or has not done that is keeping you from becoming a member?
 Yes (*please explain below*) No
-
-
-
6. Do you have enough information about the church to make a decision to join?
 Yes No (*please explain below*)
-
-
-
7. Are you trusting in Jesus for salvation? Yes No
8. Do you still have questions about your salvation experience you would like answered before joining this church? Yes No
9. Have you been baptized by immersion after your salvation experience?
 Yes No
10. Do you have questions about baptism that you would like answered before joining this church? Yes No
11. Do you know what steps you need to take to join this church?
 Yes (*please describe those steps below*) No
-
-
-
12. Do you have enough information to take your next step with the church?
 Yes No What do you think is your next step with the church?
-
-
-
13. Besides the Sunday worship service, in which programs or activities did you first become active?
-
-
-

14. Does Ballardsville Baptist Church do a good job of making its programs and activities known to guests and/or new members? Yes No (please explain below)

15. Has the church made you aware of the expectations of its members? Yes No
Please briefly describe what this church expects of its members.

16. Has the church made you aware of the financial responsibilities of its members?
 Yes No

17. Do you know the vision of this church Yes No

If so, what is it? _____

How did you learn the vision of the church? _____

What should the church do to communicate its vision to guests and new members? _____

Section II: Rating Scale

Using the scale below, for each statement below, please indicate the number that most correctly corresponds to your thoughts.

	Not Important			Somewhat Important				Crucially Important		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Knowing what the church believes and teaches about the Bible before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing what the expectations the church has of its members before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing the church's vision and mission before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing what the church believes about tithing before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing the church's history before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing what ministries the church has for my spouse before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing what ministries the church has for my kids before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing what ministries the church has for me before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing that the church will allow me to serve in ministry before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing what the church does in missions before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing how decisions are made in this church before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing how the church will help me grow in Christ before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meeting people like me before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making meaningful relationships before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meeting the preacher before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Liking the preacher's sermons before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing more about what Southern Baptists believe before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For me to be a member of a local church is _____ to my spiritual walk with Christ.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For me to be a member of a local church is _____ to my spiritual maturity as a Christian.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling a spiritual conviction to join the church before I join is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section III: Final Comments

Please answer the following questions with as much or as little information as you feel appropriate. Feel free to use the back of these pages if you need additional room to write your answers.

1. What is the most important thing you consider when determining to join a church?

2. What could Ballardsville Baptist Church do better to help you determine if this is the right church for you to join?

3. How long should a person or family attend a single church before deciding to join to try another church to join?

4. How does a person or family know when to join a local church or when to try another church?

Thank you for your participation. May God bless you and your family.

APPENDIX 3
POST-PROJECT SURVEY

Post-Project Focus Group

Ballardsville Baptist Church

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine the assimilation needs of guests and new members of Ballardsville Baptist Church. This research is being conducted by Tony Wolfenbarger for purposes of project research relating to his doctoral studies.

This research will utilize three methods to gather information about how well Ballardsville Baptist Church helps new people connect to the church through salvation, membership, relationships, ministries, and missions.

- 1) To rate various areas of interest on a scale of 1-10.
- 2) To give your opinions or experiences by recording your answer to questions.
- 3) To state your opinion in open discussion about the topic of connecting to Ballardsville Baptist Church.

Any information you provide will be held *strictly* confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, and checking the box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

Section I: Rating Scale

Using the scale below, for each question below, please indicate your answer by filling in the circle that most correctly corresponds to how the Connect 101 class answered the question.

<i>How well did the Connect 101 class answer the following questions?</i>	Not Well <i>I still have questions.</i>			Somewhat <i>Most of my questions were answered.</i>				Very Well <i>I can make a decision.</i>		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
What does the church believe and teach about the Bible?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What are the expectations this church has of its members?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What is the church's vision and mission?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What does this church believe about tithing?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What is the history of this church?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What ministries does this church have for my spouse?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What ministries does this church have for my children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What ministries does this church have for me?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can I serve in ministry at this church?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is this church active in missions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How are decisions made in this church?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How will this church help me grow in Christ?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the pastor accessible?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What is the church's reason for using this style of music?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What do Southern Baptists believe?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Why should I join Ballardsville Baptist Church?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section II: Written Comments

In this section, answer the questions with a brief comment or statement.

1. What, if any, surprises did you have while taking the Connect 101 class?

2. Which topics were most valuable to you?

3. Which lessons or topics were least valuable to you?

4. Did the pastor clearly communicate the vision and mission of the church?

Yes No - If not, what could the pastor have done to better communicate the vision of the church?

5. Do you feel you have enough answers to decide whether you should join Ballardsville or keep searching for a church home? Yes No
Please explain:

6. What changes do you suggest we make to this class?

7. Other comments or suggestions:

Thank you for your help in this matter. It will serve to help Ballardsville be more faithful with the people God brings our way. May God give you a peace and renewed joy in uniting with his church.

APPENDIX 4

LAWLESS' TOPICS ADDRESSED IN A NEW MEMBER CLASS

1. Doctrine of the Church (100%)¹.
2. Expectations of members after joining (96%)
3. Explanation of the church' mission and/or vision (92%)
4. Tithing/financial support of the church (88%)
5. Method and meaning of baptism (86%)
6. Polity and government of the church (84%)
7. Requirements for membership (82%)
8. Plan of salvation (80%)
9. Purpose of the Lord's Supper (78%)
10. History of your church (75%)
11. Current opportunities for service in the church (69%)
12. Structure/support of missions through the church or denomination (65%)
13. Introduction to church staff and leadership (61%)
14. Structure, history, and polity of the denomination (61%)
15. Examination of the church covenant (57%)
16. Training in spiritual disciplines (prayer, study, etc.) (51%)
17. Inventory of spiritual gifts (50%)
18. Training for witnessing/evangelism (42%)
19. Tour of church facilities (28%)
20. Examination of the church constitution (26%)
21. Policies for disciplining/excluding members (25%)

¹Charles E. Lawless, *Membership Matters: Insights from Effective Churches on New Member Classes and Assimilation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 65. The percentage number describes, of the seventy-one churches surveyed, which included the particular topic in their new member class(es).

APPENDIX 5

MCINTOSH AND ARN'S SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ASSIMILATION CLASS

1. An assimilated member attends the worship service regularly.²
2. An assimilated member is growing spiritually.
3. An assimilated member has friends in the church.
4. An assimilated member has affiliated with the church body.
5. An assimilated member is praying.
6. An assimilated member identifies with the goals of the church.
7. An assimilated member has a ministry role or task.
8. An assimilated member is involved in a fellowship group.
9. An assimilated member has tithes regularly.
10. An assimilated member participates in the Great Commission.

²Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know: 101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 87.

APPENDIX 6

RAINER'S TOPICS INCLUDED IN A NEW MEMBER CLASS

1. Doctrine of the Church (67.0%)
2. Polity/government of church (66.0%)
3. Examination of church constitution (64.6%)
4. Purpose of the Lord's Supper/Communion and baptism (63.5%)
5. Examine of church covenant/church discipline (63.2%)
6. Policies for church discipline/exclusion of members (62.5%)
7. Expectations of members after joining (58.7%)
8. History of church (56.5%)
9. Tour of church facilities (56.4%)
10. Denominational information (51.6%)
11. Plan of Salvation (49.1%)
12. Tithing/financial support of the church (47.4%)
13. Method/meaning of Baptist (41.1%)
14. Requirements for membership (38.9%)
15. Current opportunities for service (37.2%)
16. Training in spiritual disciplines (35.2%)
17. Introduction to church staff and leadership (33.7%)
18. Explanation of the churches mission and/or vision (32.6%)
19. Inventory of Spiritual gifts (29.5%)
20. Structure/support of missions (21.4%)
21. Training for witnessing/evangelism (18.6%)¹

¹Thom Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville: B & H, 1999), 110. The percentage number of the 287 churches surveyed that included the particular topic in their new member class.

APPENDIX 7

ARTICLES OF FAITH: WHAT WE BELIEVE BALLARDSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH

September 10, 2008

Section: THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST and THE SCRIPTURES

The ultimate source of Christian authority is Jesus Christ the Lord.¹ His lordship springs from His eternal deity and power as the anointed Son of the sovereign God and from His victorious redemption and resurrection. The Bible is our authoritative rule of faith and practice, it is the inspired revelation of God's will and way, made full and complete in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 28:1-6; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41; 22:70; John 1:1-18,29; 10:38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:6-11; 17:1-5; 20:1-20,28; Acts 2:22-24; 7:55-56; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; Galatians 4:4-5; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 1 John 4:14-15; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16. Exodus 24:3-4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11, 89, 105, 140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32. Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

Section: GOD

There is one and only one living and true God. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being. We believe in God as absolute and sole Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and that creation was by divine command, from

¹Ballardsville Baptist Church, "Articles of Faith," accessed October 27, 2014, <http://www.bbclife.org/what-we-believe>.

nothing and not through an evolutionary process. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections.

God is all powerful and all knowing; His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. He is worthy of our love, reverence, obedience, and worship. We believe that God, by His sovereign choice and out of love for mankind, came incarnate as Christ the Son into the world to save sinners.

Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3,10; John 3:16; Acts 17:24-25; 1 John 4:14.

A. GOD the FATHER

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, all wise, and ever present. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all mankind.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 20:1; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3., Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. GOD the SON

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In God's incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus was perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored God's divine will by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of mankind from sin. He was bodily raised from the dead and appeared to His disciples being the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God

where He is the one Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and mankind. He is the head of the body of believers, the church. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to fulfill His redemptive mission.

Genesis 18:1; Psalms 2:7; 110:1; Isaiah 7:14; 53, Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; John 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5,21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; Hebrews 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. GOD the HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables mankind to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts mankind of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls mankind to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration, He baptizes and seals all believers unto the day of final redemption; filling them in response to yieldedness with the goal of conforming them to the image of Christ. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Psalms 51:11; 139:7; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32, Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; Luke 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; Acts 8:17,39; 10:44-45; 13:2-4; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-17,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-15; 3:16-17; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6-7; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-8; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

Section: THE SCRIPTURES

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, is inerrant in the original manuscripts, and is God's revelation of Himself to mankind. It is a perfect treasure of

divine instruction and is eternal. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 17:17; Acts 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

Section: MANKIND

Mankind is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into God's creation and to the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby the human race inherited a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Only the grace of God can bring mankind into holy fellowship with God and enable mankind to fulfill the creative purpose of God. Mankind is created to exist forever and will either exist eternally separated from God because of sin, or eternally present with God through salvation.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5. Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; Romans 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:12-58; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

Section: SALVATION

Salvation provides redemption for all mankind, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for mankind. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as

Lord. In its broadest sense salvation includes justification, regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. Once saved the believer is secure in Christ forever. Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; Luke 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; Acts 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; Romans 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

Section: THE CHURCH

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His word, exercising the gifts and rights invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ, and employs democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all redeemed believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:1-47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; Acts 20:28; Romans 1:7; 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:1-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,20-21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:1-15; 3:1-15; 4:13-14; Titus 1:5-9; 2:1-15; 3:1-2; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

Section: ORDINANCES

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances of the church. They are symbolic, but their observance involves faith, self-examination, confession, discernment, gratitude, dedication, fellowship, and worship.

A. BAPTISM

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, baptism is prerequisite to the privilege of church membership unless prevented by health conditions, and recommended prior to receiving the Lord's Supper.

Matthew 3:13-17; 28:18-20; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 3:23; Acts 2:38-41; 8:35-39; Acts 16:30-33; Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12.

B. THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby baptized members of the body of Christ, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death, burial, and resurrection of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming. Baptism is recommended prior to receiving the Lord's Supper unless health conditions prohibit baptism.

Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-20; Acts 20:7; 2:42; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17,21; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

Section: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

A. THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER

We affirm the priesthood of all believers. Laypersons have the same privilege as ordained ministers to communicate with God, interpret Scripture, and minister in Christ's name. There is but one mediator of God and humanity, Jesus Christ our Lord. The priesthood of the believers therefore means that all believers serve as equal under God; however our priesthood does not diminish Scripture as the supreme source of Christian authority.

Scripture serves as the guide and establishes boundaries for all interpretation in matters of theology, doctrine, practice, and faith.
1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 10:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-10.

B. THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

The family is God's basic unit in society. The building of enduring Christian families should be of primary concern for all believers in Christ. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. The union between Christ and His church is the model for God's unique gift of marriage. Marriage provides for the man and the woman the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; Proverbs 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

C. STEWARDSHIP

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual. All that we have and are we owe to Him. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute their time, talents, and material possessions cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of Christ's cause on earth. We believe in tithing for the support of Christ's body, the church, as God commands. We recognize that giving 10% of one's income is the biblical standard of tithing. Offerings for special ministry opportunities are funds given in excess of the tithe.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12.
Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21; 16:1-13;
Acts 2:44-45; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20;
12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

Section: FUTURE EVENTS

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all mankind in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:1-16; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28-30; 24:27-31,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40; 16:19-31; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14-16; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

APPENDIX 8

CAPITOL HILL BAPTIST CHURCH, CHURCH COVENANT

Having, as we trust, been brought by divine grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.¹

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

We will endeavor to bring up such as may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

We will rejoice at each others' happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried

¹This appendix is taken from Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church*, 5th ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 119-20.

by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will 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 will, when we move from this place, 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.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

APPENDIX 9
BALLARDSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH,
CHURCH COVENANT

Ballardsville Baptist Church maintains the following expectations of its members, and we covenant together to

- A. Grow in faith
- B. Participate in the vision and goals of this church
- C. Practice biblical stewardship with our time, talent, and treasure
- D. Grow this church through evangelism, discipleship, and ministry
- E. Preserve the unity of this church¹

¹The Church Covenant is available at Ballardsville Baptist Church, 4300 S. Highway 53, Crestwood, KY, 40014, 502-222-9165.

APPENDIX 10
CONNECT BROCHURE

Connect

Connecting with Jesus and Christians is a vital part of living the Christian life.¹ We offer a **Connect 101** class to help people know more about Ballardsville, our ministries and church membership. It is the first step in connecting with the church. Our next class is **May 22** after the 10:45 service. We want you to attend so please register at church or by calling the office at 502-222-9165

Services

Our Sunday morning services are where most people first experience Ballardsville. These services begin at 8:30 and 10:45. Other people first come to our Wednesday evening Life University. The evening begins at 5:00 with our Life Meal and then we have discipleship classes for all ages. And yes, it is for all ages birth through senior adult.

Sunday School/Small Groups

While Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings are good connecting points, the best place to connect with others and make meaningful friendships is through our Sunday morning small group Bible studies at 9:30. This is where you really get to know people. We call it Sunday school and we have classes for every age. Most of our members and visitors attend Sunday morning groups. We have listed the classes in this brochure.

¹This appendix only contains the text of the brochure. The actual brochure was a trifold with color graphics.

What to Expect

Our Sunday morning services combine fellowship, singing songs and listening to music, prayer, giving, Scripture reading, learning and a time to respond in order to help you grow in your faith with God and fellowship with others.

Sermons - Our pastor preaches biblically accurate messages that inspire and challenge us to live for Christ in the home, school, market place, and mission field. His sermons are relevant and explain the Bible in ways that you can understand and apply to everyday life. They are generally 30 to 45 minutes and length and conclude with a time to respond with commitments, prayer and in song.

Music - Both of our Sunday morning services are essentially the same, but they are different. The music in the 8:30 service is more of a condensed unplugged version of the second service. The second service, 10:45 normally has more music and instrumentation as it is the most highly attended service. You will have opportunities to worship through a variety of musical styles that honor the Lord and challenge us with the truth of His Word.

Offerings - One of the many ways our members and regular attenders practice faithful stewardship of their finances is by giving their tithe and offerings. During each of our Sunday morning services, ushers pass an offering plate down the isles to collect these gifts. We encourage all Christians to be faithful in matters of stewardship especially in support of their local church. But, if you are **our guest**, please do not feel obligated to give, rather we encourage you to simply complete the Connect Card tear off from the bulletin and drop it in the offering plate when it passes. Or better yet, hand deliver it to our pastor after the service.

What Should I Wear

Dress in a causal manner. Actually, we don't care how you dress so long as you do! Some will be in shorts and t-shirts and others will be in suits. The pastor aims at the middle. We care about people, not their clothing. So, come as you are...but leave filled with Christ. We really do not care how you dress.

Grow

Not only are Sunday morning Bible studies a great place to connect with others, they are also a great place to grow in your faith. We encourage you to try a few classes and find the one that you like the best. All our classes teach the same lesson each week so just jump on in. Below is a list of the classes.

Serve

There are several opportunities to serve at Ballardsville. While most of the ministry opportunities are reserved for our church members, we do have guests serving in some ministries. It is our goal to have every member using their spiritual gifts and talents serving God and one another in ways that are exciting and beneficial to the church and community.

Go

Jesus said, "Go make disciples of all nations..." We are involved in many missions endeavors around the world. Our aim is making disciples for Jesus Christ, starting new churches, and helping those who do the same. Our mission efforts generally include building, repairing, teaching, clinics, and sharing Jesus. Our people serve in orphanages, homeless shelters, by building church additions / buildings, and helping people everywhere. We want all of our members living their lives on mission with Christ.

Sunday Bible Classes - 9:30 AM

<u>Class</u>	<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Room Number</u>
Infant Nursery	Birth—24 mos.	Room # 105
Preschool	2—5 yrs. old	Room # 106
K-1st Grade	5—6 yrs. old	Room # 108
Grade 2-3	grade 2—3	Room # 109
Grade 4-5	grades 4—5	Room # 131
MS-HS Girls	grade 6—12	Family Life Center
MS-HS Boys	grade 6—12	Room # 102
MS-HS Refuge	grade 6-12	Room # 132
Formations	20's-30's	Room # 124
Connections	age 30—50's	Room # 121
Foundations	age 30—40's	Room # 135
Heart to Heart	age 30—60's	Room # 134
Joy Boosters	ladies-all ages	Room # 139
Friendship	50—65	Room # 136
Fellowship	60 & up	Room # 137

Step 1

The first step to becoming a member of Ballardsville Baptist Church is attending our **CONNECT 101 Class** where you will learn more about what we believe. These classes are quarterly. The next class will be in May 22, 2016.

APPENDIX 11

INVITATION LETTER TO GUESTS

April 20, 2016

Dear _____;

I have enjoyed seeing you worshipping at Ballardsville Baptist Church (BBC) lately.¹ I trust everything is going well and you are learning more and more about the church. I want to invite you to participate in our **Connect 101** class for perspective members on **May 22** right after our second service at 12:15 in the fellowship hall.

We believe that joining a church is a serious matter and that people make their best decisions when they are well informed. The Connect 101 class is your opportunity to gather the information, meet the staff, ask questions, and learn what membership is all about at BBC.

We will cover several topics during our time together including our core beliefs, how decisions are made, member expectations, the church's vision, how to become a member, and how to connect with others in the church that are just like you. The class is approximately three and half hours in length. The time will go quick because we will have lunch, breaks, and lots of time for questions. We will provide all the materials, all you need to do is show up.

We will have childcare, including lunch, videos, and outside playtime (weather permitting)/or gym play, for birth through 4th grade, of course the younger ones will not be going outside or to the gym. Please dress your children casual so they can play. If you

¹This letter was sent on church letterhead.

feel your children will struggle with the duration of the class, you may choose to make alternate arrangements with a friend or relative to keep them for the afternoon. We understand.

Lastly, I have a personal favor to ask of you. I am completing my doctorate degree and offering this class at BBC is a part of my final thesis project. I need to conduct a couple of surveys about church membership before and after the Connect 101 class. Would you please be take 15 or 20 minutes on two separate occasions in order to complete a survey for me? Doing so will help me finish up my degree and also evaluate the effectiveness of our Connect 101 class. If you would like to help, and are willing to attend the Connect class on May 22, please let me know. The surveys will be distributed on April 24 and June 12 right after church. You can either complete them on the spot, or take them home and return them the following Sunday.

I really hope you will participate in both the Connect 101 class on May 22 and my project surveys. If you can, please let me know and I will make sure to get you the survey's even if you cannot make it to church on April 24 and June 12. The main thing is that you make it for the Connect 101 class.

Feel free to call, text, or email me, or flag me down Sunday. Thank you for your faithfulness to our Lord and his church. I am praying for you as you consider your next step with God and his church at BBC.

Your Servant,

Tony Wolfenbarger
Senior Pastor

APPENDIX 12

INVITATION LETTER TO MEMBERS

April 20, 2016

Dear David and Cathy;

I want to thank you for being a faithful member of Ballardsville Baptist Church (BBC). Because I value your opinion and input, I want to invite you to participate in our new **Connect 101** class for perspective members on **May 22** right after our second service at 12:15 in the fellowship hall.

We believe that joining a church is a serious matter and that people make their best decisions when they are well informed. The Connect 101 class will give perspective members an opportunity to gather information, meet the staff, ask questions, and learn what membership is all about at BBC.

We will cover several topics during our time together including our core beliefs, how decisions are made, member expectations, the church's vision, how to become a member, and how to connect with others in the church that are just like you. The class is approximately three and half hours in length. The time will go quick because we will have lunch, breaks, and lots of time for questions. We will provide all the materials, all you need to do is show up.

We will have childcare, including lunch, videos, and outside playtime (weather permitting)/or gym play, for birth through 4th grade, of course the younger ones will not be going outside or to the gym. If you children will be joining you on May 22, please dress them casually so they can play. If you feel your children will struggle with the

duration of the class, you may choose to make alternate arrangements with a friend or relative to keep them for the afternoon. We understand.

Lastly, I have a personal favor to ask of you. I am completing my doctorate degree and offering this class at BBC is a part of my final thesis project. I need to conduct a couple of surveys about church membership before and after the Connect 101 class. Would you please take 15 or 20 minutes on two separate occasions in order to complete a survey for me? Doing so will help me finish up my degree and also evaluate the effectiveness of our Connect 101 class. If you would like to help, and are willing to attend the Connect class on May 22, please let me know. The surveys will be distributed on April 24 and June 12 right after church. You can either complete them on the spot, or take them home and return them the following Sunday.

I really hope you will participate in both the Connect 101 class on May 22 and my project surveys. If you can, please let me know and I will make sure to get you the survey's even if you cannot make it to church on April 24 and June 12. The main thing is that you make it for the Connect 101 class.

Feel free to call, text, or email me, or flag me down Sunday. Thank you for your faithfulness to our Lord and his church.

Your Servant,

Tony Wolfenbarger
Senior Pastor

APPENDIX 13

PRE-PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS

The Pre-Project Focus Group was comprised of eighteen participants. Each participant completed a survey prior to the Connect 101 class. Returned surveys were given a respondent number. The answers given for each question by each respondent are recorded below. A zero will indicate that the participant did not answer the question.

Section I: Results

1. How much time passed between the time you started attending and the time you decided to join?
- I have not joined yet 3 to 12 weeks 6 to 12 months
 Fewer than 2 weeks 3 to 6 months More than a year

Respondent 1	6 to 12 months
Respondent 2	6 to 12 months
Respondent 3	I have not joined yet
Respondent 4	I have not joined yet
Respondent 5	I have not joined yet
Respondent 6	I have not joined yet
Respondent 7	More than a year
Respondent 8	More than a year
Respondent 9	More than a year
Respondent 10	More than a year
Respondent 11	3 to 12 weeks
Respondent 12	I have not joined yet
Respondent 13	I have not joined yet
Respondent 14	I have not joined yet
Respondent 15	I have not joined yet
Respondent 16	3 to 12 weeks
Respondent 17	6 to 12 months
Respondent 18	6 to 12 months

2. How long should it take for someone to decide if they will join a church?
 _____ weeks, months, years (*circle one*)

Respondent 1	months
Respondent 2	6+ months
Respondent 3	6-12 months
Respondent 4	6-12 months
Respondent 5	1 year
Respondent 6	3 months
Respondent 7	2 months
Respondent 8	3-6 months
Respondent 9	0
Respondent 10	1 month
Respondent 11	1 month
Respondent 12	2 months
Respondent 13	1 year
Respondent 14	1 year
Respondent 15	1-2 months
Respondent 16	1-2 months
Respondent 17	Months
Respondent 18	0

3. How long have you attended Ballardsville Baptist Church?
 _____ weeks, months, years (*circle one*)

Respondent 1	1 year
Respondent 2	1 year
Respondent 3	2 years
Respondent 4	2 years
Respondent 5	6 years
Respondent 6	0
Respondent 7	5 years
Respondent 8	5 years
Respondent 9	5 years
Respondent 10	5 years
Respondent 11	5 years
Respondent 12	5 years
Respondent 13	1 year
Respondent 14	1 year
Respondent 15	3 weeks
Respondent 16	3 weeks
Respondent 17	years
Respondent 18	3 years

4. What originally attracted you to this church?

Respondent 1	Solid sermons, church sign, and number of young families
Respondent 2	Solid scriptural basis, not yielding to political correctness, young families, places I feel we can serve
Respondent 3	Location, relationships, kid involvement, we just moved here and were shopping around different Baptists churches
Respondent 4	People
Respondent 5	The friendly people, the genuine love to worship, and the giving nature of everyone we have met also the kids programs
Respondent 6	The friendliness of everyone and no pressure atmosphere
Respondent 7	Close to home, liked the Wednesday night programs for kids and agreed with the mission statement
Respondent 8	A.W.A.N.A. and Life University
Respondent 9	A.W.A.N.A., location to our home, denomination, richness of children's programs, the sermons were by the Bible
Respondent 10	Biblical preaching
Respondent 11	Feeling welcomed by many people
Respondent 12	Visitation by pastor and church leadership, small size, welcoming congregation, a place to serve
Respondent 13	The children's program, the choir/worship songs, environment, preaching and the kindness of the congregation
Respondent 14	Denomination, tone and pace of the service, opportunities for children to be involved in multiple programs
Respondent 15	Christmas cantata and our son thought it would be a good fit for us
Respondent 16	Attended a Christmas musical, recommend by my son
Respondent 17	Friendliness, the messages from pulpit, the doctrinal beliefs
Respondent 18	A place to serve, missions minded, friendly church, good preaching, music

5. When did you feel accepted in this congregation?

- After my first visit After attending a Sunday school class
 After several visits I still do not feel accepted

Respondent 1	After my first visit
Respondent 2	After my first visit
Respondent 3	After my first visit
Respondent 4	After my first visit
Respondent 5	After my first visit
Respondent 6	After several visits
Respondent 7	After several visits
Respondent 8	After several visits
Respondent 9	After several visits
Respondent 10	After attending a Sunday school class
Respondent 11	After my first visit
Respondent 12	After my first visit
Respondent 13	After several visits
Respondent 14	After several visits
Respondent 15	After several visits
Respondent 16	After my first visit
Respondent 17	After my first visit
Respondent 18	After my first visit

6. Is there something this church has or has not done that is keeping you from becoming a member?

Yes (*please explain below*) No

Respondent 1	0
Respondent 2	0
Respondent 3	No
Respondent 4	No
Respondent 5	No
Respondent 6	No
Respondent 7	No
Respondent 8	0
Respondent 9	No
Respondent 10	No
Respondent 11	No
Respondent 12	No
Respondent 13	No
Respondent 14	No
Respondent 15	No
Respondent 16	No
Respondent 17	No
Respondent 18	No

7. Do you have enough information about the church to make a decision to join?

Yes No (*please explain below*)

Respondent 1	0
Respondent 2	Yes, have joined
Respondent 3	Yes
Respondent 4	Yes
Respondent 5	Yes
Respondent 6	Yes
Respondent 7	0, already a member
Respondent 8	0
Respondent 9	Yes, I am a member
Respondent 10	Yes
Respondent 11	Yes, I am a member
Respondent 12	Yes
Respondent 13	Yes
Respondent 14	Yes
Respondent 15	No, Need more time and more information
Respondent 16	No, Just need a little more time, also have a few questions
Respondent 17	0, I am a member, but prior to make a membership commitment, I did have enough information via inquiring from other members and observing
Respondent 18	Yes

8. Are you trusting in Jesus for salvation? Yes No

Respondent 1	Yes
Respondent 2	Yes
Respondent 3	Yes
Respondent 4	Yes
Respondent 5	Yes
Respondent 6	Yes
Respondent 7	Yes
Respondent 8	Yes
Respondent 9	Yes
Respondent 10	Yes
Respondent 11	Yes
Respondent 12	Yes
Respondent 13	Yes
Respondent 14	Yes
Respondent 15	Yes
Respondent 16	Yes
Respondent 17	Yes
Respondent 18	Yes

9. Do you still have questions about your salvation experience you would like answered before joining this church? Yes No

Respondent 1	0
Respondent 2	No
Respondent 3	No
Respondent 4	No
Respondent 5	No
Respondent 6	No
Respondent 7	No
Respondent 8	No
Respondent 9	No
Respondent 10	No
Respondent 11	No
Respondent 12	No
Respondent 13	No
Respondent 14	No
Respondent 15	No
Respondent 16	No
Respondent 17	No
Respondent 18	No

10. Have you been baptized by immersion after your salvation experience?

Yes No

Respondent 1	Yes
Respondent 2	Yes
Respondent 3	Yes
Respondent 4	Yes
Respondent 5	No
Respondent 6	Yes
Respondent 7	Yes
Respondent 8	Yes
Respondent 9	Yes
Respondent 10	Yes
Respondent 11	Yes
Respondent 12	Yes
Respondent 13	Yes
Respondent 14	No
Respondent 15	Yes
Respondent 16	Yes
Respondent 17	Yes
Respondent 18	Yes

11. Do you have questions about baptism that you would like answered before joining this church?

Yes No

Respondent 1	0
Respondent 2	No
Respondent 3	No
Respondent 4	No
Respondent 5	No
Respondent 6	No
Respondent 7	No
Respondent 8	No
Respondent 9	No
Respondent 10	No
Respondent 11	No
Respondent 12	No
Respondent 13	No
Respondent 14	No
Respondent 15	No
Respondent 16	Yes
Respondent 17	No
Respondent 18	No

12. Do you know what steps you need to take to join this church?

Yes (please describe those steps below) No

Respondent 1	0
Respondent 2	No
Respondent 3	Yes, (1) Ask to join, (2) written letter, (3) transfer of affiliation
Respondent 4	Yes, (1) Ask to join, (2) letter, (3) other church that you are changing
Respondent 5	No
Respondent 6	No
Respondent 7	0, member
Respondent 8	Yes, (1) Profession of Faith, (2) speak with staff, (3) letter
Respondent 9	Yes, Acknowledge I'm a Christian, Ask the pastor and congregation if I can join, move my membership
Respondent 10	Yes, Have Jesus as your lord and savior, be baptized, or get baptized, acceptance from congregation
Respondent 11	Yes, Come at the end of a sermon and express desire to join
Respondent 12	Yes, Come forward, make a profession of faith or transfer letter
Respondent 13	No
Respondent 14	No
Respondent 15	No
Respondent 16	No
Respondent 17	Yes
Respondent 18	Yes

13. Do you have enough information to take your next step with the church?

Yes No What do you think is your next step with the church?

Respondent 1	Yes, I have found a ministry to plug in to
Respondent 2	Yes, I have already plugged in to a ministry with the church
Respondent 3	No
Respondent 4	Yes
Respondent 5	No, this class is my starting point
Respondent 6	No, information on how to join
Respondent 7	0, member
Respondent 8	Yes
Respondent 9	Yes, I'm already there, stay involved, grow in my spirituality and worship of God
Respondent 10	Yes, the church is the body of Christ. The next step is to serve others
Respondent 11	Yes, Continue to listen for the Holy Spirit's call at this church
Respondent 12	0
Respondent 13	Yes, I would like to speak with my former pastor
Respondent 14	Yes, to continue to find ways for me and my family to get involved
Respondent 15	No, Get to know the church better
Respondent 16	Yes, Attend Sunday school and special events
Respondent 17	Yes, to continue as Sunday school teacher
Respondent 18	0

14. Besides the Sunday worship service, in which programs or activities did you first become active?

Respondent 1	Attending Sunday school
Respondent 2	Sunday school class
Respondent 3	Wednesday night classes A.W.A.N.A.
Respondent 4	Wednesday night classes A.W.A.N.A.
Respondent 5	Sunday worship is our main avenue, our son does attend VBS and kids church
Respondent 6	Sunday school
Respondent 7	Financial Peace University
Respondent 8	VBS Volunteer, music ministry
Respondent 9	A.W.A.N.A., Sunday school, VBS, Choir, summer activities, Christmas, Nativity, Sunday school class, picnics
Respondent 10	Sunday school, life university, and the men's Bible study
Respondent 11	Hand bells, choir, Sunday school class
Respondent 12	VBS, A.W.A.N.A., women's Bible study
Respondent 13	Choir and A.W.A.N.A.
Respondent 14	0
Respondent 15	None yet
Respondent 16	None yet
Respondent 17	Sunday school and other church functions
Respondent 18	Sunday school and choir

15. Does Ballardsville Baptist Church do a good job of making its programs and activities known to guests and/or new members? Yes No (please explain)

Respondent 1	Yes
Respondent 2	Yes, Best understood through members inviting
Respondent 3	Yes, I love the pamphlets
Respondent 4	Yes
Respondent 5	Yes
Respondent 6	Yes
Respondent 7	Yes, it's displayed in bulletin, foyer, front of church, and website
Respondent 8	Yes
Respondent 9	Yes
Respondent 10	Yes, bulletins, existing members need to invite more
Respondent 11	Yes, People are available to answer questions after church, worship guide directs where to find information
Respondent 12	No, if you don't get to church early and see the slide show, read it in the bulletin, or go to Sunday school you do not know
Respondent 13	Yes
Respondent 14	Yes
Respondent 15	Yes
Respondent 16	Yes
Respondent 17	Yes
Respondent 18	Yes

16. Has the church made you aware of the expectations of its members?
 Yes No Please briefly describe what this church expects of its members.

Respondent 1	Yes, worship, Sunday school, serve in some capacity
Respondent 2	Yes, active participation with giving, attendance, and service
Respondent 3	No, I've seen it in a packet before, but I do not see it posted
Respondent 4	No
Respondent 5	Yes, outreach, community, worship, giving, love, fellowship
Respondent 6	No
Respondent 7	Yes, demonstrate a genuine salvation experience, be scripturally baptized, and believe our mission statement
Respondent 8	No, (Yes as the body of Christ, No as a church member)
Respondent 9	Yes, Getting plugged in, joining a Sunday school group, fellowship, get involved in various activities in the church, services we provide, stewardship, build relationship with God
Respondent 10	No, participation in a percentage of church functions
Respondent 11	No, At the time we joined, no; we learned it over time though
Respondent 12	No
Respondent 13	No
Respondent 14	Yes
Respondent 15	No
Respondent 16	No
Respondent 17	Yes, To connect, become involved and serve and Go beyond the church walls (Connect, Grow, Serve, Go)
Respondent 18	0

17. Has the church made you aware of the financial responsibilities of its members?
 Yes No

Respondent 1	No
Respondent 2	Somewhat, I understood before coming
Respondent 3	Yes
Respondent 4	Yes
Respondent 5	No
Respondent 6	No
Respondent 7	Yes
Respondent 8	Yes
Respondent 9	Yes
Respondent 10	No
Respondent 11	No
Respondent 12	No
Respondent 13	Yes
Respondent 14	Yes
Respondent 15	No
Respondent 16	No
Respondent 17	Yes
Respondent 18	0

18. Do you know the vision of this church Yes No
 If so, what is it? How did you learn the vision of the church?

What should the church do to communicate its vision to guests and new members?

Respondent 1	Maybe; Loving God, loving others, and making him known in our community and round the world, bulletin, I am not sure
Respondent 2	0; Loving God, loving others, and making him known in our community and round the world; Tony and bulletin; 0
Respondent 3	Yes; Love, understand Jesus' love and love all people that way; the vision and mission were posted in a pamphlet
Respondent 4	Yes; love and follow Jesus
Respondent 5	No; hoping the class will help with the vision
Respondent 6	No
Respondent 7	Yes; to spread the gospel not just in this county but to the ends of the earth; Pastor Tony and Pastor Don
Respondent 8	Maybe; Know, Grow, Connect, Serve
Respondent 9	Yes/Maybe; We are loving God, loving others, and making him known in our community and around the world, in part our logo, easy to get full version on bbclife.org; tell them, show them, teach them
Respondent 10	Yes, The Great Commission, serving others; the Bible and church guidelines; express expectations and old members instruct new ones
Respondent 11	Yes, To know Christ and make him known; over time and through business meetings; repeat it in service occasionally, put it in worship guide and point it out
Respondent 12	Yes, To know Christ and make him known to all; many business meetings; new member's class
Respondent 13	No
Respondent 14	No
Respondent 15	No
Respondent 16	No; Maybe put it in the bulletin or visitor information
Respondent 17	Yes, Don't recall exactly; Be more repetitive in voicing the vision, post the vision on the website and Facebook
Respondent 18	0

In section 2 of the survey, participants were asked to indicate how important knowing key information was prior to joining the church. The total number of participants who responded with the same answer is given below. If the total does not add up to eighteen, then one of the participants left the question unanswered.

Section II: Results

	Not Important			Somewhat Important				Crucially Important		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Knowing what the church believes and teaches about the Bible before I join is								1	4	13
Knowing what the expectations the church has of its members before I join is				1	1	2		9		5
Knowing the church's vision and mission before I join is						2	3	6	3	4
Knowing what the church believes about tithing before I join is				1	1	3	4	4	3	1
Knowing the church's history before I join is	3		4	3		4	3	1		
Knowing what ministries the church has for my spouse before I join is	1				3	1	4	7	2	
Knowing what ministries the church has for my kids before I join is	1					1	3	4	3	2
Knowing what ministries the church has for me before I join is	1			1	1	2	4	7	1	1
Knowing that the church will allow me to serve in ministry before I join is				3	1	1	5	3	3	2
Knowing what the church does in missions before I join is				1			7	6	3	1
Knowing how decisions are made in this church before I join is				2	1	2	3	7	2	2
Knowing how the church will help me grow in Christ before I join is				1				6	3	7
Meeting people like me before I join is	3	1		1	4	2	2	3	2	
Making meaningful relationships before I join is	3		1	1		3	3	5	2	
Meeting the preacher before I join is		1						2	6	9
Liking the preacher's sermons before I join is		1	1				2	2	4	8

Knowing more about what Southern Baptists believe before I join is	2		2			1	2	3	3	5
For me to be a member of a local church is _____ to my spiritual walk with Christ.	1		1	1	1	2		4	3	5
For me to be a member of a local church is ___ to my spiritual maturity as a Christian.	1			1	2	2		4	1	6
Feeling a spiritual conviction to join the church before I join is	1					2	2	3	5	5

In section three, each participant was asked to answer the questions with as much or as little information as they felt was appropriate.

Section III: Results

1. What is the most important thing you consider when determining to join a church?

Respondent 1	Adherence to Scripture from the pulpit and Sunday school classes, Wednesday nights, etc. and opportunities to serve
Respondent 2	Solid scriptural basis, unyielding to worldly views
Respondent 3	Relationships and connection, involvement with children (opportunities) and how sermons were given
Respondent 4	Preacher, how the messages are and how he acts around everyone and towards me. Weather he is the same every time, people in the church are very important as well
Respondent 5	My comfort level with the people who will help me in my Christian journey
Respondent 6	0
Respondent 7	The mission of the church and vision of where it's going
Respondent 8	Can our family know, grow, connect, serve in this church
Respondent 9	Is what is being preached and taught biblically accurate to the entire family
Respondent 10	Sound preaching of Scripture
Respondent 11	That they follow the Bible's teaching
Respondent 12	Like-mindedness – being able to connect with other believers in order to encourage and admonish each other and fulfill the Great Commission
Respondent 13	I want to feel like I belong and that God has led me here and the beliefs of the church.
Respondent 14	The beliefs of the church and whether they align with my own; do I feel spiritually moved by the services
Respondent 15	If we believe the same way
Respondent 16	Do I feel the Holy Spirit leading me there
Respondent 17	Does the church follow sound doctrine, is the church body supportive of one another and the pastor
Respondent 18	Believe solid gospel, reach people for Christ, love people and serve others

2. What could Ballardsville Baptist Church do better to help you determine if this is the right church for you to join?

Respondent 1	0
Respondent 2	Already joined
Respondent 3	Nothing, we haven't joined for the single fact that we are not 100% sure if we will be in this same location next year
Respondent 4	Nothing, this is a great, awesome, amazing church
Respondent 5	Help me see what the church has to offer my family, their beliefs, and what they expect from our joining
Respondent 6	0
Respondent 7	I believe BBC does a good job of making people feel welcome and inviting them into our church
Respondent 8	0
Respondent 9	I think it has a lot to do with the member! Being friendly and welcoming
Respondent 10	Explain the importance of being a member, how it affects others and you
Respondent 11	Make connections with members, let us know how we can be useful in your church now
Respondent 12	Clearly present programs/areas of service, how business is conducted, assign a mentor family to each new member
Respondent 13	The church has done a wonderful job, it is just a personal decision
Respondent 14	At this point for me it is an internal decision
Respondent 15	Nothing
Respondent 16	Nothing, they are doing well
Respondent 17	Offer a new member class
Respondent 18	0

3. How long should a person or family attend a single church before deciding to join to try another church to join?

Respondent 1	It is going to be different for every family
Respondent 2	6 months +
Respondent 3	I think they should try others first then make the decision
Respondent 4	6-12 months
Respondent 5	I say at least a year to see all seasons a church goes through together
Respondent 6	0
Respondent 7	0
Respondent 8	3-6 months
Respondent 9	Several months to a year, sometimes you know in the first few visits, but it takes a while to learn about the bones of the church
Respondent 10	1-2 months
Respondent 11	If the teaching is biblical, immediately, if not give it a few weeks to assess what the church is doing
Respondent 12	Maybe a month
Respondent 13	On average, I'd say a year to get grounded and join groups/activities
Respondent 14	At least one year
Respondent 15	0
Respondent 16	It depends on the church and the situation
Respondent 17	It should take a few weeks to several months, but should be in accordance to the prompting and guidance of the Holy Spirit
Respondent 18	0

4. How does a person or family know when to join a local church or when to try another church?

Respondent 1	0
Respondent 2	0
Respondent 3	It's a personal decision not one that can be pushed or forced on anyone to join
Respondent 4	If everything is right and your heart pulls you to it then join if your heart isn't there then try another church
Respondent 5	I'm not sure for me I want to feel 'home' at my church
Respondent 6	0
Respondent 7	If your spiritual walk gets stagnant/ the vision of the church changes
Respondent 8	Prayerful consideration, being called or convicted to a particular church, are they stagnant in their walk or are they growing through relationships, study, service, etc.
Respondent 9	We felt it in our hearts
Respondent 10	By prayer, listen to the word, learn Scripture, make sure the Bible is being followed
Respondent 11	The Holy Spirit should guide the decision
Respondent 12	By the Holy Spirits leaning
Respondent 13	Personally, I think you feel the Spirit within several visits, Prayer!
Respondent 14	Do they see the church as a place where they want to be involved, if so it may be a good fit
Respondent 15	When the Holy Spirit leads them
Respondent 16	The Holy Spirit will let you know
Respondent 17	Hopefully as being guided by prayer and the Holy Spirit
Respondent 18	God's call, moving

APPENDIX 14
CONNECT 101 CURRICULUM

Ballardsville Baptist Church Connect 101



Connecting With God and His Family

Membership Class

CONNECT



Matthew 22:37–39

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.

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Overview

Today we are covering many topics. This class will be 3 to 4 hours in length. We will take several breaks and have time to stretch, grab some snacks, and use the restrooms.

If you need to step out for a minute, please do so. We want this to be a comfortable and enjoyable experience.

Session One – Connecting with God

- Since we have people coming to our church from many different backgrounds and religious experiences, we start with the basics.
- In this session we cover the Good News, salvation, and the ordinances.

Session Two – Our Shared Calling

- Session two explains our church vision, mission, and strategy to accomplishing it. We examine our 5 Great Passions and our church's Articles of Faith (our teaching/doctrine). These are the things that make Ballardsville unique or different than other churches.

Session Three – Connecting with Others

- In this session we examine how you join the church, the responsibilities of membership, how decisions are made, and what it means to be a Southern Baptist.

Commitments

- Throughout our time today, we are working towards commitments.
- The first commitment is that you would commit to taking your next step with God.
- The second commitment is that you would commit to taking your next step with God's People.

Session 1 - Connecting with God

First things first...

As extremely important as it is, the most important decision you ever make is not to which church you belong. The most important decision you will ever make is how you respond to Jesus Christ.

Salvation

The Plan... Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

- God made us in his image to **know him** and **enjoy him forever**.¹

The Problem... Ephesians 2:1-3

¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.²

Our default position is separation from God:

- Verse 1 – Separated by **trespasses** and **sins**
- Verse 2 – Following the course of this **world**
- Verse 3 – By nature **children of wrath**

All have sinned:

Romans 3:23 – “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Sin earns spiritual death:

Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Revelation 20:14-15 – “Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”³

¹Westminster Assembly, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Edinburgh ed. (Philadelphia: William S. Young, 1851), 387.

²Unless noted otherwise, all Bible references are taken from the English Standard Version.

³See The Great White Throne Judgement in Rev 20:11-15.

- Spiritual death is called **second death**. It is **everlasting separation** from God, his grace, love, provision, and his people.

All die physically:

Hebrews 9:27 – “... it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.”

John 3:3 – Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

The Solution... Ephesians 2:4–7

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Jesus Christ takes our place so that God may save us:

- Verse 4 – God is rich in mercy and he loves us
- Verse 5 – Makes us alive with Jesus Christ
- Verse 7 – Demonstrates immeasurable grace and kindness to us

While we were sinners, Christ died for us:

Romans 5:8 – “But God shows his love for us in that while we were **still** sinners, Christ died for us.”

Ephesians 1:7 – “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.”

John 14:6 – “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

The Good News:

1 Corinthians 15:1–4 – “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the **gospel** I preached to you, which you **received**, in which you stand, and by which you are **being saved**, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you ... For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that **Christ died for our sins** in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was **buried**, that he was **raised on the third day** in accordance with the Scriptures.”

The Response...Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For by grace you have been saved **through faith**. And this is not your own doing; it is the **gift of God**, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

By God’s love we are saved through faith:

- Verse 8 – Salvation is by God’s grace, it is a gift from God.
- Verse 9 – Good works do not save: morals, religion, baptism, or ritual
- “Salvation is a gift from God’s abundant kindness and his lavish grace. There is nothing at all within us that has inclined God to choose us. There is absolutely nothing we have done to catch God’s attention and earn his favor. It is entirely a ‘gift.’”⁴
- Salvation is by **grace alone**, in **Christ alone**, by **faith alone**.

Receive and Believe:

John 1:12 – “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

- **Believe:**
 - That Jesus Christ is the only begotten son of God.
 - That he is God in Flesh, and lived a sinless life.
 - That he died on the cross to pay for your sins.
 - That he rose from the grave on the third day.
- **Receive:**
 - His forgiveness by accepting it through faith.
 - His ruling authority over every aspect of your life.

How do I Believe and Receive?

- **Admit** you are a sinner against God and ask Jesus Christ to forgive you.
1 John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- **Believe** that he died to pay for your sin and was raised back to life.
Acts 16:31 – “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”
- **Confess** with your mouth that Jesus Christ is the Lord of your life.
Romans 10:9-10 – “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, **you will be saved**.¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and **is saved**.”
- **Determine** that with God’s help you will live under his authority from this day forward.
Luke 9:23 – Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

⁴Clinton E. Arnold, ed., *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 139.

You Can Be Saved (Born Again) Now!

- If you 1) believe this message, 2) are ready to trust in Jesus Christ for forgiveness, and 3) ready to commit to live for him, then you are ready to be saved!
- It is Jesus Christ who saves you based on his death, burial, and resurrection and your belief in him. You can express your trust in Jesus and your acceptance of his forgiveness by praying to him. Your prayer may sound something like this:

Lord Jesus, I realize that I have sinned against you, that my ways are sinful and worldly. I know I need forgiveness and I am asking you to forgive me. I believe that you are the Son of God and that you died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins. I believe that you rose from the grave, and I am asking you to save me and help me live for you. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for dying for me. And, thank you for saving me. I confess you as my Lord. Amen.

- If you accepted Christ today, record your decision below to help you remember this day.

Name

Date

If you accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior today, we want to know so that we can help you grow in your faith and take your next steps with Jesus. In the next break, please tell one of our pastors about your decision.

Assurance

- In **John 5:24**, Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”
- **Romans 8:1** says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- **Romans 8:16** says, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”
- In **John 6:37** Jesus says, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”

Are you already a Christian?

Please summarize your conversion experience including key details. How did you hear the gospel, what did you hear, how did you respond? When and how were you baptized?

i.e., When I was 8 years old, having attended church all my life, I had heard that I was lost and needed to be saved. I believed that Jesus was God’s Son and that he died for my sins and rose again. At my papaw’s house one day, I asked him how to be saved and he said that I needed to ask Jesus into my heart, ask him to forgive me my sins, and ask him to save me. I did that through a silent prayer and believed God saved me. I was baptized by immersion in a creek by my Baptist pastor several months later. When I was older I struggled with doubt but eventually settled the matter. I am still growing in my faith, and see God working every day.

Ordinances

In the **Old Testament**, God gives his people, the Israelites, several festivals, offerings, and special days to commemorate his great acts of divine revelation, judgement, deliverance, and salvation. In the **New Testament**, however, Jesus only gives us **two ordinances** to commemorate his work and its meaning for us who follow him. Those two ordinances are **Baptism** and the **Lord's Supper**. These two serve as **symbols** of testimony, remembrance, and anticipation.

Baptism – Why is it important?

1. Jesus was **baptized**.
Matthew 3:13 says, “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.”
2. Baptism properly **represents** being born again.
Colossians 2:12 says that we have “been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.”
3. Jesus **commands** us to be baptized.
Matthew 28:19–20 says, “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.”
4. Therefore, baptism **demonstrates** that I am a Christian.
 - Because I have obeyed Christ.
In **John 14:23**, Jesus says, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”
 - Because I have followed both the example of Jesus and other believers in the Bible.
Acts 18:8 says, “And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.”
 - Because I have identified myself with his death, burial, and resurrection.
Romans 6:4 says, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

Basic Facts about Baptism

1. Baptism does **not** save you.

- Baptism is a **symbol** of your **identification** with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Salvation is through **faith** alone, in **Christ** alone, by **grace** alone.

Ephesians 2:8–9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

- Baptism is very important, but it does not save you. Rather, it shows that you have been saved, and that you are **being obedient to Christ’s authority** over you.

2. Baptism is for **believers**.

- Faith and repentance come **before** baptism.

Acts 2:38 – “And Peter said to them, ‘**Repent** and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Acts 2:41 – “So those who **received his word** were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”

Acts 10:47 – “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who **have received** the Holy Spirit just as we have?”

Acts 18:8 – “Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul **believed** and were baptized.”

3. Baptism is an **acknowledgement** of one’s belief in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Matthew 10:32-33 – Jesus says, “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

- Baptism is often referred to as a believer’s **first** act of obedience. Baptism is where believers **officially profess** their faith in Jesus Christ. Believers who refuse to be scripturally baptized will struggle with everything else in their walk with Christ. It is the **profession of faith**.
- Baptism is the **proper expression** or profession of faith in Christ. Often times one’s belief in Christ is first expressed verbally in their church gatherings and there is no harm in that. Nevertheless, the Bible prescribes that believers acknowledge their trust in Jesus Christ by **submitting to public** baptism.

4. Baptism is by **immersion**.

- When the Bible speaks of baptism, it often implies immersion.

Matthew 3:16 – And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he **went up from the water**, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;

Acts 8:38–39 – “And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both **went down into the water**, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they **came up out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.”

- The *Greek* word for **baptize means immerse**. *Βαπτίζω* literally means to immerse or dip. It means to go under water.⁵ *Βαπτίζω* was not translated into English. If it were translated it would say *Immerse* or *Dip*. Rather, the *Greek* work was transliterated into an English word using *English* letters that sound similar to the *Greek* letters. The result is the word *Baptize*.
- Immersion **properly symbolizes** the believer’s **death and burial** of their old life, and their **resurrection** into a new life with Christ.

Romans 6:4 – “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

5. Biblical Baptism **does not** need to be **repeated**.

- If you **1)** properly understood salvation, **2)** your baptism was by immersion after salvation, and **3)** it was performed in a church with likeminded beliefs, your baptism was valid.

Ephesians 4:4–6 – There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

6. Baptism means you are **joining the church**.

- When you are saved and baptized, you become a member of the Universal Church that is made up of all believers worldwide.

⁵William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 164.

Acts 9:31 – So the **church** throughout **all Judea and Galilee and Samaria** had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

1 Corinthians 12:13 – “For in one Spirit we were **all baptized into one body**—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

- While salvation and baptism unites a believer to the **universal church**, every **Christian is expected** to have a **specific group of believers** to whom he or she is **accountable**, a **specific group of elders** to oversee their **spiritual development**, and a **specific group of believers** with which to **gather regularly** for **observing the ordinances, worshiping, giving, serving, and organizing for missions**. The specific group of believers is known as the **local church**.

1 Thessalonians 2:14 – “For you, brothers, became imitators of the **churches** of God in Christ Jesus that are **in Judea**....”

- To **which leaders** would you submit if local church membership were not implied? **For who are elders responsible** if **local congregations** were not implied?

Hebrews 13:17 – “Obey **your leaders** and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- The local church that **confirms your confession of faith** in Christ and **oversees your profession by baptism** is the church to which you belong.
- You **belong** to the **local church** that **baptizes you**. When you move or change churches, you transfer your local church membership to a new church.

7. Baptism should occur **soon** after belief.

- Putting off baptism is like saying, “I will follow you tomorrow Lord.”

Acts 2:41 - So those who **received** his word were baptized, and there were **added that day** about three thousand souls.

- Children – We encourage children to be old enough to understand their commitment to Christ and the significance of baptism before we baptize them.

- We often have a **First Steps Class** for our younger believers and encourage them to complete the class before we baptise them. The class helps ensure they know what they are doing and why they are doing it.
- Infants - 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 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 is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ.⁶

Ballardsville does not practice infant baptism or a baptism of confirmation.

- Ballardsville Baptist Church requires its members to have been **scripturally baptized by immersion after believing in Christ.**

Summary

The first ordinance prescribed by Jesus Christ is Baptism. Jesus led by example and submitted to baptism by immersion. He commands all believers to do the same as an outward sign of their spiritual rebirth. It symbolizes a person’s death and burial to the life of rebellion and sin, and their rebirth to a new life of obedience and surrender to Christ’s authority.

Notes:

⁶Rick Warren, *Discovering Church Membership, Class 101: Christian Life and Service Seminars*, 101 Teachers Syllabus (Irvine, CA: Saddleback Community Church, 2003), 24, digital purchase and download, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://store.pastors.com/products/class-deluxe-combo-kit>.

Lord's Supper

The second ordinance given in the New Testament is the Lord's Supper.

Why is it important?

1. Jesus **instituted** it.

Matthew 26:26-29 – “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.’”

2. It **reminds** us of our **sin**.

Isaiah 53:5 says, “But he was pierced for our **transgressions**; he was crushed for our **iniquities**; upon him was the **chastisement** that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”

3. It **symbolizes** Jesus’ atonement for our sins.

Matthew 26:28 – “...for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many **for the forgiveness of sins**.”

4. It reminds us of **Jesus**.

1 Corinthians 11:23-25 – For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. **Do this in remembrance of me**.” In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of me**.”

5. It **proclaims** the gospel and it **anticipates** Jesus’ return.

1 Corinthians 11:26 – “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you **proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes**.”

6. It provides you the opportunity to **renew your commitment** to Jesus.

1 Corinthians 11:27-28 – “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person **examine himself**, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”

Who Should Take the Lord's Supper?

1. Only **believers** should participate.

Matthew 26:29 – I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

2. Believers who are members in good standing in their local church and preferably who have been **scripturally baptized**.

1 Corinthians 11:29-32 – “For anyone who eats and drinks without **discerning the body** eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we **judged ourselves truly**, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are **disciplined** so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

- **Discerning the Body**⁷ – This means acknowledging the body of believers in one's local church.
 - Includes being in right relationship with others in the church.
 - Includes being kind to those in your church.
 - Includes conducting oneself appropriately in your church.
 - Includes seeking others' interests in your church above your own.
 - Includes properly viewing the Lord's Supper as a commemoration.

3. Believers who have **no animosity** (hostility, hatred, loathing, enmity, bitterness, dislike, envy, etc...) towards other believers.

1 Corinthians 11:29 – “For anyone who eats and drinks without **discerning the body** eats and drinks judgment on himself....

1 Corinthians 11:31 – “But if we **judged ourselves truly**, we would not be judged.”

Matthew 6:14-15 – “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

4. Believers who have **no unrepentant sin** in their lives.

1 Corinthians 11:27-28 – “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty

⁷See 1 Cor 11: 21, 22, 33, and 34.

concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person **examine himself**, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”

1 John 1:8 -10 – “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

How Often Should We Take the Lord’s Supper?

The Bible **does not prescribe the frequency** with which the Lord’s Supper should be taken.

- Some churches observe it a **few times per year**, some **quarterly**, some **monthly**, some **weekly**.
- The Lord’s Supper should be observed **often enough to remember** the Lord’s sacrifice, to remember our responsibility to live for him, and to anticipate his return.
- It should **not** be done so frequently that it **becomes routine**, common place, or somehow **diminished in significance**. The manner in which it is observed is important to its meaning. (See 1 Corinthians 11:27-28)
- We at Ballardsville Baptist Church observe it **every other month**, but it could become more frequent.

Notes:

Break - Take 15 minutes to stretch, use the comfort stations, and grab a snack.

Meet back in here at _____.

Session Two – Our Shared Calling

Our Vision

Loving God, loving others, and making Him known in our community and around the world.

- This vision is taken from the **Great Commandment** and the **Great Commission**.

The Great Commandment

Matthew 22:34–40

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

³⁷ 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. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:18–20

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

THE MISSION of Ballardsville Baptist Church is to give every man, woman, boy, and girl, in Oldham County and around the world, the opportunity to hear, see, and respond to the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, and to become fruit-bearing disciples in the church.

Elements of Our Mission

- Includes **every person** you meet.
- Includes **ministry, lifestyle, and proclamation**.
- Includes an **invitation** to respond.
- Includes the **Good News** of Jesus.
- Includes **discipleship**.
- Includes **local church membership**.

OUR STRATEGY is how we plan to accomplish the mission.

- 101 - Connect** with God and Others..... **Community**
- 201 - Grow** closer in our walk with God..... **Discipleship**
- 301 - Serve** the body of Christ **Ministry**
- 401 - Go** with the Gospel into all the world **Missions**

Our Five Great Passions

To get at the heartbeat of Ballardsville Baptist Church, what makes us tick and fuels our ministry, then you must understand our **Five Great Passions**. Whether we're together or apart, our church body strives for:

Biblical Truth

God loved us so greatly that He gave us His inspired words of life, the Bible. So, we are committed to maintaining a respect for God's Word, being faithful to its truths, and to applying its wisdom to our daily lives.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 – All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Godly Character

A relationship with God requires us to become new creations. This change is expressed in us as we seek to be Christ-like and embrace integrity, honesty, and accountability in all we say, do, and think.

2 Corinthians 5:17 – Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

1 Peter 1:15 – “...as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.”

Fruitful Living

As followers of Christ, God enables us to live productively and victoriously through His sustaining strength. As we allow God to direct our steps, we will exhibit the fruit of the Spirit through vibrant lives of growth, service, humility, joy and grace.

Galatians 5:22–23 – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Intentional Relationships

God did not create us to be alone. Because of His great love for us, we recognize the need for and actively pursue healthy, authentic relationships with others and with God, as well as strengthening the family.

Hebrews 10:24-25 – “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

Acts 2:44-45 – “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

Embodying Unity

As God’s people, we serve as a visible expression of God himself. Together, as one, we reflect the Body of Christ by affirming that each of us is made in the image of God, is valuable in His eyes, and has an integral role to play in His Kingdom.

John 17:20-22 – “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.

Notes:

Our Affiliations

Ballardsville Baptist Church is an autonomous gathering of believers in Jesus Christ who affirm the same core beliefs and covenant together for common purposes. In one sense the church is independent in that there are no outside entities or organizations controlling or offering leadership to the church. The church **voluntarily affiliates** with the Southern Baptist Convention and its affiliates for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

The Southern Baptist Convention

The Southern Baptist Convention is an affiliation of over 45,000 like-minded Baptist churches that cooperate for the purpose of missions and Christian causes in local communities, states, North America, and the world.

- Affiliation is completely voluntary and consists of:
 - Affirming *The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message*⁸
 - Contributing to the **Cooperative Program**
The Cooperative Program is the name given to identify the financial support given by cooperating churches to Southern Baptist causes. Specifically, the Cooperative Program contributions are directed through state conventions and then on to the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Two Missions Boards
 - International Mission Board - IMB
 - North American Mission Board - NAMB
- Special Offerings – In addition to the contributions that Ballardsville Baptist Church gives to the Southern Baptist Convention, our members also voluntarily give to special offerings that directly benefit national and international missions.
 - Lottie Moon – International Mission Board missionaries
 - Annie Armstrong – North American Mission Board missionaries
 - Eliza Broadus – Kentucky Baptist Convention

Kentucky Baptist Convention

The Kentucky Baptist Convention has over 2,400 cooperating churches from the state.

Oldham-Trimble Baptist Association

The Oldham-Trimble Baptist Association (OTBA) consists of 24 Southern Baptist Churches who work together to reach our counties for Christ. Contributions made to the OTBA are independent of contributions made to the Cooperative Program.

⁸*The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message* can be downloaded from <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.

ARTICLES OF FAITH: What We Believe!^{9, 10}

THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST and THE SCRIPTURES

The ultimate source of Christian authority is Jesus Christ the Lord. His lordship springs from His eternal deity and power as the anointed Son of the sovereign God and from His victorious redemption and resurrection. The Bible is our authoritative rule of faith and practice, it is the inspired revelation of God's will and way, made full and complete in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 28:1-6; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41; 22:70; John 1:1-18,29; 10:38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:6-11; 17:1-5; 20:1-20,28; Acts 2:22-24; 7:55-56; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; Galatians 4:4-5; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 1 John 4:14-15; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16; Exodus 24:3-4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

Notes:

God

There is one and only one living and true God. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being. We believe in God as absolute and sole Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and that creation was by divine command, from nothing and not through an evolutionary process. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections.

God is all powerful and all knowing; His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. He is worthy of our love, reverence, obedience, and worship. We believe that God, by His sovereign choice and out of love for mankind, came incarnate as Christ the Son into the world to save sinners.

Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3,10; John 3:16; Acts 17:24-25; 1 John 4:14.

⁹Ballardsville Baptist Church Constitution, September 10, 2008, Available from Ballardsville Baptist Church 4300 S. Hwy 53, Crestwood, KY, 40014.

¹⁰The Ballardsville Baptist Church *Articles of Faith: What We Believe* is very similar to *The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message* which can be viewed and printed at <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.

Notes:

God as Father - God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, all wise, and ever present. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all mankind.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 20:1; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; I Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

Notes:

God the Son - Christ is the eternal Son of God. In God's incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus was perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored God's divine will by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of mankind from sin. He was bodily raised from the dead and appeared to His disciples being the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the one Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and mankind. He is the head of the body of believers, the church. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to fulfill His redemptive mission.

Genesis 18:1; Psalms 2:7; 110:1; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; John 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5,21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; Hebrews 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

Notes:

God the Holy Spirit - The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables mankind to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts mankind of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls mankind to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration, He baptizes and seals all believers unto the day of final redemption; filling them in response to yieldedness with the goal of conforming them to the image of Christ. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Psalms 51:11; 139:7; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; Luke 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; Acts 8:17,39; 10:44-45; 13:2-4; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-17,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-15; 3:16-17; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6-7; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-8; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

Notes:

The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, is inerrant in the original manuscripts, and is God's revelation of Himself to mankind. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction and is eternal. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11, 89, 105, 140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 17:17; Acts 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

Notes:

Mankind

Mankind is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into God's creation and to the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby the human race inherited a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Only the grace of God can bring mankind into holy fellowship with God and enable mankind to fulfill the creative purpose of God. Mankind is created to exist forever and will either exist eternally separated from God because of sin, or eternally present with God through salvation.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5. Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; Romans 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:12-58; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

Notes:

Salvation

Salvation provides redemption for all mankind, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for mankind. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. In its broadest sense salvation includes justification, regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. Once saved the believer is secure in Christ forever.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; Luke 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; Acts 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; Romans 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

Notes:

The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His word, exercising the gifts and rights invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ, and employs democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all redeemed believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:1-47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; Acts 20:28; Romans 1:7; 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:1-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,20-21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:1-15; 3:1-15; 4:13-14; Titus 1:5-9; 2:1-15; 3:1-2; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

Notes:

Ordinances

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances of the church. They are symbolic, but their observance involves faith, self-examination, confession, discernment, gratitude, dedication, fellowship, and worship.

Baptism - Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, baptism is prerequisite to the privilege of church membership unless prevented by health conditions, and recommended prior to receiving the Lord's Supper.

Matthew 3:13-17; 28:18-20; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 3:23; Acts 2:38-41; 8:35-39; Acts 16:30-33; Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12.

Notes:

The Lord's Supper - The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby baptized members of the body of Christ, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death, burial, and resurrection of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming. Baptism is recommended prior to receiving the Lord's Supper unless health conditions prohibit baptism.

Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-20; Acts 20:7; 2:42; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17,21; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

Notes:

The Christian Life

The Priesthood Of The Believer - We affirm the priesthood of all believers. Laypersons have the same privilege as ordained ministers to communicate with God, interpret Scripture, and minister in Christ's name. There is but one mediator of God and humanity, Jesus Christ our Lord. The priesthood of the believers therefore means that all believers serve as equal under God; however our priesthood does not diminish Scripture as the supreme source of Christian authority.

Scripture serves as the guide and establishes boundaries for all interpretation in matters of theology, doctrine, practice, and faith.

1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 10:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-10.

Notes:

The Christian Family - The family is God's basic unit in society. The building of enduring Christian families should be of primary concern for all believers in Christ. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. The union between Christ and His church is the model for God's unique gift of marriage. Marriage provides for the man and the woman the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; Proverbs 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Notes:

Stewardship - God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual. All that we have and are we owe to Him. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute their time, talents, and material possessions cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of Christ's cause on earth. We believe in tithing for the support of Christ's body, the church, as God commands. We recognize that giving 10% of one's income is the biblical standard of tithing. Offerings for special ministry opportunities are funds given in excess of the tithe.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-45; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

Notes:

Future Events

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all mankind in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:1-16; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28-30; 24:27-31,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40; 16:19-31; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14-16; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

Notes:

Break - Take 15 minutes to stretch, use the comfort stations, and grab a snack.

Meet back in here at _____.

Session Three – Connecting With Others

The Church Purpose

Ballardsville Baptist Church affirms that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. The purpose of this church is to be a body committed to **believing** and **following** the Bible. The Bible serves as the **authoritative** guide for this New Testament church providing its **beliefs, practices, ordinances, and purposes**. This church strives to develop all members to maturity in Jesus Christ through:

- Worship
- Discipleship
- Ministry
- Evangelism and Missions
- Fellowship

Worship and Fellowship – Connect

- Ballardsville Baptist Church strives to develop all members to maturity in Jesus Christ through **Worship and Fellowship**.
- You were **created** to worship!

Psalm 150:6, “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!”

- **Everything** was created for worship!

Colossians 1:16-18 –¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, **that in everything he might be preeminent.**

- All things were created **for him!**
- Everything exists to show his **preeminence!**
- From Genesis to Revelation we find people honoring God as preeminent!

Worship is Personal

- God wants **your** worship **Exclusively**.

In **Luke 4:8**, Jesus said, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him **only** shall you serve.’ ” (cf. Deuteronomy 6:13)

- Everyone worships **something**.
 - People will either worship God through a life submitted to Jesus Christ, or they will worship idols.
 - Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters.” Matthew 6:24

- Personal worship is a **Lifestyle**.
 - **1 Corinthians 10:31**, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
 - Worship is more than the **songs we sing**, the **style** of music we listen to, the **location, building, or architecture**, or the **position** of our bodies in prayer. It is the **purpose for which we live**.
 - Do you live for Jesus Christ or something else?
Self, Money, Fame/Status, Pleasure, Comfort, or Possessions
 - Worship is everything you do to **show your love** to God through Christ.

Colossians 3:23, “Whatever **you** do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men”
- Personal worship must be **Correct**.
 - Worship must be according to God’s design and pleasure, not ours.

John 4:23-24 – “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in **spirit** and **truth**, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

 - To worship in the **spirit** means to **worship from the heart!** Worship is **not a ritual**, going through the **motions**, or even the **traditions** we hold. Worship from the spirit comes from **loving God** with all your **heart**, all your **soul**, and all you mind (cf. Matthew 22:36-37).
 - To worship in **truth** means to worship God as he is truly **revealed in Scripture**. Truth is not based on your opinions or preferences. It comes from His word.
- Personal worship **Requires Sacrifice**.

Romans 12:1-2 – “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

 - Personal worship is **living** for his glory moment by moment.
 - Personal worship is **offering** your life to Christ daily.
 - Personal worship is **presenting** yourself to God and his purposes.
 - Personal worship is **committing** your cause to the cause of Christ.

Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. (Luke 9:23)

- Personal worship is often **Demonstrative**.
 - What **forms** of praise are mentioned in the Bible?

▪ Confessing	Psalm 32:5
▪ Singing	Psalm 9:2
▪ Shouting	Psalm 33:1
▪ Standing In Honor	Psalm 22:23
▪ Kneeling	Psalm 95:6
▪ Dancing	Psalm 149:3
▪ Making a Joyful Noise	Psalm 98:4
▪ Testifying	Acts 10:42
▪ Playing Musical Instruments	Psalm 150
▪ Raising Your Hands	Psalm 63:4
▪ Clapping	Psalm 47:1

Worship is Corporate

- Worship must also be expressed with other believers.
 - Believers are **commanded to worship together**.

Hebrews 10:24-25 – “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
- Worship is corporate in the **Old Testament**. (Festivals, Psalms, Passover, etc...)
- Worship is corporate in the **New Testament**. (Churches worshipped together.)
 - **Hymns in the New Testament**

Romans 11:33-36 – “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

Philippians 2:5-11 – Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- Worship was corporate in the **Early Church**.
Acts 2:42 – “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”
- Worship will be corporate in **Heaven**.
Revelation 19:6–8 - The Marriage Supper of the Lamb
“Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”
- Corporate worship is **Orderly**.
1 Corinthians 14:40 – “But **all things** should be done **decently and in order**.” (The context is the corporate worship service in Corinth.)
 - All worship is aimed at glorifying God.
 - Some expressions of worship may be suitable for personal worship but distracting to others in corporate settings. In our corporate worship services, we refrain from demonstrations of worship that bring undue attention away from God and onto ourselves or others.
 - Corporate worship is about being **unified in heart, soul, and mind** with **fellow believers** in honoring God. It is about unison not uniqueness.
 - Ballardsville encourages its members to have freedom.
- Corporate worship has **Singing**.
Ephesians 5:19-21 – “addressing one another in **psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody** to the Lord with your **heart**,²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ **submitting** to one another out of **reverence for Christ**.”
- Corporate worship has **Prayer**.¹¹
Acts 2:42 – “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the **prayers**.”
Colossians 4:2 – “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”
Mark 11:17 – Jesus asked, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’?”

¹¹(cf. Rom 12:12; Eph 6:18; 1 Thes 5:17; 1 Tim 2:1; 1 Pet 4:7; James 5:14-16; 2 Cor 1:11)

- Corporate worship has the **Lord's Supper**.
 - 1 Corinthians 11:33** – “So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat [the Lord's Supper], wait for one another.”
- Corporate worship has **Fellowship**.
 - Acts 2:44-47** – “And all who believed **were together** and had **all things in common**. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple **together** and **breaking bread in their homes**, they received their food with **glad and generous hearts, praising God** and having **favor with all the people**. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”
- Corporate worship has **Giving**.
 - Giving provides for the **ministries** of the church.
 - Giving **reminds** us that our blessings are from God.
 - Giving helps us **trust** God rather than in money.
 - 2 Corinthians 9:6-8** – “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.
 - 1 Timothy 5:17-18** – “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer deserves his wages.’”
- Corporate worship has **Preaching**.
 - Jesus wants us to be his witnesses.
 - Acts 1:8** – “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
 - We are commanded to preach. We preach the Word of God.
 - 2 Timothy 4:2** – “**Preach the word**; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.
 - The message is from the Bible.
 - Jude 3** – “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to **contend for the faith** that was once for all delivered to the saints.”
 - Preaching is about **God's wisdom** not man's.

1 Corinthians 1:21 – “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we **preach** to save those who believe.”

Discipleship - Grow

- Ballardsville Baptist Church strives to develop all members to maturity in Jesus Christ through **Discipleship**.

Matthew 28:19-20 – “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.”

2 Timothy 2:15 – “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 3:14-16 – “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”

- Discipleship opportunities:
 - Sunday School
 - Life University
 - Sermons
 - One-on-One Discipleship

Ministry - Serve

- Ballardsville Baptist Church strives to develop all members to maturity in Jesus Christ through **Ministry**.
- Most ministry opportunities are reserved for members, especially teaching.

1 Peter 4:10, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace, whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

- Ministry Outreach Events – Are annual presentation of all our ministries.

Current Ministries

<p>ADULT MINISTRY Life University Teacher Men's Ministry Sunday School: Apprentice Teacher Care Group Leaders Outreach Leaders Women's Ministry</p> <p>A.W.A.N.A. MINISTRY Ministry Leader Assistant Leader Games Leader</p> <p>BUILDING & GROUNDS MINISTRY Landscape & Flower Bed Maintenance General Maintenance Grounds Team—Lawn Mowing Painting Team</p> <p>CHILDREN'S MINISTRY Sunday Morning Nursery/Childcare Sunday Morning Childcare Sub Childcare for Special Events Preschool SS Teacher Elementary SS Teacher Substitute SS Teacher Children's Church-Discovery Club Children's Church-Kid'z Zone Children's Event Worker Summer Camp Vacation Bible School Volunteer</p> <p>COLLEGE MINISTRY College Ministry Coordinator College Ministry Workers</p> <p>GREETER MINISTRY Worship Service Greeters Sunday School Hour Greeters Parking Lot Greeters Welcome Center Host</p> <p>HEALTH MINISTRY Health Ministry First Aid Blood Drive Workers Bulletin Board Upkeep Health Screenings</p>	<p>HOSPITALITY MINISTRY Funeral Meals Senior Adult Luncheon (Primetimers) Special Event Meals Wednesday Night Cook Wednesday Night Cook Substitute Wednesday Night Clean Up</p> <p>LIBRARIAN Library Upkeep</p> <p>MEDIA MINISTRY Presentation Software Operator Camera Operator Sound Operator</p> <p>MUSIC MINISTRY Choir Worship Team Instrumentalist</p> <p>OFFICE VOLUNTEER Office Receptionist Office Assistant Pew Ministry Church Historian</p> <p>ORDINANCE MINISTRY Baptismal Preparation Lord's Supper Preparation</p> <p>OUTREACH MINISTRY Card Writing Team First Touch (Sundays/Mondays) Visitation Team (Wednesdays)</p> <p>PRAYER MINISTRY Prayer Team Email Prayer Chain Telephone Prayer Chain</p> <p>RISK MANAGEMENT Risk Management Team</p> <p>SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY Set up for Prime Timers Lunch Guest Speaker for Prime Timers Lunch Provide Transportation for Seniors</p> <p>USHERS MINISTRY Ushers/Offering</p>
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The Church Covenant

Ballardsville Baptist Church maintains the following expectations of its members, and we covenant together to:

1. Grow in our faith,
2. Participate in the vision and goals of this church,
3. Practice biblical stewardship with our time, talent, and treasure,
4. Grow this church through evangelism, discipleship, and ministry, and
5. Preserve the unity of this church.

Preserving the Unity of the Church

As a family in Christ, in which every member is highly valued, we believe our unity is paramount to our mission (John 17). For this reason it is the responsibility of every member to preserve and pursue oneness in Christ with each other individually and collectively (Ephesians 4:12-16). To preserve the unity of this church family, every member is expected to:

1. I will pursue maturity in faith, love, and living, through corporate, small group, and personal worship, Bible study, and evangelism (Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 5:14).
2. I will participate in church initiatives by serving in ministry and missions (I Peter 4:10; Matthew 5:16; Hebrews 10:25).
3. I will provide for the monetary needs of the church (Malachi 3:8-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8).
4. I will practice biblical reconciliation in all relationship differences (Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:1-4; Colossians 3:13; Galatians 6:1-2).
5. I will follow New Testament principles of discipline when helping to restore members caught in sin (Matthew 18:15-17).

With God's help, I covenant together with the believers of Ballardsville Baptist Church to fulfill the duties of this promise, to help guard the church membership against sin and attacks, and look out for the interest of others above my own for the glory of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sign Name

Date

BRING SIGNED COPY OF THIS COVENANT TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP INTERVIEW.

Church Membership

Qualifications¹²

You can join Ballardsville Baptist Church in one of the following ways:

1. By profession of faith in Christ as Savior and Lord and believer's baptism by immersion
2. By transfer of membership by letter of recommendation from another Baptist church
3. By statement of prior conversion experience and believer's baptism by immersion

Member Responsibilities

Members of this church are expected to:

1. Participate in the church's Connect 101 Membership Class
2. Affirm the Constitution and Articles of Faith
3. Strive to live a life in obedience to God's Word
4. Regularly participate in worship and the life of this church
5. Be involved in Sunday school (small groups)
6. Be involved in ministry in the church
7. Financially support the ministry of this church with a tithe and offerings
8. Protect the unity of this church

Rights of Members

1. Each member shall have the right to vote on all matters submitted to the members for decision.
2. Each member shall have the right to participate in ministries of the church and, if selected, have the right to serve in leadership positions within the church.
3. Every member of the church may participate in the ordinances of the church as administered by the church.

Termination of Membership

Members may be removed from the roll of the church in the following ways:

1. Death of the member
2. Transfer of membership letter to another Baptist church
3. Affiliation with a church of another faith or denomination
4. Personal request
5. Special action of this church

¹²Please see Articles of Faith, Baptism.

Church Organization

The church delegates certain authority and responsibility to the **pastor, staff** and **committees** that serve to lead the church toward the attainment of our vision.

- The **pastor** and **ministerial staff** serve as **overseers, shepherds,** and **administrators** of the church.
- The **Deacons** serve **as ministers** and support **physical needs** of the church.
- The church also delegates certain responsibilities to committees to help administer the business of the church and ensure accountability between all the members.

The **standing committees** are:

1. Buildings and Grounds
2. Finance (and Treasurer)
3. Nominating
4. Personnel
5. World Missions
6. Committee on Committees

On the Horizon

- Youth Minister
- Leadership Model/Elders

Conclusion

I want to thank you for being here and investing your time into our church. I trust your knowledge about our church will help you discern if Ballardsville Baptist Church is where God is calling you to join, minister, and grow in Christlikeness for his glory.

Next Step...

Schedule Your Membership Interview today.

For Your Records: My Membership Interview is scheduled for:

Date: _____
Time: _____
With: _____
Location: _____

APPENDIX 15

CONNECT 101 EMAIL PROMOTION

Spring is in full swing!

A Few Special Reminders:

ANNUAL LADIES TEA

Friday, April 29 - 7 PM

BBC Fellowship Hall

CHURCH WORK DAY

Saturday, April 30 - 9 AM

Meet in church parking lot - this endeavor will take a couple of hours (if we have plenty of helpers) . . . we are trimming shrubs, mowing, planting flowers and laying down mulch.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

Thursday, May 5

Church sanctuary will be open...7 am to 8 pm

CONNECT 101 CLASS

Sunday, May 22 - 12:15 PM

For new or prospective members, or for anyone who hasn't taken the membership class but would like to...please RSVP the office at 502.222.9165 or email

BBC@BBCLife.org.

Lunch will be served.

APPENDIX 16

POST-PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS

Returned surveys were given a respondent number and their responses are recorded below. In section one of the survey, participants were asked to indicate how well the Connect 101 class answered their questions on the given topic. The total number of participants who responded with the same answer is given below. If the total does not add up to eight, then one of the participants left the question unanswered.

Section I: Results										
<i>How well did the Connect 101 class answer the following questions?</i>	Not Well <i>I still have questions.</i>			Somewhat <i>Most of my questions were answered.</i>				Very Well <i>I can make a decision.</i>		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	What does the church believe and teach about the Bible?									4
What are the expectations this church has of its members?							1		3	4
What is the church's vision and mission?							1		3	4
What does this church believe about tithing?								1	3	4
What is the history of this church?						1	1	4	1	1
What ministries does this church have for my spouse?								3	3	2
What ministries does this church have for my children?								1	3	3
What ministries does this church have for me?									6	2
Can I serve in ministry at this church?									5	3
Is this church active in missions?									2	6
How are decisions made in this church?							2	1	3	2
How will this church help me grow in Christ?									3	4
Is the pastor accessible?									5	3
What is the church's reason for using this style of music?			1					2	3	2
What do Southern Baptists believe?									3	5
Why should I join Ballardsville Baptist Church?									2	5

In section 2 participants were asked to answer the question with a brief statement. The answers given for each question by each respondent are recorded below. A zero will indicate that the participant did not answer the question.

Section II: Results

1. What, if any, surprises did you have while taking the Connect 101 class?

Respondent 1	None
Respondent 2	0
Respondent 3	So surprises
Respondent 4	None
Respondent 5	Very great class with a great teacher
Respondent 6	That the class was not better attended
Respondent 7	None
Respondent 8	I really enjoyed getting more insight on our views on certain topics

2. Which topics were most valuable to you?

Respondent 1	The importance of church membership and the explanation on how to receive God's salvation
Respondent 2	What this church teaches and believes about the Bible, expectations of the church's members, knowledge of ministries in the church and knowing I can serve and am expected to serve
Respondent 3	Worship and fellowship, unity of the church, member responsibilities, church organization
Respondent 4	Understanding of Southern Baptist belief and how the church uses Scripture to direct their services
Respondent 5	Learning about becoming a member, all of it
Respondent 6	Connecting with God, Articles of Faith, church organization
Respondent 7	Salvation
Respondent 8	Abortion, divorce, homosexuality

3. Which lessons or topics were least valuable to you?

Respondent 1	All were important
Respondent 2	The history of the church
Respondent 3	Affiliations
Respondent 4	None
Respondent 5	Not any really
Respondent 6	It was difficult to determine what was least valuable because it all gave me insight into the church
Respondent 7	None
Respondent 8	Missions

4. Did the pastor clearly communicate the vision and mission of the church?
 Yes No If not, what could the pastor have done to better communicate the vision of the church?

Respondent 1	Yes
Respondent 2	Yes
Respondent 3	Yes
Respondent 4	Yes
Respondent 5	Yes
Respondent 6	Yes
Respondent 7	Yes
Respondent 8	Yes

5. Do you feel you have enough answers to decide whether you should join Ballardsville or keep searching for a church home? Yes No Please explain:

Respondent 1	Yes
Respondent 2	Yes, the class was very thorough, I know what is required to be a member and I know that I will be able to find a place of ministry and service here
Respondent 3	Yes
Respondent 4	Yes, clear
Respondent 5	Yes, love this church, they are our family
Respondent 6	Yes, I believe we will be joining with the next few weeks unless the Lord sends something to indicate he wants to use us somewhere else
Respondent 7	Yes
Respondent 8	0, Already member

6. What changes do you suggest we make to this class?

Respondent 1	Cover the class in sermons or over multiple sermons to guarantee all hear message
Respondent 2	The class was quite lengthy, maybe cut it down to a couple of hours
Respondent 3	Try to get through affiliations quicker
Respondent 4	Shorter time length, it was a lot to digest
Respondent 5	Nothing
Respondent 6	Maybe enlist some other speakers so Brother Tony doesn't have to speak for the entire 3 hours right after preaching two Sunday morning services
Respondent 7	None
Respondent 8	Nothing

7. Other comments or suggestions:

Respondent 1	Great class, very informative
Respondent 2	This class provided so much good information that is so very much needed when considering membership in this church; so many other churches don't provide such a class; I think often times it is assumed at other churches that people already know what they are supposed to do when joining a church; this class is so necessary to the health and growth of our church
Respondent 3	0
Respondent 4	0
Respondent 5	0
Respondent 6	It was a very good class and gave us all the information we need. I, also enjoyed fellowship with others during the breaks
Respondent 7	I think Brother Tony did a great job
Respondent 8	More discussion on music/invitation time

APPENDIX 17

BALLARDSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH COMMITMENTS WE MAKE

CHURCH COVENANT

Ballardsville Baptist Church maintains the following expectations of its members, and we covenant together to:

- A. Grow in faith
- B. Participate in the vision and goals of this church
- C. Practice biblical stewardship with our time, talent, and treasure
- D. Grow this church through evangelism, discipleship, and ministry
- E. Preserve the unity of this church

MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of this church are expected to:

- A. Participate in the church's new member orientation class
- B. Affirm the Constitution and Articles of Faith
- C. Strive to live a life in obedience to God's Word
- D. Regularly participate in worship and the life of this church
- E. Be involved in Sunday school (small groups)
- F. Be involved in ministry in the church
- G. Financially support the ministry of this church with tithes and offerings
- H. Protect the unity of this church

PRESERVING THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

As a family in Christ, in which every member is highly valued, we believe our unity is paramount to our mission (John 17). For this reason it is the responsibility of every member to preserve and pursue oneness in Christ with each other individually and collectively (Ephesians 4:12-16). To preserve the unity of this church family, every member is expected to:

- A. Pursue maturity in faith, love, and living, through corporate, small group, and personal worship, Bible study, and evangelism (Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 5:14).
- B. Participate in church initiatives by serving in ministry and missions. (I Peter 4:10; Matthew 5:16; Hebrews 10:25).
- C. Provide for the monetary needs of the church (Malachi 3:8-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8).
- D. Practice biblical reconciliation in relationship differences (Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:1-4; Colossians 3:13; Galatians 6:1-2).
- E. Follow New Testament principles of discipline when helping to restore members caught in sin. (Matthew 18:15-17)

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ABSTRACT

LAUNCHING AN ASSIMILATION PROCESS AT BALLARDSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH, CRESTWOOD, KENTUCKY

Tony Ray Wolfenbarger, Jr., D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Joseph C. Harrod

The purpose of this project was to launch an assimilation process at Ballardsville Baptist Church. Chapter 1 outlines the church's cultural context, and states the goals, rationale, definitions, and limitations of the project.

Chapter 2 considers the biblical warrant for assimilation and church membership.

Chapter 3 examines the ideas of contemporary Christian authors pertaining to assimilation and church membership classes. This chapter explores the benefits of assimilation classes and the most common topics churches include in their membership classes.

Chapter 4 details the steps Ballardsville Baptist Church took to implement the assimilation process, including challenges and surprises encountered along the way. These steps include leadership education, pre- and post-project surveys, and teaching the assimilation curriculum.

Chapter 5 evaluates the effectiveness of the project by measuring the attainment of project goals and by examining the project's strengths and weaknesses. The project concludes with theological and personal reflections. This project maintains that a quality assimilation process will initiate the building of healthy Christians and subsequently healthy churches.

VITA

Tony Ray Wolfenbarger, Jr.

EDUCATIONAL

B.S. Tusculum College, 2001

M.Div. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005

MINISTERIAL

Associate Pastor, Eighteen Mile Baptist Church, LaGrange, Kentucky, 2003-2005

Associate Missions Pastor, Grace Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee, 2006-2008

Senior Pastor, Ballardsville Baptist Church, Crestwood, Kentucky, 2008-