



## What is the Church?



**T**his leaflet has been produced by Dovedale Baptist Church to give you an introduction to what the Church is all about as we see it. This is the first part of our introduction to church membership.

### What is the Church?

We use the word “church” in two ways. Firstly “Church” is the community of people throughout the world and across the ages who belong to Jesus Christ. Secondly “church” is the local expression of the worldwide church in one community of people.

When we commit our lives to Jesus, we become part of the worldwide Church. The Church is not a building, a meeting or an organisation, it is PEOPLE who belong to Jesus.

The Bible describes the Church as the Bride of Christ - Eph 5:25-32, and as the Body of Christ - Romans 12:4-8.

We become Christians individually, but as Christians we belong together. God's plan is to build his Church which is made up of Christians bound together in love and commitment.

“Love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Ephesians 5:25

In Christ we who are many

### How is this expressed in Baptist churches?

Baptists see the local church as a "gathered community" of Christians, part of the Church worldwide. Each Baptist church is self-governing and it chooses its own leaders: pastors, elders and deacons. Authority in the Baptist church is based in the church meeting, where all church members come together to seek the mind of Christ for the church.

Baptist churches associate together for fellowship, worship and mission. Our church belongs to the Merseyside District of the North Western Baptist Association. We also belong to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Evangelical Alliance.

### **What else do Baptists believe?**

Baptists share the same faith as other Christians. Some particular beliefs that Baptists hold to are:

- ♦ The truth of the Bible
- ♦ The need for every person to make a personal response to Jesus Christ
- ♦ The necessity for the baptism of believers
- ♦ The ministry of every member of the church
- ♦ The freedom and autonomy of each church of believers in Christ
- ♦ The separation of the Church from the State
- ♦ The freedom of all people to express their religious beliefs



### **What is church membership?**

We express our membership of the worldwide Church by being a member of a local church. The word member is used in an "organic" sense: as my hand is a member of my body. To have this organic belonging together we need to identify with one particular church. Church membership is your commitment to live out your Christian faith alongside other people within Dovedale church.

For more information on church membership please see the leaflet "Church Membership" (Dovedale Leaflets number 2).

If you have any questions about anything on this leaflet or anything else please do get in touch with our minister, Wayne Clarke on 0151 280 7253