



GET ON BOARD

An Introduction to Fenlands
Church: What we believe and
how you can be a happy and
effective for the Lord in being
part of this fellowship

David Chapman
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People get ready, there's a train a-comin' Don't need no ticket, you just "Get On Board!"

This booklet is about Fenlands Church. What makes us tick! How we organise ourselves. What we expect of people who want to belong.

We try in a few pages to answer questions you might want to ask. The real way to get to know us is by getting to know us! A few weeks might give you a picture—a few months would make the picture clearer.

We are a very open and trusting church. We welcome you and all that you are in Christ.

We are an inclusive church. We want everyone to be and feel included and grow in their service for Jesus Christ.

We are a family church. We believe that everyone has a part to play whether young or old, male or female, single or married.

We are a Holy Spirit led church. We want everyone to be open to His leading.

We are a Christ-centred Church and want to be sure that everything is directed towards his praise and glory.

The booklet is based on five "ships"

**Relationship, Membership, Leadership, Discipleship,
Worship,**

So the song is about getting on board a train but the same idea applies for a plane or a ship!

Before We Begin ...

Fenlands Church is committed to helping our people be Christians where they live! This means we have an emphasis on local areas and a desire to see suitable leaders raised up who will care for people who live in these local areas. This includes people who live in the villages around us.

The idea is to have real fellowship in these areas—first through friendships that develop fellowship in all kinds of ways. Next we focus on meetings that can include friends and neighbours.

We want to maintain a strong identity from our corporate Sunday Morning Service where everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend.

We want to be a church that is:

- PRAYING
- LEARNING
- WORSHIPPING
- CARING
- WITNESSING

This involves times (seasons) where we might emphasise one or two of these in order to be sure each area is strengthened.

We believe that Christians grow through seeing their obligation as spiritual priests. That is—everyone has the amazing privilege of meeting with God as Father for themselves. We bring this personal relationship with God into our meetings together. So, the Lord builds his Church through fellowship, prayer and the employment of spiritual gifts.

Acts 2:41-42 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Our Teaching and Preaching has a strong element of “Go and do likewise...” Also, we try to model for all ages the kind of lifestyle and worship we believe is good and acceptable to the Lord.

The Bible is the Word of God and we keep it central to all we do. We make sure that this is in harmony with the authority of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, with Jesus Christ: clearly seen as Lord and Head of the Church.

Also, because of the rural nature of our church, we have developed a relationship with Rural Ministries—a charity committed to developing church life in rural areas.

RURAL MINISTRIES IS AN EVANGELICAL MISSION AGENCY COMMITTED TO PLANTING AND GROWING RURAL CHURCHES



We are also part of a Churches together fellowship of churches in South Lincolnshire (East Elloe)



MEMBERSHIP

Being a member is like being part of a body—a leg or arm or eye or finger—a member of a body.

1Co 12:26-27 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

We do not have a contract, a paper to sign or an “oath of allegiance!”. We do encourage everyone to make it obvious that they want to belong. This usually becomes obvious by the life-style. We usually complement this by a demonstration of commitment together in a kind of welcome and laying on of hands (identifying with one another as belonging together).

Church membership is complicated in the 21st century. There are all sorts of Christian Groups you could belong to and the choice can be difficult. There is, though, in Scripture, the emphasis on belonging to your local church. This does not cut you off from others, it merely states the obvious. A politician can belong to only one party—children cannot properly belong to several groups of parents.

Belonging to Fenlands Church comes from four main things:

1. Your choice
2. Your evident commitment
3. The loving reception of the congregation
4. The recognition of the elders

The time taken to make an open statement of intention to belong and serve among us varies enormously. The fact is—most people show that they belong by their love and service and attendance among us.

As we have no contract, leaving works much the same as joining. Usually, leaving arises from leaving the district. Sometimes someone will want to move on to a different church. If so, we try to see this through in a way that honours God and everyone concerned. It is good to avoid arguments and divisions.

Underneath any decision to belong is an examination of the teaching and practice of a church. We do aim to be Biblical and Spiritual in everything.

We honour and love the Word of God and recognise that the freedom of the Holy Spirit is based on the truth of the Bible. Above all we exalt Jesus Christ as Lord of all. We believe that the whole Bible is about him and the whole Universe is his.

Colossians 1:15-19 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him

In considering membership you should be able to assess our doctrine and life reasonably quickly. It takes longer to assess how things work out in practice.

RELATIONSHIP

Being a Christian means being added to the Church of Christ. This Church is not seen in Christian denominations or organisations but in the simple fact that every believer who has ever lived or is yet to live is a part of that Spiritual Body called the Church of Christ. Belonging in a local church begins by belonging to God as one of his children, chosen to be like Jesus, a son!

The local church is seen in the many and various companies of Christians as they demonstrate who Christ is and what his Kingdom is like. This starts with individuals repenting of sins and recognising Jesus Christ as Lord, risen from the dead. This results in being filled with, baptised into, the Holy Spirit. A local church is able to show the fruit and the power of the Holy Spirit by the way they live and show love for one another.

“Relationship” means we are more than friends, we are brothers and sisters together. We do far more than just meet on a Sunday morning. We meet together as often as we can—at least we do in small groups. We don’t just sing, pray and listen to God’s Word together. We eat and drink, laugh and play, weep and mourn, suffer and succeed—TOGETHER.

So, we demonstrate relationships that are real—everyday. We honour relationships with other Christians and recognise Christ’s provision of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to serve local churches in matters of foundational truth and godly order.

Spiritual relationships begin at the Door (or the Gate).

John 10:9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.

John 14:6 Jesus said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

We begin through faith in Jesus Christ. We trust in him. We trust his words, his works. What he has said and done is good enough for us. This faith comes through revelation—not religion! God reveals who Jesus is to those who are seeking (looking hard). This brings an amazing change or transformation in our lives.

Several things all come together when someone begins in faith in Jesus Christ:

1. Confession of sin that one is just not good enough to earn heaven.
2. A change of heart about one's life and willingness to submit to God as Father.
3. Receiving, through the Holy Spirit, a new birth, a new beginning, as a new creation.
4. Being baptised into and filled with the Holy Spirit and so receive power to live God's way and be holy (special for God).
5. Being baptised in water in testimony of what God has done in one's life.

This relationship with God makes it possible to enter into a relationship with Christians in a local church. This is more than a friendship—it is a bond of love—an adoption into God's family.

Ephesians 5:1-2 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

DISCIPLESHIP

This aspect of Christian life relates to our personal walk with the Lord. Fellowship together, learning together, praying together, witnessing together, worshipping together, are of great value but can become shallow if there is no personal spiritual discipline.

We have a five-fold aim in our teaching:

- Knowing God [Father, Son, Spirit]– through the Word and Prayer
- Being Filled with the Holy Spirit
- Having Fellowship with other believers as often as possible
- Becoming like Jesus Christ
- Living out and telling out the Good News to all

These require a personal commitment to God and willingness to be a disciple.

A disciple is a follower of someone. In this he or she imitates the one they are following.

1Thessalonians 1:6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

This suggests that there needs to be a level of imitation within Fenlands Church. We learn from each other and follow each other according to how we follow the Lord Jesus. This will not mean that we manage to get everything right but it does mean that we should be showing a level of unity and similarity about how we serve God, worship him, pray and so on.

1Corinthians 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Unity does not mean uniformity—we celebrate the variety and beauty that can live in the Body of Christ. However, the variety seen needs to be graceful, beautiful—not a chaos of people all doing their own thing!

Discipleship means allowing discipline. So, we allow the Holy Spirit to teach and guide us—submitting to God’s will. Sometimes this might mean submitting to the decisions of leadership. Not an easy thing in our modern world but an important aspect of church life, where authority and obedience are Biblical truth for the believer. The main thing is that Christians love Jesus Christ and, because of this, they keep his commands. Obedience is a matter of love—not fear.

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

LEADERSHIP

There is a healthy tension between the fact that every believer is a “priest” and has a duty to serve God as fully as possible and the fact that God commands that churches should have leaders who have authority and take oversight of a church.

In Fenlands Church, leadership has a little to do with “office” and a great deal to do with “service”. We try to avoid the ideas of management and superior positions. An elder is an important work but it is not superior to any other person or work. It means being “over” a church in the sense of watching over everyone. It carries ideas of shepherding and parenting and requires maturity and experience.

1Peter 5:1-4 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

The issue of authority extends beyond Fenlands Church and Fenlands Family Church and values the help of other church leaders in matters of doctrine and discipline. In this we respect the help provided by Rural Ministries and a serving organisation for rural churches.

The process of appointing a new elder begins with evidence in a man's life in the church. This will be monitored by the other elders and church leaders. The church will be asked to consider the man as an elder. After a suitable period of time and subject to prayer and church response the appointment will be made and recognised by Fenlands Church and Rural Ministries leaders.

We aim for team leadership, with, at least, one of the elders being full-time.

A special feature of Fenlands Church leadership is in the way we try to establish local church where our people live—Church in the House! This requires willing and gifted people. House groups can be an extremely useful tool in church growth and be the catalyst to establishing a new church community.

The elders have oversight of all the work and activities of our congregations while people in the support team serve by leading specific things—like Worship, Mission, Area groups, Play'n'Chat.

You will have noted that our elders are male? This is only with respect to elders. We are convinced from Scripture about this. All other leadership is male and female. We also encourage husband and wife teams where suitable.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

WORSHIP

This aspect of the Christian life is very far-reaching. We should not think of it as limited to a time of singing songs of praise and worship. The Lord Jesus worshipped his Father through every second of his life. Serving, teaching, healing, praying, walking and talking—all was worship.

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

So worship is about discipleship, it is about our relationship with God and each other.

People who are worshipping God in their personal lives will be able to worship God in the church gatherings. They will be ready with spiritual words, songs and gifts. When we live a daily walk with God we are always aware of his amazing grace towards us and will overflow with praise and thanksgiving for all that Christ has done and all that he is.

The grace and love of God in justifying guilty sinners and placing them in Christ—safe for ever—should bring to birth lives that are giving and unselfish. God baptises and fills us with his Spirit. We are given power to serve and power to live the way God has purposed.

Galatians 5:22-24 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Worshipping believers will want to serve God and their fellow believers. They will want to put the Lord first in everything. This means that the plans of each day, week, month or year are made with God first in mind. We set apart time each day to meet with him and time each week to meet with our fellow believers in church gatherings. We set apart some of our income and give it to the Lord through the church. We will set apart our gifts and abilities to benefit the local church.

In a world that encourages self-fulfilment all this might seem “unusual”? However, putting God first is not a legal ruling—it all arises out of love for the Lord. We do not legislate about any of these things—but we do look for them as evidence of

the fruit of Christ in each of us.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Yes, there is a sense in which our setting apart for God ends up with us being blessed and added to. There is a remarkable spiritual blessing and joy in being holy (set apart) for God.

When we gather to worship the Lord together we often include the Bread and Wine. This is something Jesus asked us to do as a way of remembering him. We remember that we are saved by his death and made alive by his resurrection and are serving him until he returns for us from heaven. The sharing from the same bread and wine speaks of his body and blood and that we are an example of his body to those who do not believe. We share the Lord's Supper at the heart of our worship. This is not a mere ritual but a time to revisit why we are Christians and what we ought to be getting on with for the kingdom of Christ. Above all, it is a time to get to know the Lord better, more deeply.

Statement of Faith

Our beliefs are those taught in the Bible - *"not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words."*

1 Corinthians 2:13

Put as simply as possible those beliefs are:

- Repentance from sin
- Faith in Christ Jesus alone for forgiveness and eternal life
- Trust in Christ's finished work accomplished through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven.
- Hope concerning Christ's promised return.
- Belief that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Belief that the Person of the Holy Spirit indwells the true believer providing evidence of salvation.
- Acceptance that the Bible is God's complete revelation to mankind.
- Love for God and willingness to serve Him
- Love for all people and concern for their true happiness in spirit, soul, and body.
- Fellowship with believers of like mind in worship, prayer, and service.

We hope these pages have given you a good idea of what we are as a local church? Also, we hope that we have answered a few of the main questions you may have had?

You can contact us by 'phone or email—or arrange to meet with one or more of the leaders. Usually, we offer the opportunity to talk through the booklet with us.

Fenlands Family Church—Thorney

fenlandschurch@gmail.com

01733 271377

THE CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Duke of Bedford School

Sandpit Road

Thorney

PE6 0ST

Fenlands Church—Tydd Gote

fenlandschurch@gmail.com

01945 420297

Fenlands Church Centre

Main Road

Tydd Gote

PE13 5QA

you can find out more about us on our web site:

www.fenlandschurch.co.uk

You can find out about Rural Ministries on their website:

