

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

AT CLIFTON BAPTIST CHURCH



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MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Our Shared Beliefs

1. What is a Statement of Faith?
2. Why have a Statement of Faith?
3. How do members relate to the Statement of Faith?
4. Where does Clifton's Statement of Faith originate?
5. What is Clifton's Statement of Faith?

1. What is a Statement of Faith?

A Statement of Faith is simply a written statement of a church's essential and distinctive beliefs. Such a statement seeks to articulate in our own words the truths that the church understands to be taught by Scripture and which define the doctrinal commitments we hold in common.

2. Why have a Statement of Faith?

If we view the Bible as our final authority for what we believe and how we should live, it might seem we would not need a Statement of Faith. However, many people who claim to submit to the Bible as their authority have significantly different interpretations of what the Bible teaches. Therefore, it is important for a church to state explicitly its own understanding of what the Bible teaches on important issues of life and doctrine.

Furthermore, having such a statement serves a number of other valuable purposes. It helps...

- Promote unity by defining and promoting a common set of beliefs for church members to jointly affirm and by which to live.
- Promote freedom by allowing for differences of view on certain issues that the church does not recognize as essential.
- Provide guidance on the important and debated doctrinal issues in our day.
- Clarify the distinctives of this church from other Christian churches.
- Guard the doctrinal faithfulness of the church over the course of time.

3. How do members relate to the Statement of Faith?

An individual needs to give personal affirmation to the Statement of Faith in order to become a member of Clifton Baptist Church. However, this does not mean that person must have come to a settled conviction regarding everything in the statement. While some matters in the statement are essential to affirm in order to be a Christian (e.g. justification by faith, the deity and Lordship of Christ), others are more distinctive to the particular identity of this local congregation (e.g. the perseverance of the saints, the independent governance of local churches).

Therefore, we understand a person who joins Clifton may still be in process regarding their beliefs about certain elements in our statement. In fact, we expect this may be the case with many who join. However, if a person has already developed a settled conviction contrary to something in the statement, we would want to discuss that with him or her before proceeding with membership. Furthermore, if someone comes to develop such convictions at a later time after joining the church, such that he or she is no longer able to affirm the Statement of Faith, at that point the individual will need to seek membership in another congregation that shares those beliefs.

4. Where does Clifton's Statement of Faith originate?

Most fundamentally, our goal is for everything contained in our Statement of Faith to accurately reflect the content of what is taught in Scripture. In our effort to do so, we take into consideration those statements that have stood the test of time historically in the life of the church throughout the ages. In this regard, our statement stands in the tradition of early church statements such as the Apostle's Creed (derived from a late 2nd-century baptismal creed), the Nicene Creed (325 A.D.), and other early church councils.

More recently, significant statements were derived out of the Protestant Reformation, such as the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), the revised New Hampshire Confession (1853), and a variety of other Baptist confessions. Most directly, Clifton's Statement of Faith is based on the Abstract of Principles (1858), which served as the founding doctrinal statement of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Clifton's current statement is a slightly modified version of this historic affirmation.

5. What is Clifton's Statement of Faith?

I. The Scriptures

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God. Therefore, all Scripture is authoritative, infallible and inerrant. The Scriptures are the only sufficient rule for faith and practice (Ps. 19:7; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

II. God

There is but one God, the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of Himself, all perfections, and being infinite in them all; and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence and obedience that springs from faith (Deut. 6:4; Ps. 145:3; John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 1 Tim. 1:17).

III. The Trinity

The Scriptures reveal that the one God eternally exists in three persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person has distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

IV. Providence

God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any wise to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures (Isa. 46:9-11; Prov. 16:33; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Jas. 1:13-15).

V. Election

Election is God's eternal choice of some persons unto everlasting life—not because of foreseen merit or foreseen faith in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ—in consequence of which choice they are called, justified and glorified (Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 1:27-29; Eph. 1:4, 11).

VI. The Fall of Man

God originally created Man in His own image, and free from sin; but, through the temptation of Satan, Adam transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law. As a result they are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors (Gen. 1:26-27; 3:1-7; Rom. 5:12-19; Eph. 2:1-3).

VII. The Mediator

Since Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is fully God and fully man, He is the divinely appointed mediator between God and man. Having taken upon Himself human nature, yet without sin, He perfectly fulfilled the law; suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. He was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended to His Father, at whose right hand He ever lives to make intercession for His people. He will return again visibly and bodily. He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church, and Sovereign of the Universe (Isa. 53:10-12; John 1:1, 14; Acts 1:9-11; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Gal. 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 1:1-3).

VIII. The Holy Spirit

We believe that God the Holy Spirit brings glory to the Father and the Son. He applies the work of Christ to believers and distributes spiritual gifts to every believer according to His sovereign good

pleasure for the purpose of building up the body of Christ. He is the Comforter, the Spirit of Adoption, the Seal of our Salvation and the Guarantor of our inheritance in Christ (John 14:16-17; 16:14; Acts 5:3; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:13-14).

IX. Regeneration

Regeneration is a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, who gives life to those dead in trespasses and sins, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the word of God, and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone, so that the ultimate cause of regeneration is God's grace, not man's free will (Eph. 2:1-6; Tit. 3:5; 1 John 5:1).

X. Repentance

Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbles himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-aborrence, with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things (Acts 2:37-38; 11:18; 2 Cor. 7:10-11).

XI. Faith

Saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of whatever is revealed in His word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness (Rom. 3:27-28; 4:1-5; 4:17-25; 10:14, 17; Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8; Jas. 2:14-26).

XII. Justification

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the satisfaction that Christ has made; not for anything wrought in them or done by them; but on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith (Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:34; 10:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).

XIII. Sanctification

Those who have been regenerated are also sanctified by God's word and Spirit dwelling in them. This sanctification is progressive through the supply of Divine strength, which all saints seek to obtain, pressing after a heavenly life in cordial obedience to all Christ's commands (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:27-27; Rom. 8:1-17; Gal. 5:13-24; 2 Pet. 1:3-11).

XIV. Perseverance of the Saints

All those whom God has regenerated will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall through neglect and temptation, into sin, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the church, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (John 6:37-40; 10:28-29; Rom. 8:28-39; 1 Cor. 1:8-9; Phil. 1:6).

XV. The Church

The Lord Jesus is the head of the church, which is composed of all His true disciples, and in Him is invested supremely all power for its government. According to His commandment, Christians are to associate themselves into particular churches; and to each of these churches He has given needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which He has appointed.

The regular officers of a church are Elders and Deacons (John 10:16; Acts 20:17, 28; Eph. 1:22; 5:23; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-18; Tit. 1:5-9; Heb. 10:25).

XVI. Baptism

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of giving himself up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. It is prerequisite to church membership and to participation in the Lord's Supper (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:13).

XVII. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, and to be observed by His churches till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate His death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with Him, and of their church membership (Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:23-34).

XVIII. The Lord's Day

The Lord's Day is a Christian institution for regular observance, and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10).

XIX. Liberty of Conscience

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His word, or not contained in it. Civil magistrates being ordained of God, subjection in all lawful things commanded by them ought to be yielded by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake (Matt. 15:9; Rom. 13:1-7; 14:4; Acts 5:29; Col. 2:20-23).

XX. Marriage

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15-25; Prov. 5:15-20; Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 7:1-16; Eph. 5:21-33; Heb. 13:4).

XXI. The Resurrection

The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God—the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked, to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. The bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised (John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:12-28; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:23).

XXII. The Judgment

God has appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when every one shall receive according to his deeds; the wicked shall go into everlasting and conscious punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life (Matt. 25:46; John 5:22, 27-29; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:6-11; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 7:13-17; 14:9-11).



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Our Shared Mission

1. What are Clifton's Core Values?
2. What is Clifton's Mission and Vision?
3. What is Clifton's Covenant?
4. How do we use our church covenant?
5. Why join a church?

1. What are Clifton's Core Values?

Our Core Values articulate some of the main principles and convictions that guide our life together:

1. We value **Scripture** alone as the ultimate and sufficient authority in matters of life and doctrine.
2. We value **proclaiming Jesus Christ** both locally and globally to the glory of God.
3. We value **expositional preaching and teaching** of God's Word for the ongoing edification and reformation of the church.
4. We value **God-centered worship** as thoroughly biblical and deeply joyful.
5. We value providing a **place of worship** that is safe, attractive, and God-honoring as a service to all who gather with us.
6. We value earnest and consistent **prayer**, recognizing God's call upon his people to pray and his promise to answer prayer offered in faith and in accord with his will.
7. We value **regenerate church membership**, evidenced in covenantal care and loving church discipline.
8. We value **equipping** every member to serve.
9. We value godly and biblical **leadership**, composed of elders and deacons, with lay ministry teams carrying out many aspects of the work of ministry.
10. We value **biblical marriage**, upholding God's wise and beautiful design in the complementary, life-long covenant relationship between a man and a woman.
11. We value **the family** as the first God-ordained unit of care, nurture, and instruction in godliness.
12. We value **the sanctity of human life** for all people as created in God's image, from conception through death.
13. We value **intentional evangelism** as an act of love toward non-Christians, including children of our members, relatives, neighbors, co-workers, friends, and anyone with whom we have opportunity to share the gospel.
14. We value the **reconciliation** of people of diverse races, backgrounds, and life situations through the gospel of Jesus Christ.
15. We value caring for the needs of the people in Louisville's **Clifton neighborhood**, where we regularly gather as a congregation.
16. We value **sending** people out from us for the good of the Church of Jesus Christ and the spread of the gospel around the world, by sacrificially giving of our time, resources, and people.

2. What is Clifton's Mission and Vision?

Our **mission statement** is the statement of our purpose as a congregation. It seeks to state concisely why we exist and what we understand the goal of our ministry to be at the big-picture level. The following statement is our mission.

***Clifton Baptist Church exists to proclaim Jesus Christ
so that people are transformed and God is exalted.***

We believe our mission is at the heart of what God's Word calls every local church to pursue.

Our **vision statement** brings things down just a little bit, to a more concrete statement of what we desire this particular congregation, Clifton Baptist Church, to pursue and accomplish by God's grace. It fills out our mission statement with a little bit more detail on how we want to pursue that mission. Here is our vision . . .

*Clifton Baptist Church will by God's gracious aid proclaim Jesus Christ
to make new disciples, to build itself up to maturity, and to cultivate gospel partnerships
so that healthy churches are established and strengthened
throughout greater Louisville, the United States, and the world.*

In short, we at Clifton desire to proclaim the gospel near and far. We want those who are not yet followers of Jesus Christ to become followers of Christ by faith. We want those who are disciples of Christ to keep trusting Him to the end of their lives and to be built up to maturity. We do not simply want to see individuals converted and growing in Christ, we want to see groups of Christians covenanted together in healthy local churches to carry on this vision. Furthermore, we desire to see this happen not only throughout Louisville or our own country. In obedience to the Great Commission of Jesus, we desire to be used by God to help establish and strengthen healthy churches in people groups around the world where there is currently no church.

3. What is Clifton's Covenant?

1. 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 the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.
2. We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
3. 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.
4. We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.
5. 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.
6. We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.
7. We will seek, by divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, remembering that we have been buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life.
8. 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 to all nations.
9. 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.
10. We will be bound by this church's covenant, constitution, and Statement of Faith in all matters pertaining to church membership and church discipline.
11. 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.

4. How do we use our church covenant?

Whereas our Statement of Faith states the foundational beliefs we hold in common as a church, our covenant lays out the promises we make to one another in terms of how we will live together as a church. The covenant seeks to provide accountability for our biblical responsibilities toward one another as fellow members.

The covenant reminds us that being a church member is not a spectator sport! As we join a church we are committing to live in service to others for their encouragement and care. As we enter into intentional relationships with one another, it can sometimes be challenging and a bit messy. But as we live in obedience to how Christ calls us to live, it is deeply rewarding and ultimately for our good!

As you consider these covenant promises, we encourage you to focus on how you might grow in carrying out these promises toward others, rather than primarily thinking about how well others are doing these things for you. When we focus on the needs of others, it honors the Lord and we are blessed in the process. And when the church as a whole lives this way, the body is built up in remarkable ways.

On Termination of Membership, Article 6.6 of Clifton's Constitution reads,

Termination of membership shall be recognized by the church following the death, transfer of membership, or voluntary resignation of any church member. Membership may be terminated as an act of church discipline at the recommendation of the elders (pastors) and with the vote of 75% of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members. The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline or for any other biblical reason.

5. Why join a church?

During this session, we will seek to show why it is important for every Christian to become a member of a local church—whether that is here at Clifton or at another local church that preaches the gospel.

In his book, *Spiritual Disciplines in the Local Church*, Don Whitney raises an important question:

"If I come and worship as often as the members . . . if I fellowship with these believers as much as anyone else, if I profit from the teaching and other ministries of the church, and if I actively demonstrate love for my brothers and sisters in Christ here, why should I formally join the church?" (43).

Reason 1: Join a church for **non-Christians**.

- Scripture teaches that Christians are those who hear the gospel, turn from their sin, trust in Christ's atoning death alone for their salvation, and by grace live in obedience to God's Word.
- When Christians join a church and live faithfully according to God's Word, they collectively help clarify to non-Christians the truth and transforming reality of the gospel.
- Joining a church is one concrete way to demonstrate with your life that there is a genuine difference between being a Christian and being an unbeliever. This may help non-Christians see their need for Christ.
- **Implication:** While we gladly welcome non-Christians to come to our church gatherings, we are unable to affirm them as members. The church consists of Christians only.

Reason 2: Join a church for **accountability**.

- God never intended for his children to live as solo-Christians.
- By joining a church, we acknowledge that even as Christians we continue to struggle with sins and weaknesses. One way God calls us to address this is by submitting ourselves to be accountable to church leaders and other members.
- It is difficult to be held accountable if no one knows you well or realizes they are responsible for you. Church membership makes this accountability more concrete, more informed, and more consistent.
- **Implication:** A church consists of Christians who are willing to hold one another accountable, to be involved in the lives of others, and if necessary, to discipline a fellow member who is unrepentant of sin.

Reason 3: Join a church for **love, encouragement, and discipleship**.

- Stronger and weaker Christians need one another.
 - Older men and women in the faith are commanded by Paul to disciple and encourage younger Christians (Titus 2)
 - Younger Christians are also called to care for and love older Christians.

Titus 2:2—Titus, as a young man, was commanded by Paul to “teach *the older men* to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance.”

- In the church, God has bound us together as one body in Christ and commanded us to care for one another.

Ephesians 5:30— “After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the Church—*for we are members of one body.*”

Hebrews 10:24-25 — “...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.”

- **Implication:** Stronger and weaker Christians need to make their love for Christ definite by loving others in a purposefully committed fashion. What better way is there to make your love practical than to commit yourself to a local church where you can be cared for and at the same time care for other particular Christians?

Reason 4: Join a church for ***church leaders***.

- In Hebrews, leaders are commanded to keep an account of those put under their care.
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.”
- How will leaders know which people they are responsible for leading and shepherding if they are not members of the church? The pastors of Clifton are not called to provide care to every Christian in Louisville or around the world. They have a specific responsibility to shepherd the members of this particular congregation.
- One of the most significant expressions of this membership, which allows and helps leaders do their job, is being present when the church gathers.
- **Implication 1:** There is no such thing as a consistently *absent* member.
- **Implication 2:** If a member stops attending church for an extended period of time, leaders will follow up to discern why the member is no longer attending. We will do this as an act of love and out of concern for your spiritual well-being.
- **Implication 3:** If someone chooses to no longer attend the church’s corporate gatherings, with no legitimate reason for doing so (e.g. health, extended travel, joining a different church, etc.), the church will remove him or her from membership.

Reason 5: Join a church to ***share responsibility***.

- The body of Christ was never intended to function through the work of only the pastors and a few people. Every member is called to use their gifts for the encouragement, care, and building up of others.

Ephesians 4:15-16 – “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

1 Corinthians 12:7-25 – “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.... All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. 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.... God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.”

1 Peter 4:10-11 – “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.”

- In light of our particular circumstances and the makeup of our membership, we ask every member who is physically capable to serve in our children's ministry in some capacity.
- In addition to the children's ministry, we encourage every member to put their God-given gifts to use to serve the body. Sometimes this is in a formal ministry capacity, but often this takes place through informal, relational opportunities with other members.
 - In the final membership session, you will be introduced to a variety of ministries at Clifton through which you can serve the body.
- **Implication:** There is a place for every member to serve in the church.

Conclusion

“If the church is a building, then we must be bricks in it; if the church is a body, then we are its members; if the church is the household of faith, it presumes we are part of that household. Sheep are in a flock and branches are on a vine. Biblically, if we are Christians we must be members of a church. This membership is not simply the record of a statement we once made or of affection toward a familiar place. It must be a reflection of a living commitment or it is worthless.”

“So, do not merely attend a church (though you should attend), but join a church. Link arms with other Christians. Find a church you can join, and do it so that non-Christians will hear and see the Gospel, so that weak Christians will be cared for, so that strong Christians will channel their energies in a good way, so that church leaders will be encouraged and helped, so that God will be glorified” (Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 162-63, 164).



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Our Shared Organization: History, Cooperation, & Leadership

1. What is Clifton's history?
2. What is Clifton's relationship with the SBC?
3. What does leadership look like at Clifton?

1. What is Clifton's history?

We are a *Christian, Protestant, Baptist* Church. Church history has many important dates around each one of those three distinctives. Here are some key dates in church history and in Clifton's history.

Christian

- 1st century –
 - The saving promises of God are fulfilled to His people through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - Repentance and the forgiveness of sins begins to be freely proclaimed in Jesus' name to people from every nation, culture and ethnicity.
 - Those who trust and follow Jesus as Lord and Savior begin to be called "Christians" (Acts 11:26) and are gathered into local churches all over the Roman empire.
- 312-313 A.D. – Constantine's conversion and the Edict of Milan, which guaranteed religious freedom throughout the Roman empire and moved Christianity from minority to majority status.

Protestant

- 1517 – Martin Luther sets in motion the Reformation with his 95 theses, declaring fundamental theological differences with the Catholic church.
- 16th - 17th centuries – Churches are established independently from the Catholic church on the basis of essential protestant convictions, such as the unique authority of Scripture and justification by faith alone.
- 17th century – "Puritans" break away from the Church of England with the goal of pursuing a continued reformation of the church, its beliefs, and its practices.

Baptist

- 1640 – Baptists in London follow the Puritans in every way but paedobaptism (William Kiffin and Benjamin Keach are two of the more famous leaders in the 1600s, Andrew Fuller, Samuel Pearce, and William Carey in the 1700s).
- 1707 – The prominent Philadelphia Baptist Association is formed in America.
- 1845 – The Southern Baptist Convention is formed.

Clifton Baptist Church

- 1893 – Clifton Baptist Church was organized, arising out of a local Christian mission. For a time, the church gathered in various locations in the Clifton area, including a Frankfort Avenue storefront, under a tent, and in nearby homes.
- 1937 – The church building was completed at its present location: 1947 Frankfort Avenue.
- 2001 – Clifton's ministry was reinvigorated through its merger with a recent church plant, Trinity Baptist Church. Trinity was planted in 1996 out of a desire to begin a congregation committed to expository preaching and biblical church government. Since the merger, Clifton has been steadily growing, while also sending out numerous members into places of ministry all around the world.

<h2>2. What is Clifton's relationship with the SBC?</h2>

1. What is the Southern Baptist Convention?

The SBC is an alliance of over 40,000 churches voluntarily cooperating together under the heading "Southern Baptist." These churches are spread throughout the world, but are significantly concentrated in the southern part of the United States where the denomination began.

2. Why is Clifton a part of the SBC?

- We are united with the churches of the SBC in the doctrinal commitments laid out in the Baptist Faith and Message (2000).
- Specifically, we are united with the SBC in essential core commitments such as believing the Bible is God's inerrant Word, believing that conscious trust in Jesus Christ is the only way for a person to be saved, and our responsibility as churches to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.
- We are also united with the SBC in certain Baptist distinctives such as the autonomy of the local church, congregationalism, the value of voluntary cooperation among churches, and the practice of believer's baptism.

- Practically, participation in the SBC allows Clifton to partner with other churches in order to send missionaries, plant churches, and provide ministry training. We are able to multiply our efforts and effectiveness in these pursuits when we do them together rather than as individual local churches.

3. What does the Southern Baptist Convention do?

- The Convention: The SBC is an actual two-day summer convention, where the 40,000+ churches send representatives to conduct business on behalf of the denomination. The convention is the equivalent of the world's largest church business meeting! At the convention, representatives hear annual reports from the various SBC entities. They also make decisions regarding the leadership and direction of the denomination.
- SBC Entities & Causes:
 - International Mission Board (IMB): The international missions sending agency of the SBC.
 - North American Mission Board (NAMB): The agency tasked with promoting evangelism and church planting among SBC churches in North America.
 - Seminaries: Southern (1859), Southwestern (1908), New Orleans (1917), Gateway (1944), Southeastern (1951), and Midwestern (1957).
 - Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC): Assists churches in applying Christian principles to moral and social challenges, and promoting religious liberty.
 - The Cooperative Program (1925): The way SBC churches support these national entities as well as other various state-level programs is through the Cooperative Program. Churches give to the CP, which then distributes gifts to the various entities according to an approved percentage.
 - The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering: An annual offering taken by SBC churches, of which 100% goes to support IMB missionaries. Over 50% of IMB missionary support comes from this annual offering each year.

3. What does leadership look like at Clifton?

Clifton Baptist Church is a congregationally-governed, elder-led church. The elders bear a unique responsibility for the teaching, leading, and shepherding of the congregation. However, the congregation as a whole remains the final authority for all matters related to the church. In addition, we set apart deacons, who seek to facilitate practical service within the body.

1. The Congregation

Even though the elders are charged with the task of leading and shepherding the church, they do not have the final say in matters. The final authority of the church (under the Lordship of Christ!) resides with the congregation itself, including:

- **Membership & Discipline** – When it comes to affirming or removing an individual's membership status within the church, Scripture indicates this is a decision of the entire congregation. Jesus declared that when a Christian persisted in unrepentant sin, the matter was to be taken to the church as a whole (Matt. 18:15-17). In the same regard, Paul specifically refers to matters of membership and discipline that are made by those “assembled” (1 Cor 5:4-5, 9-13) and by “the majority” of a congregation (2 Cor. 2:5-11).
- **Doctrine** – The New Testament also indicates that while a church is to be led by its elders in matters of doctrine, the church as a whole remains responsible for its own doctrinal faithfulness. For example, when Paul writes to the Galatians regarding their seeming desertion of the gospel, he addresses the churches directly rather than their leaders (Gal. 1:6-9; cf. 2 Tim. 4:3-4).
- **Ministry** – The church bears final responsibility for the fulfillment of its ministry to proclaim the gospel and make disciples of Jesus Christ. Only when each part is working properly is the church able to carry out this mission. Therefore, the elders are called to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (see Eph. 4:11-16).

2. Elders

- **Biblical Names for “Elders”**
 - “Elder” (*presbuteros*): Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; 1 Pet. 5:1
 - “Pastor/Shepherd” (*poimen, poimaino*): Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:2, 4
 - “Overseer/Bishop” (*episkopos*): Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:7; Phil. 1:1
- **The Qualifications of Elders** – 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

- **A Plurality of Elders**

We understand the Bible to teach that pastoral leadership is not to be restricted to one man, but rather that a plurality of elders should serve together in each local church. Our church constitution states that Clifton is to have a plurality of elders.

“The elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9” (Constitution, article 6.2.2).

Examples in Scripture: Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; Acts 21:18; 1 Tim. 4:14; Titus 1:5; Jam. 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1-2.

- **The Responsibilities of Elders**

Our constitution sets out what we understand to be the key responsibilities of the elders:

“Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall provide broad oversight to the ministry, financial management, and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17; Tit. 1:5-9; Jas. 5:14; and 1 Pet. 5:1-4, the elders shall seek the mind of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the word of God as they undertake the work of shepherding God's flock. The elders shall teach and exhort; refute those who contradict the truth; pray for the sick; care for the church's members; devote themselves to prayer, to the government of the church and to ministry. The elders shall provide oversight of the congregation and lead the church to fulfill its ministries” (Constitution, article 6.2.1).

More specifically, this means that elders will, among other things:

- Oversee the preaching and teaching ministries of the church
- Equip church members and coordinate opportunities for various ministries
- Oversee the new member process
- Oversee public services, including the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper
- Oversee the process of church discipline
- Nominate candidates for the office of elder and deacon

- **Tenure of Elders**

With the exception of our staff elders, elders are elected for a three year term, at which point they may be reaffirmed. After two, consecutive three year terms, elders must not serve in that position for one year.

For more about elders see 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9 and articles 6.2 and 6.3 of Clifton's constitution.

- **How do the elders make decisions in relationship to the deacons and congregation?**

The elders lead the congregation in all important, decision-making processes. In some cases, this means making recommendations and clarifying decisions that the congregation ultimately needs to make. In many cases, the elders directly handle decisions for which deliberation by the entire congregation would not be profitable (e.g. the implementation of various elements of ministry, detailed budget line items, particulars on job descriptions). However, the elders seek to inform the congregation regularly, and get their recommendations and input on important decisions, understanding that the congregation always retains the final authority on any decision.

The deacons are tasked with serving and facilitating in specific areas of ministry, and do not function as a separate governing body.

3. Deacons

- **To “Deacon” Is to Serve**

The Greek term “deacon” means “servant.” See, for example, Acts 6:1-6, Romans 16:1, and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Some form of the word “deacon” is used over 100 times in the New Testament and never loses its association with the supplying of material needs.

- **Deacons’ Responsibilities**

The church calls men and women to bear responsibility for the church. As it says in the constitution the responsibilities of deacons include:

1. The ministry of mercy.
2. The accommodations for public worship, including the Lord’s Supper.
3. The care and maintenance of church properties.
4. The welcoming and greeting ministries of the church.
5. The budgeting process of the church.
6. At the elders’ recommendation, the church may recognize deacons to serve in other specific capacities as needs arise in the church.

(Constitution, article 6.4.3)

Comparing Paul’s requirements for “elders” and “deacons” in 1 Timothy 3 is helpful. It shows us that those serving in both offices must be persons of mature Christian character. It also shows that deacons are not required *as deacons* to teach or to have authority in the church. This is why we think it is permitted for women to serve the church as deacons (see 1 Tim. 2:12-15; Rom. 16:1).

- **Tenure of Deacons**

Deacons are elected to three two-year terms, after which time the deacon may not serve as a deacon for one year. For more about deacons, see 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Acts 6:1-7, and article 6.4 of Clifton’s constitution.

4. Officers

- **Clerk** – The church clerk takes minutes at our business meetings and helps with maintaining the church’s membership role. For more information see article 6.5 of Clifton’s constitution.

- **Treasurer** – The church treasurer helps by overseeing the church finances and financial policies. For more information see article 6.6 of Clifton’s constitution.



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Our Shared Organization: Ministry & Communication

1. What are the ministries of Clifton?
2. Who are the staff at Clifton?
3. What are small groups like?
4. What is Sunday school like?
5. What does gathered worship look like?
6. What do we do for evangelism?
7. What do we do for missions?
8. How do we communicate as a congregation?
9. What next?

1. What are the ministries of Clifton?

- **Ministry Philosophy**

- The elders and deacons seek to equip and facilitate the work of ministry by the entire congregation.
- We are open to people being creative. If we don’t have the ministry you are interested in, we are glad to consider new ministries being initiated (under the supervision of an elder or staff member).
- Due to our particular needs and makeup as a congregation, we ask every member that is physically capable and approved to serve in some capacity within our Children’s Ministries (Nursery Ministry, Kids Ministry, or Youth Ministry).
- While we want to encourage the discovery and use of an individual’s particular gifts, we also ask our members to guard against thinking this is the only way to serve. The work of the church gets done by a combination of...
 - ...people helping in areas where they are gifted ...
 - ...and many, many more people helping out in areas where they don’t have a particular “gift!”

Most importantly, we would like all members, as disciples themselves, to be disciple-makers, focused on serving the body for gospel growth.



Clifton Leadership Structure

Congregation
The Church Governs

Elders
The Elders Lead

Staff & Deacons
The Staff & Deacons Serve



Living as a Member at Clifton

Area 1

Attend Weekly Gatherings

Area 2

Serve in Children's Ministry
(Nursery, Kids, or Youth)

Area 3

Join a Small Group

Area 4

Join a Ministry Team or Two!

- **Ministry Teams**

- **Finance Team** – The purpose of the finance team is to count and record the weekly offering. Members of the finance team serve in pairs on a rotational basis.
- **Greeting Team** – The purpose of the Greeting team is to welcome and direct members and guests during public gatherings, anticipating needs related to navigation, seating, and facilities.
- **Hospitality Team** – The purpose of the Hospitality Team is to facilitate fellowship around shared meals for the congregation, for both regular and special occasions.
- **Member Care Team** – The purpose of the Member Care Team is to build up the body of Christ by providing biblical counseling to members experiencing various types of trouble.
- **Music Team** – The purpose of the Music Team is to lead people to praise God in song by telling of who he is and what he has done in Jesus Christ.
- **Ordinances Team** – The purpose of the Ordinances Team is to facilitate logistically the practice of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and of the offering in public worship services.
- **Corporate Safety Team** – The purpose of the Corporate Safety Team is to facilitate the safety of people gathered for services by identifying and mitigating hazards on the property.
- **Sound Team** – The purpose of the Sound Team is to facilitate the public proclamation of Christ in teaching, preaching, prayer, and song through skillful use of media technology.
- **Special Assistance Team** – The purpose of the Special Assistance Team is to help members and regular visitors who have impaired mobility, vision, or disabilities to participate in regular church services.

2. Who are the staff at Clifton?

Director of Kids Ministry – Amy Sarin
Director of Nursery – Loretta Bitner
Minister of Music – Tommy Nissen
Minister to Senior High – Nathan Parsons
Minister to Junior High – Blake Lehmann
Office Administrator – Alexis McDowell
Pastor of Discipleship – David Dykes
Pastor of Executive Leadership – Jason Deming
Pastor of Preaching – John Kimbell
Pastor of Leadership Development – Shawn Wright

3. What are Small Groups?

The Christian life is never a solo journey. Christians need consistent encouragement from each other in order to persevere in faith and live lives characterized by love and obedience to Christ.

To this end the author of Hebrews exhorts us with great urgency, “Take care brothers, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day...” (3:12-13). Later in the letter he continues, “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together” (10:24-25a).

At Clifton Baptist Church, we believe Small Groups are an excellent way to facilitate the mutual encouragement, care, and service that the Bible calls the local church body to practice toward one another. Therefore, Small Groups at Clifton are groups of about 9-14 believers committing to meet regularly for fellowship, study, accountability, prayer, and service.

When and Where?

Small groups at Clifton are free to meet anytime during the week. However, the majority of our groups meet on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Sunday evenings of the month. Our small groups primarily meet in the homes of our members around Louisville.

Who Can Join?

Small groups at Clifton are intended primarily to help our adult members provide biblical care and encouragement for one another. At Clifton, we understand participation in a small group as one aspect of our commitment to this local congregation. Therefore, although you do not have to have completed the membership process before joining a group, group participation is reserved for members or those moving toward membership.

How Do I Get into a Small Group?

The primary opportunities for joining a small group are through our sign-ups at the beginning of September and January. However, placements may also be made throughout the year according to availability. You may go to the website at any time and sign up using the form provided at cliftonbaptist.org/small-groups.

Questions?

If you have any further questions or would like to speak with someone directly about small groups at Clifton, please contact David Dykes at ddykes@cliftonbaptist.org.

4. What is Sunday School?

The primary focus of Sunday School at Clifton Baptist is biblical instruction. More specifically, Sunday School:

- Grounds us in basic doctrines and disciplines
- Improves our understanding and study of Scripture
- Teaches us how to live Christ-centered lives
- Helps us apply the Scriptures to the practical matters of life
- Communicates God's wisdom for various relationships
- Teaches us how to engage the world

Sunday school classes meet from **9:30am – 10:30am on Sunday mornings**. Here are some of the classes we offer:

Discipleship Track

The Discipleship Sunday School Class is designed to equip members in key areas for living out the Christian life. The class is taught by various teachers. Recurring topics include:

What is the Gospel?	Biblical Dating	The Church
Spiritual Disciplines	Biblical Marriage	Evangelism & Apologetics
How People Change	Biblical Parenting	Missions
Helping Others Change	Finances	

Bible Studies

There are a variety of other ongoing Scriptural studies offered during the Sunday School hour at Clifton. See the brochure rack or the website for the most up-to-date offerings.

5. What does gathered worship look like?

“Read the Bible, preach the Bible, sing the Bible, pray the Bible, see the Bible.”

-Terry L. Johnson, *Worship That Is According to Scripture*

Our main purpose in corporate worship is to contemplate and celebrate together the glory of God in Christ Jesus. Our gatherings focus on hearing from God and responding to Him. We know the Lord through His Word, and so we come together corporately to pursue Him through reading, preaching, singing, praying, and “seeing” (through the ordinances) the truth of the Scripture. As His Holy Spirit leads us in understanding and pondering the seriousness of our sin, we are also reminded of what a great Savior we have in Jesus and the joy of living for His Kingdom in the fellowship of other believers.

Our preaching is expository in that our pastors seek to proclaim faithfully the intended meaning of the Scriptures. We publicly devote ourselves to prayer as an expression of our dependence on the Lord, and we see the gracious work of God displayed visibly to us through celebrating baptisms and the Lord’s Supper. The elders oversee the planning of our gatherings and directly lead in several elements of these times, yet also seek to involve various members in facilitating our corporate worship.

We sing a mixture of gospel-centered hymns and songs, both old and new, desiring to express our unity while displaying a diversity of personal backgrounds and preferences. Our musical style is somewhat eclectic, gathering in a rich collection of Christian song from many centuries and traditions. Our congregation sings heartily, and we strive to emphasize the congregational voice as primary. On Sunday mornings, our singing is accompanied by a variation of instrumentalists, ranging from piano, flutes, violins and violas, to trumpet, guitar, bass, and drums.

6. What do we do for evangelism?

- **Evangelism Philosophy**

- The church itself is the best “evangelism program,” combining both corporate witness and personal witness together according to God’s design. We desire every Clifton member to be grounded and growing in the gospel personally, so they will be able to more effectively share the good news of Jesus Christ with others wherever God has them.
- We want to pursue a culture of evangelism in which it is a normal and regular part of our lives individually and corporately to proclaim the gospel to non-Christians.
- We also seek to equip and provide specific opportunities for members to share the gospel individually and corporately.

- **Outreach Opportunities**

- Personal invitations to church
- Member coordinated evangelism
- Easter Egg Hunt & Block Party
- Trunk-or-Treat Event
- FaLaLa on Frankfort
- Kids Camp

- **Recommended Resources**

- *What is the Gospel?* – Greg Gilbert
- *Evangelism* – Mack Stiles
- *Quest for Joy* – John Piper
- *Christianity Explained* – Michael Bennett
- *Two Ways to Live* – Matthias Media
- *Tell the Truth* – Will Metzger

<h2>7. What do we do for missions?</h2>

At Clifton, we desire to see God glorified through the spread of the gospel to all the peoples of the world. From the very beginning, God's plan of salvation has been to bless all peoples through the saving work of Jesus Christ (Gen 12:3; Gal 3:13-14). Furthermore, Jesus has commanded His followers to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19). Therefore, we believe every Christian has a part to play in spreading the gospel to those people who have never heard it. We do this either by going or by faithfully sending and supporting those who do. As a church, we are committed to hastening the spread of the gospel to all peoples by:

- **Praying that God will call out from our local church men and women** who will go to the various people of the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ in both short-term and long-term capacities.
- **Sending those whom God calls from among us** in a manner worthy of Him by confirming their gifting for missionary service, equipping them with a clear vision of the gospel and the church, and supporting them with our informed prayers, money, and regular correspondence.
- **Staying informed about God's work** among the various peoples of the world.
- **Praying regularly for the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ** among the various peoples of the world, especially among those peoples who have yet to hear.

We have sent out many folks from our congregation to minister in various places around the globe. We still think of them as extensions of the ministry of Clifton, and this is reflected in our strategy to support and care for our missionaries through prayer, finances, correspondence, and personal visits.

One key tool we use to help us raise up and equip members for future missionary service is our missionary cohort program. This 10-month program seeks to equip members who are interested in exploring missionary service and would like to be considered for a sending relationship with Clifton. For further details contact Shawn Wright, our Pastor of Leadership Development, at swright@cliftonbaptist.org.

8. Pastoral Training

Clifton's Pastoral internship is designed for men who are trying to discern calling and gifting for pastoral ministry, including overseas ministry. The internship is intended for those who are nearing the end of their time in Louisville and have been active members at Clifton Baptist Church.

The Goals of the Internship

The internship program has three major goals in the lives of our interns:

- 1) to develop a 'theological and ecclesiological vision' for future ministry
- 2) to provide opportunities and feedback for the development and discernment of ministerial skills and gifting
- 3) to encourage growth in personal holiness, integrity in his relationships, and in God-honoring sacrificial love for his family through the time in the internship

We believe that God alone will work out these goals in our interns' lives. Nonetheless we will try to incorporate numerous intern tasks to try to accomplish our three major goals, including weekly intern meetings, ecclesiological reading and writing assignments, preaching and teaching opportunities, 'shadowing' elders in pastoral ministry, serving in select ministries throughout the year, sitting in on elder meetings, and participation in conferences and events. We believe that this church-based, elder-led program will help to supplement seminary and Bible college training.

Our Hope for the Internship

Additionally, our hope is that interns will leave the internship program with a "portfolio" to aid them in future ministry and even in seeking future ministry positions. This portfolio will include a statement of the intern's testimony, his understanding of his call to ministry, a personal statement of doctrinal belief, various positions statements on ecclesiological issues, and assessments of his character and suitability for ministry from various elders who've been involved in his time in the internship.

Interns should expect approximately 15-20 hours of work per week for required meetings and homework. Generally, this requires adjusting most interns' work or school schedules.

However, we believe that the internship will be a time of rich preparation for years of faithful ministry in the future. The internship lasts approximately 10 months, from late August until the Southern Baptist Convention in mid-June. Although there is more value to this time than earning course credit, currently, students in an MDiv program at SBTS can earn up to 6 elective courses over the 10 month period.

We are privileged to invest in and send out these men to be future pastors, church planters, and missionaries as well as faithful husbands, fathers, and colleagues.

9. How do we communicate as a congregation?

- **Services** – Upcoming events are announced during Sunday morning services and printed on the back of the bulletin. Prayer updates are primarily shared during the Wednesday night prayer service.
- **Website** – Information about the church is available at cliftonbaptist.org. Included there are announcements; the church calendar; preaching and Sunday school schedules; recordings of sermons; descriptions of various ministries; and Clifton's core documents.
- **App** – Our "Clifton Baptist Church" app is available in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Download the app to receive service notifications (weather, schedule changes, etc.) and special prayer reminders. The app also will provide you with easy access to announcements/ upcoming events, sermon recordings, etc.
- **The Messenger** – This newsletter is a weekly email that goes out to all members, and is the main source of communication with members and those in the membership process. It includes the current Sunday's order of service, prayer requests, updates on missionaries, testimonies of membership candidates, and announcements. A current email address for each person must be listed in Breeze to receive these emails.
- **Prayer Directory** – This booklet is a listing of the members of Clifton and includes each person's contact information. It is called the Prayer Directory to encourage members of Clifton to pray for each other. The photos and contact information is based from the information in Breeze, so it is important that each member keep his/her profile information up to date and ensure his/her photo is an up-close view of the head and shoulders.
- **Breeze** – This church management software is a tool used to facilitate communication, event registration, and ministry coordination. Breeze also serves as an online member directory and calendar. The link to log into Breeze can be found in the menu bar of our website.
- **Ministry Groups** – Information on various ministries can be found on our website (listed above). While actual care for one another is done in person, many groups choose to communicate and coordinate their ministries together through Breeze. Breeze provides a way for leaders to easily send messages to their team,

communicate needs for the groups, and assist each person in scheduling the times they prefer to volunteer.

- **Phone or Email** – The church office may be reached by emailing info@cliftonbaptist.org or by leaving a voicemail at (502) 897-1771. Members can use this email address to send any birth or wedding announcements, prayer requests, or questions they may have to the staff. Elder/staff emails can also be found in the prayer directory or in Breeze.

10. What's next?

The Process of Joining Clifton

1. **Submit the form at the bottom of the cliftonbaptist.org/mmc page to let us know you'd like to pursue membership with Clifton.** Your submission will prompt our Office Administrator to send you a link to **complete the Child Protection Policy Personal Commitment Form** (Note: If you have never completed Ministry Safe training, you will need to do this before submitting the CPPPC form).
2. Upon receiving your submission, our Office Administrator will reach out to **schedule a membership interview**. Interviews can be scheduled only after the Membership Matters Class has been completed and the CPPPC form submitted. The elders typically conduct interviews on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month after the evening service.
3. **Answer 5 testimony-related questions.** After your membership interview is completed, these answers will be published in our weekly newsletter, *The Messenger*, to introduce you to the congregation.
4. **Attend a membership interview with two elders.** The purpose of this interview is (a) to provide the elders with an opportunity to get to know you, (b) to hear your understanding of the gospel and how you came to personally trust in Christ, (c) to hear whether you have been baptized as a believer by immersion under the authority of a local church, and (d) to answer any remaining questions you may have about membership at Clifton.
5. **We will publish your testimony in *The Messenger*.** After your testimony has run in our church newsletter for two weeks, you are eligible to be voted on by the congregation.
6. **The church votes on your membership.** These votes are conducted during one of our quarterly members meetings.

7. **For those who have not been previously baptized,** the church's vote on your membership will be pending your baptism. We will schedule this for a Sunday morning and upon your baptism you will become a member of the church!

The church vote isn't the end of the membership process; it is just the beginning. As you seek to live as a disciple of Christ, you will experience the immeasurable value and joy of going through this life with others who are committed to you as fellow believers.

***Note:** On Childhood Baptism and Church Membership, see Appendix B



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Childcare Orientation

1. What is Clifton's vision for ministry to children & youth?
2. What are Clifton's policies for ministry to children & youth?
3. Who is expected to serve?
4. What are Clifton's structures?
5. Questions

1. What is Clifton's vision for ministry to children & youth?

- Vision: Children's Ministries are ministries of
 - ...proclamation,
 - ...evangelism,
 - ...discipleship.
- Vision: Generations of Godliness
 - Psalm 145:4-7

"One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness. They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness."
 - Deuteronomy 6:4-9

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."
- Some methods for achieving the vision:

2. What are Clifton's policies for ministry to children & youth?

- Why are policies needed?
 - The uniqueness of caring for children
 - Prerequisite goal
 - The reputation of Christ at Clifton
- Overview of Policies:
 - See Handout: "Childcare Protection Policy"

3. Who is expected to serve?

- The scope and scale of Clifton's needs.
- Overview of the application process.
 - Childcare Application Form (Personal history, references, membership)
 - Ministry Safe Training
 - Criminal Background Check
- The priority of keeping children safe.

4. What are Clifton's structures?

- Nursery Ministry, Children's Ministry, and Youth Ministry
- Weekly Team vs. Quarterly Teams
- How to get involved?

5. Questions?

- Comments, Questions, or Clarification?
- Due date for Childcare Applications

Appendix A - CBC Constitution

Constitution of Clifton Baptist Church

Revised August 9, 2015

Preamble

Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to call certain of His servants to unite here under the name Clifton Baptist Church of Louisville, Kentucky, for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we, the members of Clifton Baptist Church do hereby organize ourselves and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the Statement of Faith and Covenant of this church.

Article 1 - Name

1.1 This church shall be known as Clifton Baptist Church.

Article 2 - Affiliations

2.1 Clifton Baptist Church is voluntarily cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention, the Kentucky Baptist Convention, and the Long Run Association.

Article 3 - Purpose

3.1 The foundation of this church is the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20), and He guides His church in all affairs through the Holy Scriptures (Psalm 119; 2 Tim. 3:15-17). Therefore the purpose of this church is to glorify God through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit (Isa. 43:7; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

3.2 The priorities of ministry of this church flow from the vision of God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ. We exist to savor this vision in worship (John 4:23), strengthen the vision in nurture (1 Cor. 14:26; 2 Peter 3:18), and spread the vision in evangelism, missions, and loving deeds (Matt. 5:16; 28:18-20; 1 Pet. 2:9; 3:15).

3.3 In order to remain true to our Lord and His word, this church must be marked by preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 4:1-2), administering baptism (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:1-4) and the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:17-34), loving one another (John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:11-24; 4:7-12), and practicing formative (1 Thess. 5:14; 1 Tim. 5:1-2; Tit. 2:15) and corrective discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-5).

Article 4 – Membership

Section 1 - Qualifications

4.1.1 To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must sustain the doctrines of our church and not hold any settled convictions contrary to them, in accord with our Statement of Faith, and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant.

4.1.2 The normal process for becoming a member is completion of all sessions of the New Members' Class, an assessment of a person's qualification for membership in an interview with at least two elders, and a vote by the entire church on the basis of the person's profession of faith.

Section 2 - Admission of Members

4.2 To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission and accepted by vote of at least 75% of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members. At that point newly elected members shall relinquish their membership in other churches.

Section 3 - Duties and Privileges of Membership

4.3.1 In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Only those who are members of this congregation shall be entitled to lead in the ministries of the church.

4.3.2 It is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members' meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on such other matters submitted to a vote.

Section 4 - Watchcare Membership

4.4.1. Persons temporarily residing in the Louisville area who are members of an evangelical church may apply for watchcare membership. Qualifications are identical to those for full membership as set out above, except that home church membership must be retained. A letter of commendation will be sought from the applicant's home church.

4.4.2 Duties and privileges of watchcare members are the same as for other members except that:

1. when absent from the Louisville area for extended periods of time they are released from the responsibility to attend our church services;

2. while they will be encouraged to participate in members' meetings, they will not be eligible to stand for any office or to vote.

4.4.3 Termination of watchcare membership as a disciplinary measure will be as it is for other members, except that the elders shall notify the pastor of the home church of that termination. Watchcare membership will normally terminate immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in the Louisville area.

Section 5 - On Church Discipline

4.5.1 Formative discipline is inherent in the preaching, teaching, and exercise of other ministries in the church. When formative discipline fails due to sin, corrective discipline is then necessary. Corrective discipline is for the good of the church and the member who has sinned. It is never to be entered into lightly or quickly. The goal of corrective discipline is always remedial, that is, the goal is always the salvation and holiness and good of the one being disciplined.

4.5.2 Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of Scripture. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed. Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, removal from office, and excommunication (see Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

4.5.3 The purpose of such discipline should be:

1. For the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (Heb. 12:1-11; Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 6:1);
2. For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Tim. 5:20; Heb. 10:24-25);
3. For the purity of the church as a whole (1 Cor. 5:6-7; Eph. 5:27; Rev. 21:2);
4. For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (Matt. 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:10-14); and
5. Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (Deut. 5:11; John 15:8; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:12).

4.5.4 It is desirable in the case of public sin that a confession be made before the church in a specially called meeting, so that the church can freely extend forgiveness. Such public confession is especially necessary in the case of elders and deacons (1 Tim. 5:19-20; Gal. 2:11-14).

Section 6 - Termination of Membership

4.6 Termination of membership shall be recognized by the church following the death, transfer of membership, or voluntary resignation of any church member who is in good standing. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline (ordinarily, but not necessarily,

at the recommendation of the elders) and with the vote of 75% of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members. The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline or for any other biblical reason.

Article 5 - Meetings

Section 1 - Worship Meetings

5.1 Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the church determines.

Section 2 - Members' Meetings

5.2.1 In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5.2.2 There shall be a regular members' meeting at least every quarter, at some time apart from the Sunday morning service, and at a time acceptable to the membership. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

5.2.3 Special members' meetings may be called as requested by the elders, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of ten percent of the voting membership. In the event of a written request from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

5.2.4 There shall be an annual members' meeting, at which normally officers are elected, positions filled, and a budget approved by the membership no more than three nor less than one month prior to the start of the fiscal year. The fiscal year will commence on January 1.

5.2.5 The chairman of the elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church. In the absence or incapacity of the chairman of the elders, another elder appointed by the elders shall perform these duties. The date, time, and purpose of any regular or special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church at least two weeks preceding the meeting. Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present.

5.2.6 Meetings shall be run according to Robert's Rules of Order. On any matter that is brought to vote, a two-thirds vote is needed for it to pass (unless this constitution specifies otherwise). Abstentions will not be considered as votes cast. Only votes cast by members present at the time of the meeting will be counted.

5.2.7 Resolutions adopted by the elders shall be reported to the church at members' meetings and may be reversed by the church by a majority vote of the members present.

Article 6 - Officers

Section 1 - Summary

6.1.1 Jesus Christ is the Lord and head of this church and He rules primarily through the Scriptures.

6.1.2 The biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons, but the church is governed by the congregation. The biblical terms “elder,” “pastor,” and “overseer” are understood to refer to the same biblical office. In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under this constitution of clerk and treasurer, as well as paid ministerial staff as occasion may require. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

Section 2 - Elders

6.2.1 Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall provide broad oversight to the ministry, financial management, and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17; Tit. 1:5-9; Jas. 5:14; and 1 Pet. 5:1-4, the elders shall seek the mind of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the word of God as they undertake the work of shepherding God's flock. The elders shall teach and exhort; refute those who contradict the truth; pray for the sick; care for the church's members; devote themselves to prayer, to the government of the church and to ministry. The elders shall provide oversight of the congregation and lead the church to fulfill its ministries.

6.2.2 The elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Tit. 1:6-9. Only men may serve as elders in accord with 1 Tim. 2:12; 3:2. At least one-third of the elder board must consist of those who receive no financial compensation from the church. No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure. Those elders not receiving compensation from the church will be called “lay elders” for the purpose of this constitution, although biblically and functionally there is no difference among the elders.

6.2.3 The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially. After a lay elder has served two consecutive three-year terms, he shall not be eligible for re-election to the eldership for at least one year. Staff elders, however, are not subject to term limits. In the event that a staff elder resigns his staff position, yet retains an active and involved membership, at the elders' discretion he may continue service in his office as a lay elder until the second regularly scheduled members meeting after his staff resignation, at which time he is eligible for recommendation from the elders for re-election for service as a lay elder. Upon the completion of that term, he shall be eligible for another term if so elected by the membership.

6.2.4 An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express such concern

to the elders and, if need be only afterwards, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matt. 18:15-17 and 1 Tim. 5:17-21. Any elder may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any formally called members' meeting of the church.

6.2.5 The elders shall take particular responsibility to oversee worship services; administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper; equip the membership for the work of the ministry; encourage and teach sound doctrine; admonish and correct error; oversee the process of church discipline; coordinate and promote the ministries of the church; mobilize the church for world missions; examine and instruct prospective members; examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions; receive, hold and disburse a fund for benevolence (reporting to the church the total receipts and disbursements for the overall benevolence fund); and oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

6.2.6 The elders may establish and oversee ministry positions and committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders shall also have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. The outworking of this responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to deacons or another staff member.

6.2.7 A paid staff or volunteer ministry position does not in and of itself constitute an elder's position.

6.2.8 In proposing new paid ministerial staff positions, the elders shall present a job description for each position to the membership for approval. The membership may approve all candidates to fill such positions or may delegate this responsibility, on a position-by-position basis, to the elders, deacons, or other staff members. The elders shall present a request to dismiss paid ministerial staff (i.e., those paid to do ministry) to the congregation. The elders may hire and fire non-ministerial staff, or delegate that responsibility on a case-by-case basis. The elders will report job descriptions, hiring decisions, and firing decisions for non-ministerial staff, or delegate that responsibility on a case-by-case basis. The elders shall report to the congregation all changes to any job description.

6.2.9 The elders may choose to operate among themselves by consensus, but they must have at least 75% approval of the elders in order to proceed with an action.

6.2.10 The elders shall elect a chairman who shall serve as chairman of elders' meetings and as moderator of members' meetings. The chairman shall be a lay elder. In his absence, the elders shall appoint another elder to fulfill these duties.

6.2.11 For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Kentucky, the chairman of the elders shall serve as the president of the corporation.

Section 3 - A Preaching Elder

6.3.1 A preaching elder shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above. He shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the ministry of preaching and teaching the word of God.

6.3.2 In the absence or incapacity of a preaching elder, the other elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

Section 4 – Deacons

6.4.1 The office of deacon is described in 1 Tim. 3:8-13 (cf. Acts 6:1-7). The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men and women who are giving of themselves in service to the church, who possess gifts of ministry, and who are called to further service and care for the church's members. The number of deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and the call and qualifications of men and women in the church. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church biannually. After a deacon has served three consecutive two-year terms, he or she shall not be eligible for re-election to the deaconate for at least one year.

6.4.2 Deacons shall advise and assist the elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the word, new and existing ministries of the church, and the care of the members of the congregation. The deacons may be organized in the most fitting way to accomplish the mission of the church. Thus the ministry of deacons may involve several diaconal committees. There is no requirement that the deacons meet as a committee of the whole.

6.4.3 The responsibilities of deacons do not include preaching, teaching, or spiritual oversight, which are the responsibilities of the elders, or financial control of the church. Deacons exercise a ministry of service, not a ministry of spiritual leadership. Although they may teach and preach in contexts in which they are not infringing upon the oversight duties of elders (Acts 6-7:53; Titus 2:3), the responsibilities of deacons include the following:

1. The ministry of mercy is a particular responsibility of deacons. They shall see that the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the infirm receive spiritual and physical comfort.
2. Deacons shall attend to the accommodations for public worship. Deacons may assist in providing for the elements during the Lord's Supper.
3. Deacons shall attend to the normal care and maintenance of church properties.
4. Deacons shall attend to the welcoming and greeting ministries of the church.
5. Deacons of finance shall attend to the budgeting process of the church.
6. At the elders' recommendation, the church may recognize deacons to serve in other specific capacities as needs arise in the church.

6.4.4 Each year the deacons of finance, with the approval of the elders, shall present to the church an itemized budget at the regular members' meeting preceding the annual members meeting. This budget shall be presented for discussion at that time and called up for a vote at the annual members' meeting.

6.4.5 No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders or the deacons responsible for the church's finances.

Section 5 - Clerk

6.5.1 It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the elders, deacons or the church.

6.5.2 In the absence or incapacity of the clerk, the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk.

6.5.3 For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Kentucky, the clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation.

6.5.4 The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this constitution shall be available for all church members.

Section 6 - Treasurer

6.6 The treasurer, who shall not be an active elder or a paid church staff member, shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as designated by the church. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the church at regular members' meetings.

Article 7 - Elections

Section 1 - Principles

7.1 The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

1. Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, shall be an integral part of the election process.
2. Nominations shall proceed with the support of the elders.
3. All candidates for church office shall be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members.
4. The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 2 - Selection of Officers

7.2.1 The election of officers shall be held as needed in a members' meeting of the church. Two months prior to the election the elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process.

7.2.2 A slate of names of nominees to serve as elders, deacons, ministerial staff, clerk, and treasurer shall be presented by the elders and made known to the church at least one month prior to voting. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting at which the church votes on the candidates.

7.2.3 The chairman of the elders shall declare as elected those persons receiving a 75% majority of all votes cast for any office.

7.2.4 The persons elected shall assume their respective offices at the beginning of the fiscal year (unless another date has been specifically designated). Elections to fill any need that may occur during the course of the year may be held at any members' meeting, upon recommendation of the elders.

Section 3 - Calling of Staff Elders

7.3.1 In the calling of any man to a staff elder position, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed, and the elders shall encourage members of the congregation to submit names. The elders shall nominate a staff elder candidate to the congregation, after which the church shall be given adequate opportunity to assess the gifts and spiritual life of the potential staff elder.

7.3.2 In selecting a staff elder who is not a current member of the church, the same biblical qualifications for all elders, as listed in 6.2.2, will be prerequisite. The ability to preach will be assessed with particular care when selecting a potential preaching elder. In addition, the church shall receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant.

7.3.3 The elders shall bring only one recommendation to the church at a time.

7.3.4 Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as a staff elder shall be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting. The call of a staff elder shall take place at a members meeting set aside for that purpose. The extension of a call shall be made upon an affirmative vote of 75% of the members present, upon which he shall be a member of the church, an elder, and a staff elder, whom the church shall publicly recognize as such.

Article 8 - Indemnification

Section 1 - Mandatory Indemnification

8.1 If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the elders determine that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. The church shall purchase appropriate insurance to meet these potential liabilities.

Section 2 - Permissive Indemnification

8.2 At the discretion of the elders, the church also may indemnify any person who (a) acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and (b) either believed that his or her conduct was not unlawful or failed to abide by a law that the elders determine to be in contradiction to biblical obligations.

Section 3 - Procedure

8.3 If a quorum of the elders is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

Article 9 - Dispute Resolution

9.1 Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (see, e.g., Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8), the church shall urge its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles and the avoidance of suits of law to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities. The elders shall adopt policies and procedures to effect these aspirations.

Article 10 - Amendments

10.1 The Statement of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended by a three-quarters vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

10.2 This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

Appendix B - Childhood Baptism and Church Membership

A Recommendation from the Elders of Clifton Baptist Church on Childhood Baptism and Church Membership

The following convictions are the basis for our recommendation:

1. A local church's membership should be comprised only of genuine Christians, and only of genuine Christians who have been baptized as believers, by immersion.
2. Membership candidates are to be interviewed to ascertain, as much as is humanly possible, the genuineness of a candidate's conversion.
3. We recognize that the New Testament example is for baptism upon a valid profession of faith. Therefore, baptism ought to follow conversion immediately upon the appearance of discernable signs of conversion.
4. Church members ought to live lives which reflect the present work of the Spirit in their hearts moving them toward increasing Christ-likeness.
5. Children can be confused or deceived about the present reality of their spiritual condition, thus making the Spirit's work in their hearts and lives difficult for both them and others to discern.
6. Time is sometimes the only course of action for determining, as much as is humanly possible, the validity of a child's profession of faith in Christ.
7. Discernable signs of a child's genuine conversion often become clearer as the child grows and shows the fruit of a changed heart, rather than mere obedience to his or her parents.
8. We understand, however, that setting an age limit would be purely arbitrary, and we do not want to be in a position of forbidding a truly believing child from obeying the Lord Jesus Christ by being baptized.
9. Since we believe that it is right for true believers to be members of a local church, all children (and others) who are baptized will be recommended for membership in the church.
10. Church membership carries with it responsibilities which may be beyond the grasp of many children, so parents of believing and baptized children must exercise guidance of their children in carrying out these responsibilities to the best of their ability.

Policy Recommendation regarding Requests for Childhood Baptism at Clifton Baptist Church:

In light of the above convictions, the elders of Clifton Baptist Church will handle parents' requests for children's baptism on a case-by-case basis. If after serious inquiry we agree with parents that a child is truly a believer, we will recommend he or she be baptized. If, however, we are unable to gain confidence of the state of the child's spiritual condition, we will recommend that further time be given. In no case do we wish to convey the idea that it is our expectation that young children should be baptized. But also, we wish to be obedient to Christ in baptizing any truly believing person, truly believing children included.

These convictions and accompanying policy recommendation were reached by the elders through much study, prayer, and discussion on a variety of related issues including the desire to preserve and guard the purity of the church while recognizing that an unbaptized Christian is a foreign concept to the New Testament. After weighing the arguments for both sides of the issue, the elders urge the congregation to adopt this recommendation along with the following procedure as a general course of action to be taken.

Procedure to follow for children being considered for baptism & membership:

1. Parent/Guardian Support

Parents or guardians who believe that their child has been truly converted and should therefore be baptized and join the membership of the church should meet with an elder to discuss their desire to see their child baptized. The elders will discuss with parents their reasons for believing that their child is truly a believer in Christ and will decide together whether to proceed with the following steps.

2. Gospel Study Sessions

The child shall be led through a study which clarifies the gospel. Someone other than a parent shall lead the child through this study. Possible leaders include the child's Sunday School teacher, the minister to youth, an elder, approved member, etc. This study should take about three or four sessions. The purpose of these studies is for the adult leader meeting with the child to discern if the child understands and has embraced the gospel. The elders will proceed to the next step only after speaking with this leader and based upon his or her recommendation.

3. Membership Matters Class

The child, like all other membership candidates, shall be led through the Membership Matters class that introduces the child to the nature of membership at Clifton Baptist Church.

4. Membership Interview

The elders shall interview the child for membership and, if acceptable, present the child to the congregation as a baptismal and/or membership candidate.

5. Baptism and Membership

If the congregation is convinced that a child has given evidence of a genuine conversion, they shall vote to receive the child into membership. The child shall subsequently be baptized and accepted into the fellowship and discipline of the congregation.