# BELONG
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LOCAL
· CHURCH ·
ST. PETE

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# BELONG HERE SCHEDULE

**12:30P - 1P**
EAT LUNCH, INTRODUCTIONS

1P - 1:25P
SESSION 1 Our Story, Mission, and Values | Faith That Echoes On (1 Thessalonians 1)

**1:35P - 2P**
SESSION 2 Called Out and Sent In (1 Peter 2) | Your involvement, reaching our area, and membership documents

**2P - 2:30P**
Q + A

# SESSION 1

# OUR STORY

## FALL 2018 CHURCH PLANT

Gulf Coast Community Church announced a church plant in the city of St. Petersburg. Interest meetings were held and the Board and Core Team formed.







## JAN 2019 FIRST SERVICE

Local Church St. Pete held its first Sunday service on January 13, 2019 at Mt. Vernon Elementary School.

## MAY 2019 NEW MEETING PLACE

Due to necessary electrical upgrades at Mt. Vernon, we had to relocate our Sunday gatherings and were thankful to land at the historic Albright church building @ 2750 5th Ave N – at the center of our target neighborhoods.





## JULY 2019 PARTNERSHIP

Local Church St. Pete began partnering with the Acts 29 Network of churches for support, leadership development and collaboration.

## AUG 2019 LEADER'S COLLECTIVE

Daryn was accepted into the Leader's Collective – a year-long program providing training, accountability and camaraderie for church-planting pastors.






## OCT 2019 CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Local Church St. Pete added a board member and church administrator to assist in providing support and leadership for our mission efforts.

## DEC 2019 TO PRESENT DAY

Local Church St. Pete continues to see an influx of new college students, singles and families excited to join with us on mission.






# CORE DESIRES

### Expectation and Dependency
We believe God will do great things for our good and His glory. We want to trust him and lean on him through prayer in every way.

### Humility and Compassion
We know we are not the “saviors” of St. Pete, there’s only one. We are not the only thing going on in St. Pete. God is at work through many people and in various ways, but we get to be a part of His mission. We will always have something to learn from others. We have been shown compassion and want to show it to others.

### Love and Mercy
Jesus said, “The world will know you are my disciples by your love for one another.” We want to walk in love. This will require sacrifice, patience, sincerity, and time. We have been forgiven and shown mercy through Jesus and want to show forgiveness and mercy to others.

### Intentionality and Hospitality
The time is now and the mission is before us. We want to move about our day-to-day lives with intentionality. We want to listen to, learn from, eat with and welcome people into our lives.

### Tolerance and Community
We do not have to agree on everything with someone else to show them love and respect. We do not need to accept their belief system as true to be their friend. We want to bring honest questions and honest answers where we have them. We know this happens best in the context of genuine community.

# DISCIPLES WHO MAKE DISCIPLES

**to impact the city of St. Pete for Jesus**

1. **What is a disciple?**
   A disciple is someone who follows Jesus and brings others to Jesus.
2. **How do you make disciples?**
   Create an environment where people are known, loved, trained and sent, driven by a compelling vision of Jesus. You could start by prayerfully asking someone to begin meeting together regularly.
3. **Why do we do this?**
   Because Jesus commanded us to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).
4. **Who are you investing in / discipling?**
   Everyone should have someone in their life they are discipling (in some form or context).
5. **What specifically should you do when meeting / gathering with the person you are discipling?**
   CONNECT – create a culture of grace where they can be honest about struggles, questions, sin, dreams, etc. Lead by example in this.

   TRAIN / TEACH – Do you know their story? Have they heard your story? Share THE story of the Bible (CREATION, REBELLION, RESCUE, RESTORATION) w/ an emphasis on Jesus and what he accomplished in his LIFE, DEATH and RESURRECTION. Always read and discuss scripture together. We highly recommend the book “One to One” by David Helm, which teaches how to do a “one to one” meeting with someone.

   You can ask the following questions of any Bible text:
   1. What did this text mean to its original hearers / in its original context?
   2. What does it mean for our lives today?
   3. What is God saying or revealing through this?
   4. What am I going to do about it? PRAY – Pray together, often following the method Jesus taught us (Matthew 6:9-13). Teach them to fight against their true enemy: the devil and his spiritual forces (Ephesians 6:10-20).
6. **How do you know when you’ve succeeded?**
   When you’ve invested in someone and sent out your disciples to make disciples on their own.

# HOW WILL WE REACH OUR CITY WITH THE **LOVE AND TRUTH OF JESUS?**

Build relationships, practice hospitality, walk in love (practice community), invite others into that community, *one to one* Bible reading, House Groups, Neighborhood Dinners, activities and service projects.

There is a prevailing relativism in our city, a secular mindset in almost every area, from sexuality to the arts to education. So many people have never read the Bible or even heard the Gospel presented in a clear way. Many have a poor experience with "church" and want nothing to do with it. We have the opportunity to come alongside people in love. We hope to disarm with the love of Jesus, invite people into our lives and invest in relationships. We pray the Gospel will be seen and clearly explained through these encounters. We will need to be good listeners in order to truly know and learn from the people in our city / neighborhood. This will take time, intentionality and prayer.

We're praying the Gospel will bring hope to those struggling with depression.

We're praying the Gospel will bring reconciliation where there's broken relationships and racial tension.

We're praying the Gospel redefines what is good and beautiful in the area of sexuality.

We're praying the Gospel infuses visual artists and musicians with a vision for engaging culture with the arts.

We're praying the campuses around us are impacted by the truth of Jesus and that students are both discipled and learn to make disciples.

We're praying for those struggling with addictions of all kinds (porn, drugs, alcohol) - that they will find freedom and rest. That the things people to turn to cope with their pain will be seen for what they are – empty. And instead, people will find rest in Jesus.

We're praying for clarity on how to come alongside the homeless and in particular the mentally or emotionally unstable on the streets of our city.

We're praying that our church serves our foster care system - that children find loving homes to belong to.

We're praying our community serves the marginalized and forgotten within our society.

We're praying for those who have experienced sexual abuse that they will find redemption and peace.

We're praying our children encounter Jesus in a living way. That they walk with compassion, conviction and courage.

We're praying the church is filled with non-Christians, looking for answers and for Christians who don't have a church community.

# MINISTRIES WE FOCUS ON

**And When They Happen**

**Our philosophy of ministry from the start: SIMPLE + FOCUSED**

We want to evaluate everything we do on the basis of whether or not it helps or hinders us from being *disciples who make disciples.* As a result, we have a very focused and simple philosophy of ministry.

*We are called out and sent in* (1 Peter 2:9-10). We are called out of darkness, sin and shame through the power of Jesus, and this humbles us. We express this humility in our corporate worship gatherings and everyday lives. But that's not all – we're sent back into the world and culture to live lives that reflect the transforming work of Jesus in us. We're sent into schools, workplaces and neighborhoods to l**ive intentional lives on mission for Jesus.** You might meet with friends for coffee, serve those in need, do one-on-one Bible reading with someone, participate in a discipleship group, host a neighborhood dinner and much more - none of which might be officially planned by the leadership teams of Local Church St. Pete. It's ministry that happens as part of our rhythm of being disciples who make disciples.

**Sunday Gatherings**
Weekly

**Prayer**
All the time (2nd Tuesday, every Sunday)

**Hospitality**
All the time

**HOUSE groups**
2-3 times a month (scattered throughout)

**LOCAL kids**
Sundays

**LOCAL youth**
2-3 times a month

**College Age** (18-24 year olds)
Monthly gathering and weekly bible studies

**LOCAL mission**
Varied

**Church Planting and Leadership Development**
Both LOCAL and GLOBAL

**Men's / Women's Gatherings**
Quarterly

**Men's / Women's Bible Studies**
Seasonal

**Discipleship Groups** (One-to-ones or two-to-four)
Organically

**Classes**
Varied

**Pastoral Residency**
A two-year immersive training program for seminary graduates to serve, learn, and grow here with us before being sent out to continue the work of shepherding and equipping Jesus' church. Residents will be provided with a wide range of ministry and mentorship opportunities for the purpose of continued pastoral formation.

# LOCAL + GLOBAL MISSION

**Serving in love**

Below you will find local and global ministries we partner with, learn from, and come alongside as we walk in love and make disciples. If you want more information on how to get involved with one or all of these ministries, please go to COMMUNITY on our website at www.localchurchstpete.com. Click on the mission group you'd like to learn about and sign-up to receive more information.

## LOCAL MISSION

**A Door of Hope** – offering hope for kids in crisis by providing loving, Christian foster homes: www.adoorofhope.com

**College Age** – equipping and empowering students to reach their campuses with the truth and love of Jesus with boldness and humility: www.localchurchstpete.com

**Created** – committed to the restoration of exploited women to an understanding of their value, beauty, and destiny in Jesus Christ: www.createdwomen.com

**Faith Youth Services** – offering trauma-informed mentoring, along with academic and workforce coaching to help at-risk youth build resilience for a brighter future: www.faithyouthservices.org

**Hands & Feet St. Pete** – Feeding the homeless and meeting other practical & spiritual needs every week in downtown St. Pete: www.localchurchstpete.com > LOCAL Mission

**Next Stepp Pregnancy Center** – offering life-affirming solutions and resources to women and families facing unintended pregnancies: www.nextstepp.org

**St. Petersburg Free Clinic** – changing lives by offering food, shelter and health care to our neighbors in need: www.stpetersburgfreeclinic.org

## GLOBAL MISSION

**Church Planting in Madrid, Spain** – Emilio & Hannah Marrero – a church planting network and residency restoring and training local pastors in an underrepresented region of Europe: www.localchurchstpete.com > GLOBAL Mission

**Casa de Esperanza** – Fidel & Charo Corrales – an orphanage and school in Bolivia committed to showing abandoned children God's never-failing love: www.hogarcasadeesperanza.org

**Training Leaders International** – Hanoi Bible College – Luan and Teresa Nguyen – equipping the next generation of pastors and leaders with theological education to serve the fast-growing church in northern Vietnam: www.trainingleadersinternational.org

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO:

**Cru: The Jesus Film** - Liz DiPietro

# LEADERSHIP TEAM

## PASTORAL TEAM
Daryn Kinney - Pastor
Ronnie Rentz - Pastor
Trevor Morten - Pastor
Beau Dugan - Pastoral Resident
Samuel Hawes - Pastoral Resident
Trevor Shultz - Pastor (non-vocational)

## ADVISORY TEAM
Josh Allen
David Reid
Alex Peckham

## STAFF
Daryn Kinney - Lead Pastor
Ronnie Rentz - Pastor
Trevor Morten - Pastor
Beau Dugan - Pastoral Resident
Samuel Hawes - Pastoral Resident
Lindsey Birge - Director of Operations
Lexie Aurie - Administrative Assistant

Brent D'Altilio - Worship
Stephen Birge - Facilities
Kelsey Whittaker - LOCAL Kids Director
Summer Smalley - LOCAL Kids Assistant Director
Jess Bender - Social Media / Graphics
Ben Saylor - Production & Sound
Keaton Hunter - Production Team Lead

## HOUSE GROUP LEADERS*
Steve and Lindsey Birge
Coleman and Alissa Bryant
Steve and Patti Cash
Gabe and Rita Franklin
Tony and Jane Giaccone
Steve and Robin Harris
Samuel and Natalie Hawes
Keaton Hunter and Camille Harkenrider
Aldi Isaacs
Nathan and Amy Johnson

## HOUSE GROUP LEADERS *continued*
John and Heather Morgan
Trevor Morten
Alex and Ashley Peckham
Ned and Katrina Potithavoranant
Ron and Carol Ripple
Ronnie and Christina Rentz
Trevor and Emily Shultz
Luke and Leah Torres
Aaron and Kristen Van Fossen
Matt Vergin
John and Carmon Watts
David and Rosie White

## DEACONS
*House Group Leaders are Deacons
Lindsey Birge
Michael Griffith
Ben Larsen
Clinton Wilson

## BENEVOLENCE TEAM
Justin Andrews
Lindsey Birge
Liz DiPietro
Ronnie Rentz

# PARTNERSHIPS

ACTS 29

- church planting and pastor training across the US and abroad

LEADERSCOLLECTIVE

- promoting healthy churches by helping pastors and church-planters sustain healthy, fruitful ministry

Made to Flourish

- providing tools and resources for pastoral residencies in churches committed to vocationally informed discipleship

# SESSION 1 NOTES

## FAITH THAT ECHOES ON | 1 Thessalonians 1

*"God intends every church community to receive and pass on the message of the gospel BUT no church can do this with any credibility unless its people have been (and are being) visibly changed by the message it preaches."* NT Wright

*"He (Jesus) did not stay in the safe immunity of His heaven. Instead He emptied himself of His glory and humbled himself to serve. He actually entered our world. He took our nature, lived our life and died our death. He could not have identified with us more closely than he did...And now he calls us to enter other people's worlds, as he entered ours...We are called to enter other people's social and cultural reality: into their thought- world, struggling to understand their misunderstandings of the gospel, and into the pain of their alienation, weeping with those who weep. And this without compromising our Christians beliefs, values and standards."* John Stott

# SESSION 2

# SESSION 2 NOTES

## CALLED OUT, SENT IN | 1 Peter 2:9-10

# ONE ANOTHERS

**Local Church St. Pete**

**LOVE** - “Love one another” (Romans 13:8, 1 Peter 1:22 & 4:8)

**DEVOTE** - “Be devoted to one another in love” (Romans 12:10)

**HONOR** - “Honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 10:12)

**HARMONIZE** - “Live in harmony with one another” (Romans 12:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:13)

**NO JUDGING** - “Stop passing judgment on one another” (Romans 14:13)

**ACCEPT** - “Accept one another” (Romans 15:7)

**INSTRUCT** - “Instruct one another” (Romans 15:14)

**AFFECTIONATELY GREET** - “Greet with a holy kiss” (Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20)

**AGREE** - “Agree with one another in what you say” (1 Corinthians 1:10)

**HAVE EQUAL CONCERN** - “Have equal concern for each other” (1 Corinthians 12:25)

**BE OF ONE MIND** - “Be of one mind” (2 Corinthians 13:11)

**ENCOURAGE** - “Encourage one another” (2 Corinthians 13:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:11)

**CARRY BURDENS** - “Carry each other’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2)

**SERVE** - “Serve one another humbly in love” (Galatians 5:13, 1 Peter 4:10)

**SHOW KINDNESS** - “Be kind to one another” (Ephesians 4:32)

**SHOW COMPASSION** - “Be compassionate to one another” (Ephesians 4:32)

**RECITE** - “Speak to one another in psalms, hymns and songs from the spirit” (Ephesians 5:19)

**SING** - “Speak to one another in psalms, hymns and songs from the spirit” (Ephesians 5:19)

**SUBMIT** - “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21)

**BEAR WITH** - “Bear with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2, Colossians 3:3)

**FORGIVE** - “Forgive one another” (Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13)

**LOOK TO INTERESTS** - “Look to the interests of others” (Philippians 4:2)

**TEACH** - “Teach one another” (Colossians 3:16)

**ADMONISH** - “Admonish one another with all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16)

**DO WHAT IS GOOD** - “Strive to do what is good for each other” (1 Thessalonians 5:5)

**MOTIVATE** - “Spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24)

**CONFESS SINS** - “Confess your sins to each other” (James 5:16)

**PRAY FOR HEALING** - “Pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:16)

**OFFER HOSPITALITY** - “Offer hospitality to one another” (1 Peter 4:9)

# HOUSE GROUPS

House groups are a vital place to get connected and to walk out the calling we have to love and serve each other and our community. Groups are meeting in different locations and times throughout the week. We typically meet in homes two to three times a month and spend time together sharing food, discussing the Scriptures, praying, and serving. For more information on House Groups visit www.localchurchstpete.com or email us at info@localchurchstpete.com

## **22** GROUPS

**Allendale Terrace -** Wednesdays @ 7:15PM - Matt Vergin
**Barcley Estates** - Mondays @ 6PM - Steve & Lindsey Birge
**Childs Park** - Tuesdays @ 7PM - Keaton Hunter & Camille Harkenrider
**Crossroads** - Wednesdays @ 6PM - Ronnie & Christina Rentz
**Highpoint** - Tuesdays @ 7:30PM - Ned & Katrina Potithavoranant
**Historic Kenwood** - Thursdays @ 7PM - Trevor Morten
**Holiday Park** - Mondays @ 7PM - Coleman & Alissa Bryant
**Largo** - Wednesdays @ 6PM - Aaron & Kristen Van Fossen
**Lealman** - Thursdays @ 7PM - Tony & Jane Giaccone
**Meadowlawn** - Mondays @ 6:30PM - Samuel & Natalie Hawes
**Melrosemercy** - Thursdays @ 6:30PM - Gabe & Rita Franklin
**North Kenwood** - Tuesdays @ 6:30PM - Alex & Ashley Peckham
**Northwest Park** - Wednesdays @ 6:30PM - Trevor & Emily Shultz
**Oakwood Gardens** - Sundays @ 5PM - Luke & Leah Torres
**Old Northeast** - Fridays @ 7PM - John & Heather Morgan
**Old Southeast** - Wednesdays @ 6PM - Nathan & Amy Johnson
**Shore Acres** - Thursdays @ 7PM - Steve & Patti Cash
**South Pasadena** - Wednesdays @ 6:30PM - John & Carmon Watts
**South Pinellas Park** - Wednesdays @ 6:30PM - Steve & Robin Harris
**Tampa** - Tuesdays @ 7PM - Aldi Isaacs
**West Lealman** - Thursdays @ 7PM - Ron & Carol Ripple
**Westminster Heights** - Fridays @ 7PM - David & Rosie White

# STATEMENT OF FAITH

*(Adopted from The Gospel Coalition Confessional Statement / October 2018)*

## THE TRIUNE GOD

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace.

## REVELATION

God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.

## CREATION OF HUMANITY

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

## THE FALL

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God's own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself.

## THE PLAN OF GOD

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer.

## THE GOSPEL

We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God's very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is "Christ died for our sins . . . [and] was raised"). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).

## THE REDEMPTION OF CHRIST

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has

prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

## THE JUSTIFICATION OF SINNERS

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

The Power of the Holy Spirit

We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, and in him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

## GOD'S NEW PEOPLE

We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each "local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

## BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things.

## THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

# CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Local Church St. Pete
PO Box 7664, St. Pete, FL 33734

The members of Local Church St. Pete, united for the worship of God and the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, adopt these bylaws as our principal articles for the governance of the church.

## ARTICLE 1
## THE RULE OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ has purchased the Church with His blood, and it is His possession. He alone is the King and Head of the Church.

## ARTICLE 2
## NAME

The name of this local church is LOCAL CHURCH ST. PETE (hereinafter referred to as “the church” or “this church”).

## ARTICLE 3
## PURPOSE

The purpose of this church, being a gathered community of believers with a common eldership, shall be to worship God according to the teaching of His Word and to practice the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the Scriptures. In order to serve this purpose, the church may own and maintain property to house and support a place of worship (including suitable real estate and buildings); receive, hold, and disburse gifts, bequests, and funds; license ministers of the Gospel for civil purposes; and act as necessary to fulfill its mission.

## ARTICLE 4
## STATEMENT OF FAITH

Section 4.1 The elders of the church will maintain a Statement of Faith for the church that will serve as the guide in matters of doctrine. The Statement of Faith will be used to determine fitness of prospective candidates for membership, the office of deacon, and the office of elder. Local Church St. Pete statement of faith is The Gospel Coalition Confessional Statement.

## ARTICLE 5
## MEMBERSHIP / PARTNERSHIP

Section 5.1 Membership / Partnership Defined. Although every person who has faith in Christ is a member of Christ’s body, not every member of Christ’s body is a member of every local church. Being a member in this church means a person has the privileges and responsibilities of

a member in this church community. This includes giving input and having a voice in identifying leaders, certain steps in the disciplinary process of members when necessary with the aim of restoration, and other decisions as defined in this document and as may arise in the course of church life.

Members of Local Church St. Pete will receive care from the church community and leadership, are invited into the mission and vision of Local Church St. Pete, receive spiritual instruction and accountability and are provided with a framework for discipleship and spiritual growth.

Section 5.2 **Membership Qualification.** The following qualifications are necessary for membership in Local Church St. Pete.

a) A confession of personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and the testimony of baptism.
b) Completion of membership class, or a waiver of this requirement by the elder board.
c) Completion of appropriate application forms as determined by the Board of Elders and a meeting with an elder or deacon to confirm these qualifications, agreement with the church's Statement of Faith, and to allow full discussion of questions or concerns either party may have.
d) Members must be at least sixteen (16) years of age.
e) Upon meeting the qualifications above and, members will be presented into membership at the next members meeting.

Section 5.3 **Removal from Membership.** Membership can be terminated in any of the three ways described below:

**Transfer.** If a member in good standing decides to move to a different location or join a different church, the church will provide a letter of commendation and indicate the termination of membership at his or her request.

**Non-attendance.** If a member has a prolonged absence of more than three consecutive months from the church's services and meetings without extenuating circumstances (e.g. travel, missionary work or illness) the church and the elders will formally attempt to contact and care for that member. If there is no reply after one month of attempted contact, the Board of Elders may rescind the membership of the absent member. The time period may be extended for further attempts.

**Discipline.** Members who are disciplined in accordance with the church's Statement on Discipline and Restoration in Church Life may have their membership removed.

Section 5.5 **Members Meetings.** The elders of the church will hold meetings for the members of the church at a time other than the regular worship services. These Members Meetings are to inform members of events in the life of the church and to conduct any necessary business as outlined in these bylaws. Members Meetings are also known as Family Meetings.

## ARTICLE 6
## LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Section 6.1 **Authority in the Church.** The New Testament establishes two offices in the local church: elders and deacons. Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, the elders, not a single or individual elder, are to lead the congregation of the church. The elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function.

While elders are to lead, the affirmation of the membership of this church at a properly called members meeting is vital for the following:

a) Accepting members into the church or removing members from the church roll;
b) Disciplining members by dismissing them and disciplining officers by removing them from office;

Section 6.2 **Elders.** The New Testament uses three main terms to speak of what is traditionally called a “pastor.” The terms elder, overseer, and pastor all refer to the same office. These words are used interchangeably in the Scriptures and are found together describing the same persons. Elders are given the role of directing the affairs of the church.

The church shall be governed by a plurality of elders known as the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders may consist of vocational elders, bi-vocational, and/or non-vocational elders. If there are not three qualified men who can serve as elders, the current elders shall appoint a sufficient number of non-elders to serve in an advisory role until elders are duly qualified and appointed to serve in their stead.

Section 6.3 **Qualifications of Elders.** The elders shall be men whose lives conform to the biblical qualifications presented in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; and 1 Peter 5:1-4. These qualifications apply to every elder of the church. To serve in the office of elder, an individual must be a member in good standing at this church (or, if transferring membership, become one) and subscribe to Article 4, Statement of Faith of these bylaws.

Section 6.4 **Responsibilities of Individual Elders.** The elders are responsible for lovingly governing the church, teaching the Word of God and “tending the flock” as overseers (1 Peter 5:1-3). Specifically, the responsibilities of each elder include, but are not limited to:

a) Giving himself to diligent study and fervent prayer and promoting prayer within fellowship;
b) Consistently offering his life as an example to the flock;
c) Developing contexts for both equipping the saints and encouraging the work of the saints in order to present them to God as mature in Christ;
d) Instructing and examining candidates for baptism and membership;
e) Participating regularly and actively in the service and ministry of the church.

Section 6.5 **Responsibilities of the Board of Elders.** The responsibilities of the Board of Elders include, but are not limited to:

a) Equipping the church through regular preaching and teaching;
b) Mobilizing the church to mercy and evangelistic ministry;
c) Caring for the sick, elderly, hurting, non-participating, etc.;
d) Overseeing the Lord's Supper and baptisms;
e) Establishing strategic long-term goals and objectives;
f) Clarifying and guarding the doctrinal purity of the church against false teaching and/or practices, including the formulation of consequent church policies;
g) Advising and evaluating all staff, including the preparation and/or revision of job descriptions;
h) Raising up and training men who aspire to leadership and maintaining an orderly succession of elders;
i) Producing an annual budget for the church;
j) Admonishing and/or disciplining members when needed.

Section 6.6 **Appointment Process for Elders.** The Board of Elders will from time to time solicit feedback from the church regarding men who might be qualified for the office of elder. Men who have been identified as potential candidates will go through a prayerful process of evaluation led by the Board of Elders that is based on the qualifications stated in Section 6.3 of these bylaws and the needs of the church.

Each candidate must be approved by the Board of Elders. Following this approval, their names will be presented to the church members. If concerns exist regarding a candidate's eligibility for the office of elder, the Board of Elders will review each concern given and will re-evaluate the candidate if needed. If concern does not exist or has been ruled out, the candidate will be presented to the church members for affirmation at either a Members Meeting or a Sunday worship service.

Upon affirmation, the candidate will be installed and presented as an elder of this church. Installation in office (ordination to Gospel ministry) shall be done through the laying on of hands (1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6) by the other elders of the church.

Section 6.7 **Annual Evaluation.** An annual evaluation of each elder is to be conducted by the Board of Elders and/or a committee appointed by the Board of Elders. This evaluation is meant to provide a more in-depth time of care, accountability and encouragement.

Section 6.8 **Term of Service for Elders.** A vocational elder shall serve an indefinite term until the vocational elder resigns his position or the Board of Elders seek termination / removal. Termination may occur for any of the following reasons: Improper performance or non-performance determined by the Board of Elders, conduct offensive to the name of Jesus Christ and His Word, consistent compromise of the statement of faith or failure to meet and uphold the qualifications of an elder outlined in Scripture. The Board of elders should seek feedback from members of the church when walking through this process.

A non-vocational or bi-vocational elder will serve for a two-year term. However, at the conclusion of this term they may remain on the elder board for an indefinite extension at the request of the other elders. Should the offer be made, the elder will then have the right to graciously decline or accept the offer. An elder may be asked to relinquish his position by the Board of Elders for any of the following: Improper performance or non-performance determined by the Board of Elders, conduct offensive to the name of Jesus Christ and His Word, compromise of the statement of faith or consistent failure to meet and uphold the qualifications of an elder outlined in Scripture. The Board of elders should seek feedback from members of the church when walking through this process.

If at any time an elder should feel the need to step down, temporarily or indefinitely, the elder should communicate with The Board of Elders so that (1) the elder is properly cared for and (2) the particular area of ministry the elder oversees / participates in is properly served.

Section 6.9 **Resolving Charges Against an Elder.** In the event that a credible charge, i.e., verified by at least two witnesses, against an elder of the church is brought to the attention of the Board of Elders, the elders will follow the guidelines laid out in the church's *Statement on Discipline and Restoration in Church Life*.

Section 6.10 Resignation of an Elder. Any elder may resign by submitting a resignation letter to the Board of Elders. The other elders will meet with the resigning elder to discuss any questions or concerns from either party. Upon formal acceptance by the Board of Elders, the resignation will be effective and announced to the church.

Section 6.11 **Compensation of Vocational Elders.** Decisions involving compensation of vocational and bi-vocational elders shall be the responsibility of the Board of Elders or a committee appointed by the Elders.

Section 6.12 **Deacons.** Deacons are officers with the role of serving and caring for the church. Although the role of deacon is not explicitly defined in Scripture, it is likely rooted in Acts 6 when the apostles appointed members of the church to care for particular needs of the saints so as not to take themselves away from the ministry of the word and prayer. This church views the office of the deacon as that which extends practical care for the saints, accompanied by a measure of spiritual care as well, freeing the elders to carry on the ministry of the word and prayer and providing care in a way the elders would not otherwise be able to provide.

Section 6.13 **Duties of Deacons.** The duties of deacons will vary according to the role they serve.

a) Deacons of mercy help in managing mercy ministries and meeting practical needs within the church.
b) Deacons of administration help manage Sunday service teams and corporate gatherings of the church.
c) House Group Leaders are recognized as Deacons.
d) The Board of Elders may initiate other roles for deacons fitting with what is described above.

Section 6.14 **Qualifications of Deacons.** Men and women who serve in the office of deacon are to meet the qualifications found in 1 Tim. 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6. To serve in the office of deacon, an individual must be a member in good standing at this church (or, if transferring membership, become one) and subscribe to the Article 4, Statement of Faith.

Section 6.15 **Appointment Process for Deacons.** The Board of Elders will from time to time solicit feedback from the church regarding men or women who might be qualified for the office of deacon. Anyone identified as potential candidates will go through a prayerful process of evaluation led by the Board of Elders that is based on the qualifications stated in Section 6.15 of these bylaws and the needs of the church.

Each candidate must be approved by the full Board of Elders. Following this approval, their names will be presented to the church. If concerns exist regarding a candidate's eligibility for the office of deacon, the Board of Elders will review each concern given and will re-evaluate the candidate if needed. If concern does not exist or has been ruled out, the candidate will be presented to the church for affirmation at either a members meeting or a Sunday worship service. Upon affirmation, the candidate will be installed and presented as a deacon of this church at either a Members Meeting or a Sunday worship service.

Section 6.16 **Term of Service for Deacons.** A deacon serves for a two-year term. A deacon will serve for the term a process of re-evaluation led by the elders will take place. Based on the re-evaluation they may remain a deacon for an indefinite extension at the request of the other elders. Should the offer be made, the deacon will then have the right to graciously decline or

accept the offer. A deacon may be asked to relinquish his position by the Board of Elders for any of the following: improper performance or non-performance of deacon responsibilities, conduct offensive to the name of Jesus Christ and His Word, compromise of the statement of faith or consistent failure to meet and uphold the qualifications of a deacon as outlines in Scripture.

If at any time a deacon should feel the need to step down, temporarily or indefinitely, the deacon should communicate with an elder so that (1) the deacon is properly cared for and (2) the particular area of ministry the deacon oversees / participates in is properly served. The church will be made aware of these changes.

## ARTICLE 7
## CHURCH PROPERTY

Section 7.1 **Dissolution.** Should a condition arise at any time in the future when for any reason, the church work cannot continue, the church property shall either be transferred to another church of like doctrine/theology, or it shall be sold and the proceeds donated to organizations of like theology and with a Gospel-advancing focus.

Section 7.2 **Consolidation.** If conditions arise where a consolidation with another church of like theology is advisable, the Board of Elders shall be authorized by the church to negotiate the terms of such consolidation, including but not limited to the property of this church.

## ARTICLE 8
## REVISIONS, ADDITIONS, AND AMENDMENTS

Section 8.1 **Process.** Revisions, additions, and amendments of these bylaws may be made only by the Elders. Any and all revisions must be presented to the members of the church.

Section 8.2 **Restrictions.** The Elders of Local Church St. Pete must always hold this stance concerning the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments: *"We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct."*

The language of the above restriction cannot be appealed or amended.

## ARTICLE 9
## AUTHORITY TO BIND THE CHURCH

Section 9.1 The Board of Elders alone has the authority, in accordance with these bylaws, the church constitution, and any applicable laws to execute legal documents relating to real estate, church property, and church finances. Any financial decision, unless already within the boundaries of the existing budget, in excess of $1000.00 must be approved by the Board of Elders. In the event that it is a time sensitive request, such request may be made through email.

# STATEMENT ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION

**Local Church St. Pete**

The Bible teaches that God, like a good parent, disciplines those he loves (Hebrews 12:5-13). We recognize every believer is part of the same family in Christ and is susceptible to sin. We also recognize that God has sovereignly placed us within a specific local church to walk in love, grow in holiness, use our gifts and make disciples. Jesus gifted his followers with the Holy Spirit – the empowerment we need to walk in obedience and love. In this context, church discipline is a loving act designed to bring a fellow believer back to a state of spiritual health.

When it comes to practicing church discipline and restoration, it should always be guided by gentleness and motivated by love. Galatians 6 helps us understand how to do it and what the goal should be. Galatians 6:1-3 says, *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. [2]Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. [3]For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

## A CALL TO RESTORATION

A Spirit-led life involves a commitment to helping others who are "caught in any transgression" (Galatians 6:1). This isn't about judging every minor fault, but about intervening when a fellow believer is stuck in a pattern of behavior that is causing harm and is contrary to their identity in Christ. This intervention is a mutual accountability, a refusal to abandon a brother or sister who is trapped. The word "restore" found in Galatians 6:1 is a medical term used to describe setting a dislocated bone back in place. When we walk out Galatians 6:1 it is a work of repair and healing, aimed at returning the person to a state of spiritual health and obedience to Christ.

## TO BE DONE IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS

This process must be done in a "spirit of gentleness." Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit, reflecting the character of Jesus himself. This means approaching a difficult conversation with humility and grace. It requires an awareness of our own vulnerability to temptation, recognizing, "That could easily be me!" (1 Corinthians 10:12-13). According to Galatians 6, a Spirit-led life is not a subjective "do what you think is best" way of life. Instead, it is a daily lifestyle of surrender, a way of life shaped by God's presence and power. The Holy Spirit is fiercely interested in our growth in Christ-likeness and our holiness. One key aspect of a Spirit-led life is avoiding "conceit," which is a boastful and vain attitude that leads to putting others down or writing them off. The gospel frees us from this comparison trap by reminding us that we are accepted and loved by God in Christ. This understanding allows us to approach others with both humility and courage, a meekness and boldness that comes from resting in God's love.

## AN EXPRESSION OF CARRYING EACH OTHER'S BURDENS

Restoration is a form of carrying each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2). This act of love, of refusing to let someone carry their weight alone, "fulfills the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2), which is to love one another as he has loved us. While we must all bear our own individual "load" and be accountable for our actions (Galatians 6:5), carrying a burden refers to a more intense, heavy weight that is difficult to bear alone, requiring the support of the community.

## WITH THE GOAL OF DOING GOOD

This entire process is part of a broader commitment to "do good to everyone" (Galatians 6:10). When we come alongside one another this way it's a loving act that contributes to the holiness and well-being of the individual and the entire community. It's also a practical expression of a life surrendered to the Spirit, resulting in relationships characterized by mutual care, humility, and love.

Now that we've established the biblical foundation for this process, here is a step-by-step guide on how we practice it within our church.

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO RESTORATION

Jesus gave us a simple, clear path for restoring a brother or sister who is caught in a pattern of unrepentant sin in Matthew 18:15-17. The process is intended to be gentle and private, with the goal always being to bring someone back into a right relationship with God and with others.

1. **A Private Conversation:** If you notice a brother or sister caught in a pattern of unrepentant sin, the very first step is to go to them privately. The goal is to talk with them personally about what you observed (or heard) and help them turn back to God if that is, in fact, what they need to do. Refuse to gossip with others or fall prey to slander. If you observed something or heard something that concerns you – go directly to that person in love and humility. Take time to really listen to your brother or sister's response. This could involve *multiple* conversations and appeals. Remember to pray before and after you meet.
2. **Bringing in Others:** If they don't listen, you should take one or two other trusted church members with you. This shows a broader concern and adds weight to the appeal, hoping to help them see the seriousness of their actions.
3. **Involving the Church:** If the person still refuses to repent, our pastors will step in to talk with them. This could involve a number of appeals in various forms – and it will always include prayer. If no change is made, the pastors will let the church know (this could include all members of LCSP, members of Local involved in the person's House Group or simply friends who are alsomembers of Local) so that others can lovingly reach out and appeal for their repentance.
4. **A Painful Step:** As a last resort, if there is still no repentance, the pastors will announce at a Member's Meeting that their membership has been revoked. This is not about shunning them. It's a formal and painful way of saying their actions are in opposition/contrary to the ways of Jesusand it wouldn't be loving to allow them to continue on as a member. Even then, the hope is that this will be the step that leads to their repentance and restoration. Consider: Matthew 18:12-14; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14; 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:16-18; 4:9, 14- 15; 3 John 9-10.

The ultimate goal of this entire process is restoration. And when a person repents and turns from their sin, we are committed to joyfully announcing their restoration to the church.

# GIVING

## Convictions and practice of Local Church St. Pete

Each week we gather as a community whose identity is *in Jesus.* A people humbled by God's radical grace and generosity. Often times when we talk about generosity; specifically, the giving of our money, we talk about it this way: *"We believe faithful and sacrificial giving is an expression of worship and obedience."* As followers of Jesus, we've been given the privilege to worship the Lord this way and contribute towards the mission of the gospel sacrificially and intentionally. The giving of our finances is an invitation to worship – to declare *"All that I have comes for you. What I have is a gift from your hand...I want to steward it well and I want to worship you with it."* It's also a declaration that money is not our master, Jesus is. We want to be motivated by Scripture; moved by the generosity of Jesus and model sacrificial worship in our lives, including our finances. Regardless of how long we've been a follower of Jesus it's important to repeatedly ask these questions along the way: *"What are my convictions about the giving of my finances? How do I plan for it? Am I being faithful and sacrificial? Is it done with joy?"*

In Genesis 14, Abram (later called Abraham), responded to the king of Salem (Melchizedek) with a tithe (a tenth of everything); Abram recognized the legitimacy of Melchizedek's blessing over him but it was ultimately an expression of worship to the Lord. This ancient practice, rooted in expressed allegiance to the Lord, became a "guideline" throughout the storyline of the bible and is still a guideline for followers of Jesus today. The people of Israel gave a tithe, a tenth of all their yearly agricultural produce and a tenth of their flocks and cattle – a sacrifice of praise and devotion to God. In Leviticus 27:30-34 and Malachi 3:6-12 we discover God considers any smaller proportion as "robbery." Why? Everything Israel (and we ourselves) have is really God's – they (we) only have it because God gave it to them (us) to use.

In the New Testament we don't see a direct command to tithe. Instead we're to *"give as Christ gave."* Does God expect less from us now that Jesus has come? The question we should ask then is *"Are we recognizing the legitimacy of what Jesus accomplished with our lives – specifically expressed through the faithful and sacrificial giving of our finances?"* Tithing then becomes a guideline for us to give radically and sacrificially; an expression of allegiance to Jesus and a participation in the work of the Kingdom of God here and now. For example, in the early church, when followers of Jesus living in Jerusalem were suffering from a famine, the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth this way: 2 Corinthians 8:8-9 *"I am not commanding you, but I am to test the sincerity of your love . . . for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor so that you through His poverty might become rich."* In other words, *"The motive behind your radical generosity should be rooted in and grow out of the radical generosity you've been shown in Jesus."*

## GIVING *(continued)*

Consider the following principles (adapted from John Stott's book *"The Living Church"*):

- Giving is an expression of the grace of God. 2 Corinthians 8:1-6
- Giving is something we should seek to excel in. 2 Corinthians 8:7
- Giving should be inspired by the cross (the generosity we've been shown). 2 Corinthians 8:8-9
- Giving should be "according to your means." Acts 11:29
- Giving "looks like a harvest"; we "sow" it, the Lord uses it and does great things through it often times producing more than we imagined. 2 Corinthians 9:6-11
- Giving leads to thanksgiving to God (done cheerfully not *reluctantly*). 2 Corinthians 9:11-15
- Consider setting aside a sum of money "on the first day of the week." 1 Corinthians 16:1-3
  Note the sense of "settled conviction." Decide what to give instead of simply "winging it."

We invite our entire church community to grow in giving as an essential part of our discipleship to Jesus. As a member of LCSP we ask that you commit to the "faithful and sacrificial" giving of your finances. Your generosity sustains the life and community of Local Church St. Pete. It also drives the work of justice in our city, and around the world. In addition, it enables us to support church planting and church care - both locally and beyond.

How can you participate in giving? The easiest way to give is online through our secure platform and we encourage recurring donations so we know what to expect each month however, we know that isn't always possible or preferred.

There are four ways to give: (1) online through our secure platform, (2) texting 84321, (3) in person on Sundays (give boxes in the back of our gathering space) or (4) by mail. Mail checks to PO BOX 7664 St. Pete, FL 33734.

What are your convictions? Do you have any questions? Don't hesitate to reach out to info@localchurchstpete.com

# MEMBERSHIP EXPECTATIONS

**of Local Church St. Pete**

## PURSUING JESUS

We desire all members of LCSP to pursue a vibrant relationship with Jesus, reading his Word and communicating with him in prayer – for their own spiritual health and the health of others..

## MUTUAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Members of LCSP are called to encourage one another, love one another and build each other up. Jesus said, in John 13:35 “by this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

## FAITHFUL PARTICIPATION

As members we regularly gather on Sundays with the church family to worship Jesus, love others and grow together.

In addition to the Sunday gatherings, House Groups are one of the primary environments where we can practice the “one anothers” of Scripture. We desire that every member finds a House Group where they can grow in relationships and learn to follow Jesus together.

## SERVING

As members, we seek to use our gifts and/or participate wherever able in order to grow in relationship with others and see the mission of the church accomplished. This includes Sunday Serve Teams, Local Mission opportunities and other possibilities.

## GIVING

We believe giving is a continuation of worship and a great privilege. As members we commit to regular and sacrificial giving.

## DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship involves setting an example of what it means to know and follow Jesus and inviting others to do the same. It should begin as soon as you become a follower of Jesus - sharing and giving away what you’ve come to receive. Disciple making can be expressed in a lot of ways but it should always include teaching others what it means to know and follow Jesus.

We encourage all members to consider Discipleship Groups, one-to-one Bible reading, and building relationships with those in their sphere of influence, sharing the love of Jesus through the Holy Spirit’s power.

# NEXT STEPS

## IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN GETTING CONNECTED:

- Attend a Men's or Women's Gathering and connect with a discipleship group
- Find a House Group
- Join a Sunday Serve Team
- Serve alongside a LOCAL or Foreign Mission Partner
- Download the Church Center App

## IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PURSUING MEMBERSHIP:

- Read Belong Here Book
- Complete the Membership Profile on our website www.localchurchstpete.com under Belong Here
- We will be in touch to schedule a membership meeting with a pastor