



LIVING STONES FAMILY

Playbook

Reno • South Reno • Sparks • Elko • Carson City • Fernley • North Valleys • Winnemucca

NV

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THE LIVING STONES STORY

Living Stones was started by Harvey Turner as a Bible study in Reno, NV, in 1998.

Many of his friends had no interest in attending church, so he started the Bible study to bring the Word of God to them. The study became popular with college-aged students who were hungry for community and the gospel of Jesus. Over time, it grew to about forty people packed into multiple rooms in a two-story house. Seeing this movement, Grace Church in Northwest Reno opened its doors for Living Stones to start evening worship gatherings on Friday nights. These worship gatherings quickly grew to a few hundred people and experienced many baptisms.

In affirmation of God's blessing and work of renewal, Grace sent out Living Stones in 2009 to start as a separate church. In 2011, Living Stones multiplied to its second congregation. Since then, our family of churches has grown to eight congregations across Northern Nevada in Reno, South Reno, Sparks, Carson City, Fernley, the North Valleys, Winnemucca, and Elko.

THE NAME "LIVING STONES"

The name of our churches comes from 1 Peter 2:4-5:

"As you come to Him, a Living Stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus."

These verses illustrate the church as the new temple or dwelling place of God. Jesus is the Living Stone, or foundation stone, that the entire church is built upon. Every person who believes in Jesus receives an identity from Him and becomes a living stone. Together, these living stones make up the "spiritual house," or temple where God is present.



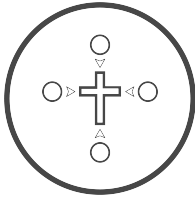
LS VISION

Living Stones exists to see a fundamental shift in the spiritual climate of Northern Nevada.

Northern Nevada is desert. Physically, it is a beautiful place known for its rugged high desert mountains. Spiritually, it is also a desert known for its rugged individualism, familial brokenness, addiction, and apathy toward God. Few people know Jesus, and there has never been an intentional and multigenerational church planting movement in this region of the world. Our goal is to see many new churches planted because God's plan to reach the world is through his people, the church. Since the church is the temple of God, it is the place where people experience his life-giving presence. Since church members are called ambassadors of God's kingdom, it is through their proclamation that others can hear the gospel. And since the church is the body of Christ, it is through its members that the hurting are served, mended, and comforted.

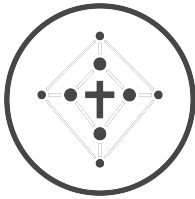
LS VALUES

Five Core Values shape everything we do



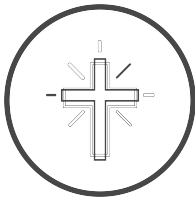
We strive to make outsiders insiders

Like Jesus, Living Stones does everything possible to make outsiders insiders in the Kingdom of God. We make it our aim to remove all obstacles that would block people from knowing Jesus. We also intentionally pursue outcasts and irreligious people who do not normally feel comfortable in church settings. No one should be blocked from the gospel and the opportunity to be reconciled to God.



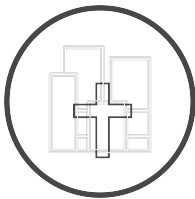
We are Disciples Making Disciples

Disciples are people who follow Jesus, find their identity in Him, and enjoy relationship with God. Part of following Jesus means we invest our whole life to help others grow spiritually as they learn to know, love, and follow Him too. According to Jesus, discipling is not only the job of pastors and deacons, it is the job of every believer. Every follower of Jesus at Living Stones is expected to use their gifts to make disciples.



Unity in Diversity

The church of God is to be a house of prayer and worship for all peoples and ethnicities. This is the heart of God and will be fully displayed around His throne in heaven. Our prayer is for the diversity of our cities (age, ethnicity, subculture, political affiliation, marital status, socio-economic status, etc.) to be represented and integrated in every level and function of our churches.



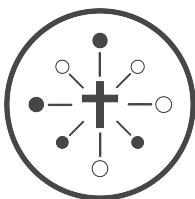
In the City, for the City

Living Stones wants to be a blessing to cities rather than a burden. Like God with his people, we want to be for our cities, not against them. There are three ways we exercise this value:

Physically - by being present to care for physical needs of the hurting and underprivileged in our city.

Culturally - by participating in and shaping what is good and beautiful in the culture of our city.

Spiritually - by praying for and guiding people toward the freedom and fulfillment that can only be found in Jesus through the proclamation of His gospel.



Churches Planting Churches

Church planting is the most effective way to see people come to the knowledge and love of Christ. Since the church is the temple of God, church planting is God's plan to bring His presence to the ends of the earth. We are constantly seeking to raise up new leaders and send out more church plants. We invest 10% of our money every year into church planting throughout the United States and the world in partnership with the Acts 29 church planting Network. (www.Acts29.com).

LS FAMILY STRUCTURE

Family of Churches

At Living Stones, we believe we can do more together as a family of churches in Northern Nevada than we could as independent churches. Each LS local church has its own board of governing Elders that operate under the authority of the LS Family Elders. The Family Elders consist of the Lead Pastors from all the local churches. In addition, a small corporate staff serves the operations of the LS Family.

Benefits of the LS Family

First of all, we are a family. Family means we are committed based on our common roots and DNA. Family means we support each other even when it means personal sacrifice. In times of strife, families commit to working toward peace. Family is a place to belong. It is also expected for families to grow and multiply into more families.

There are five significant benefits to being a part of the LS Family: Brotherhood, Accountability, Collaboration, Shared Resources, and a Trusted Name.

Brotherhood

You are not alone as leaders and as churches. Many churches fall apart because the leader and his wife feel no relational support. Taking a stand for truth when it is not popular can also make churches and their leadership feel alone. Brotherhood means we get to link arms in the battle and support each other when we feel weak or need some help. It also means we get to rejoice together in victories and successes.

Accountability

As Christians, we are both saints and sinners. Our hearts are prone to wander, and our compulsions, unhealed wounds, and selfish desires can cause us to make foolish decisions. The LS family is committed to holding all pastors accountable to the qualified character and servant leadership described in the Bible. We are also committed to holding each other accountable to the family's work, which is being healthy churches and planting healthy churches according to the LS DNA.

Collaboration

We can do more together than we can individually. A multitude of counselors forms the best ideas and practices. Collaboration enables us to share ideas, sermon series, momentum, and strategies to make disciples in our cities more effectively.

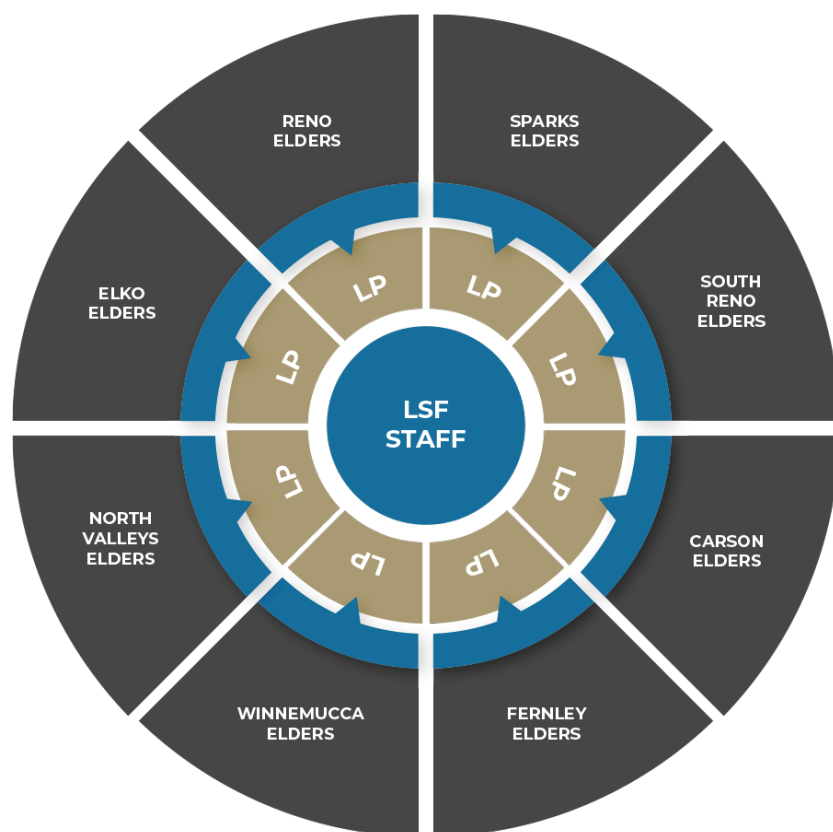
Shared resources

Planting and running a church is difficult and takes a lot of resources. Partnering together as a family enables us to get the most "bang for our buck and time." Things like By-laws, legal fees, banking fees, employee benefits packages, online subscription resources, accounting, creative art ideas, discipleship structures, and training opportunities are all shared so that each church can get to the work of making disciples without having to worry about "re-creating the wheel."

Trusted Name

God has blessed Living Stones with a good reputation in Northern Nevada and the West Coast. We are known as a church that seeks the city's welfare, loves the Bible, and welcomes outsiders.

LSF Structure and Leadership



The LS Family Elders govern the **LS Family** (Lead Pastors from each location).

The LSF Staff serves the **LS Family**.

The LS Family Elders are held accountable by the **LSF Full Council of Elders** (every Elder from each church).

Local church Elders lead each LS local church.

Further explanation is provided in the LS Elders Section.

LS METHODS OF MINISTRY

Based on patterns with early believers, each Living Stones church participates in five core ministries to make disciples. These ministries are the **main diet** of LS.



Five Main Diet Ministries

Weekly Worship Gatherings

Weekly Community Groups

Quarterly *In the City*, for the City service

Church Membership

Leadership Development

Churches that execute the above ministries well are free to add **supplemental ministries** to serve their members and advance the mission in their cities.

Supplemental ministries might include:

- Theological classes
- Relationship classes (marriage, singles, parenting)
- Men's or women's studies
- Retreats
- Financial stewardship classes
- Worship nights
- Relationship-building events for members

PRAYER

“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.” (Psalm 127:1)

Living Stones steeps everything in prayer. Unless God builds His church, our efforts are vanity. Only God can save, regenerate, grant faith, heal, sanctify, open the eyes of the blind, produce endurance, and establish His kingdom on earth. Since He must do the work, we must pray.

All Living Stones churches exercise regular and occasional “Frontline Prayer” meetings. “Frontline Prayers,” as opposed to “Maintenance Prayers,” are focussed on:

- Confessing sin and asking for grace.
- Asking God for compassion and zeal to reach the lost and serve the city.
- Pleading for God to show His face and give glimpses of His glory.
- For more people to know Him, and for those who know Him to know Him more¹.

At a minimum, all Living Stones Churches have the following prayer rhythms:

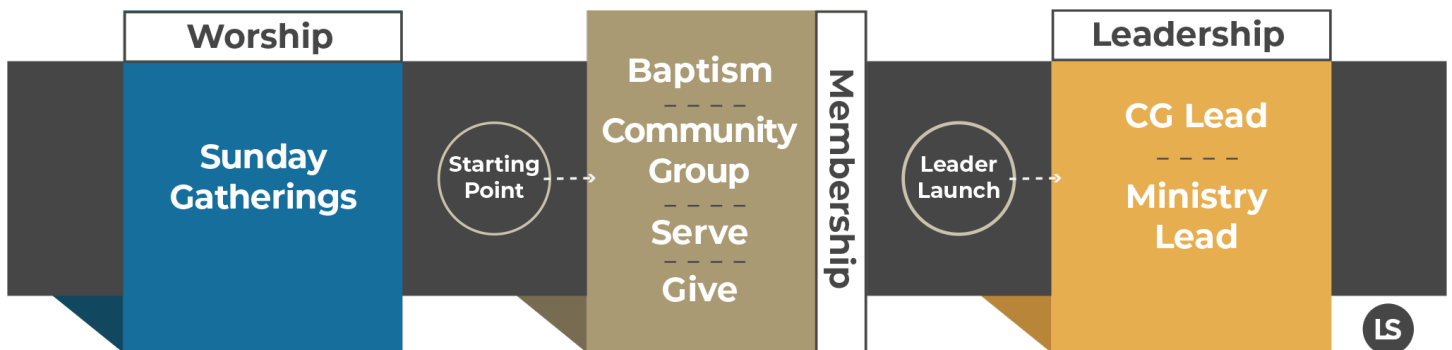
- Pre-service prayer every week with leaders and volunteers for at least 15 minutes.
- One hour of weekly prayer with staff.
- Time for prayer at Elder and leader meetings.
- Two Frontline Prayer gatherings per year.

¹ This concept comes from a summary of C. John Miller’s ideas in Timothy Keller, *Center Church*, pg. 72

LS PATHWAYS TO INVOLVEMENT

When someone walks through the door at Living Stones, we want to make it as straightforward as possible for them to get connected and fully integrated into membership as a disciple of Jesus. Therefore, each Living Stones church seeks to move people through three stages of involvement: Worship, Membership, and Leadership.

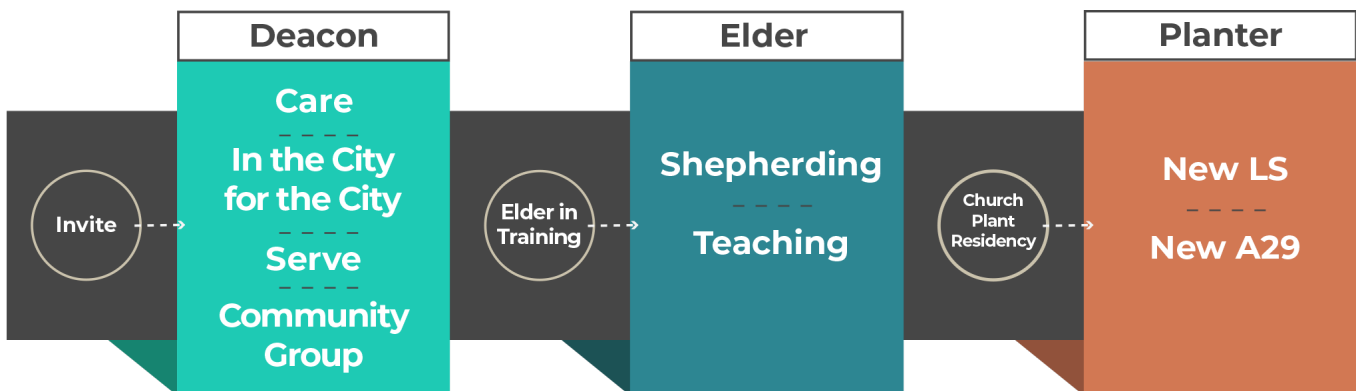
The easiest step for most people to take after attending Worship Gathering is Starting Point, a monthly class that connects newcomers. Before someone becomes a member, they must join a Community Group, get baptized (if they have not already), serve, and start giving. Healthy Covenant Members may then pursue Leadership. The primary places to lead are in Community Groups and volunteer ministries. Every church offers a stage one leadership training program called Leader Launch to develop these leaders.



Starting Point is a monthly class to help you get involved at LS.

Leader Launch is a 6-12 month class to prepare you for leadership at LS.

Pathways to Deacon, Eldership, & Church Planter



Elder in Training is a 1-2 year-long process to develop potential Elders.

Church Plant Residency is a process for the development of church planters.

LIVING STONES DOCTRINE (ORTHODOXY)

Living Stones Churches are biblically rooted, historically informed, and gospel-centered.

GOD IS TRIUNE

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF

In the natural world, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and in the verbally-inspired, inerrant, and authoritative 66 books of the Bible, God has revealed Himself to humanity.

HUMANITY

God created human beings, male and female, in His own image. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Jesus and bear God's image in unique and distinct ways. Neither men nor women alone can fully represent the image of God on earth. At creation, both received different and complementary roles from God that are to be lived out according to the Bible.

THE FALL

Adam fell into sin through the devil's temptation bringing alienation from God and total corruption to every aspect of every human being (our bodies, minds, wills, emotions, and souls).

GOD'S REDEMPTION OF HIS PEOPLE

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to His Father, the eternal Son, Jesus, became human: the Word became flesh, truly God and truly human, one Person in two natures, miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit and born to the virgin Mary.


He perfectly obeyed His heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, and ascended into heaven.

SALVATION OF SINNERS

By His sacrifice, Jesus bore in our place the punishment due to us for our sins, making proper and complete satisfaction of God's justice for us. By His perfect obedience, He satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf. By faith alone, through grace alone, God credits Christ's perfect obedience to all who trust in Jesus for salvation.

THE GOSPEL

The gospel is the good news that, through Jesus, God saves sinners and plans to renew this broken world. Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, who died, resurrected, and



ascended to the Father on behalf of His people. Through faith alone in this Jesus, God justifies, sanctifies, and adopts His people to the hope of eternal life with God in the new creation.

This good news is *biblical* (Jesus' death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), *theological and salvific* (Jesus died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), *historical* (if the saving events did not actually happen, our faith is worthless), *apostolic* (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and *intensely personal* (God adopts individuals to love and relate to them as Father).

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is eternally God and the third person of the Trinity. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. By His powerful and mysterious work, He regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakens them to repentance and faith, baptizes them into union with the Lord Jesus, and justifies them before God.

THE CHURCH

The Universal Church is the people of God. It consists of those born again to faith in Christ for salvation. God chose the church before the foundation of the world and is gathering them through history into one universal family under the Lordship of their Savior Jesus.

Local churches are gatherings of believers spread throughout the world. They gather for worship regularly and are sent into the world by Jesus to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them how to follow Christ.

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

At the appointed time, Jesus Christ will return to resurrect the dead, judge the world, and renew the heavens and the earth. His bodily return will be personal, glorious, and full of perfect justice.

MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY

Marriage is a God-given gift to humanity to show His personality and relationship to His church. The Bible holds marriage between one man and one woman from cover to cover. Any expression of sexuality outside of that covenant is outside of God's created will and is sinful. God beautifully designed and intends His people to participate in sex only within the union of marriage between one man and one woman. (See Gen. 2:24-25, Matt. 19:4-12, Heb. 13:4)

CREEDS

Living Stones affirms the following historical creeds and statements of faith: Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, and The Lausanne Covenant.

LIVING STONES DOCTRINE (DISTINCTIVE)

Below are teaching positions that distinctively shape the ministry of Living Stones.

GOSPEL-CENTERED

The gospel is the center and ultimate motivator of all we do as a church. It is the good news of Jesus Christ—God's very wisdom. (John 3:16) It is the power of God to those who are being saved. Everything Living Stones does is birthed from and built around the gospel of God. (See Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Titus 3:3-8)

REFORMED SOTERIOLOGY

God is sovereign in all aspects of salvation.

Under the curse of Adam, all humans are born into total depravity. Apart from God's intervention, no human would choose Him of their own free will. God elected, died for, draws, and preserves his people in predetermined love. The elect are effectually drawn to Jesus by the Father and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. Their salvation is eternally secured, and God guarantees their perseverance in the faith through the indwelling work of God the Spirit. (See Ephesians 2:2, 4-5. 2 Timothy 2:26. John 5:21, 6:37)

BELIEVER'S BAPTISM (CREDO BAPTIST)

All Christians should be water baptized as commanded by Jesus.

Baptism is when a person is fully submerged into water and pulled back out. Submersion symbolizes the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is an outward expression of the inward reality that a person has been "born again," and has put off their old self. The old self died with Christ and was raised to new life. Baptism is an outward expression of inward faith and is therefore for believers only (Mark 1:5-10. Acts 2:41, 8:12).

COMPLEMENTARIAN

God made humanity to be in his image. Male and female, He created them. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not interchangeable. Instead, they complement each other in mutually enriching ways to represent God's image to the world. Both men and women have equal access to God and equal value before him.

As the Bible unfolds, it calls Men and Women to different roles within the relationships of the home and the church. In the home, God calls husbands to die to themselves and be servant-leaders of their families. God calls wives to be helpers of their husbands and submit to them out of devotion to the Lord. In the church, God calls only qualified men to fill the office of elder. Elders are to shepherd the flock of God under the authority, guidance, love, and wisdom of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd. (See Colossians 3:28, Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Timothy 3:2)

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CONTINUATIONISM

All the gifts of the Spirit listed in the Bible are present and active in His church.

The gifts of the Spirit are free to be used by members according to the guidelines of the Scriptures.

Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as the "other" Paraclete, is present with and in believers. (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:14, 14:16-17). He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith, baptizing them into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. (John 16:18, 3:8; Acts 16:14; 1 John 5:1; Romans 3:23-25). By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. (1 Corinthians 12). The Holy Spirit is Himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service. (Ephesians 1:14; Romans 8:12; John 16:13; John 14:26; John 6:63; Acts 1:8).

COVENANTAL HERMENEUTIC

All sixty-six books of the Bible tell one story that details God's relationship with humanity. He relates to humanity through a series of covenants that fit under two categorical headings: The Covenant Of Works and The Covenant Of Grace. God commands humanity in the Covenant Of Works, saying, "Do this and live." But in the Covenant Of Grace, God takes the requirement of obedience and the penalty for disobedience upon himself to secure an everlasting relationship with his chosen people. The Bible chronicles the unfolding of these covenants and finds ultimate fulfillment for the Covenant Of Grace in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This fulfillment is called the New Covenant, and it is experienced by believers when they are born again by the Holy Spirit. (See Jeremiah 31:31-35, John 1:17, Romans 8:3-4)

LITURGICAL

Sunday liturgy is planned with care so that the entire gathering demonstrates the gospel to the glory of God. Every gathering walks through elements that proclaim the storyline of the Bible, including Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.

CHURCH CALENDAR

Living Stones follows the high holidays of the Christian church calendar. Accordingly, we acknowledge the following seasons and days in Living Stones gatherings: Advent, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Holy Week (Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Resurrection Sunday), Ascension Day, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, Reformation Day, and Christ the King Sunday.

THE ARTS

Living Stones believes that visual art and music are powerful gifts God has given to humanity to reveal His glory. Therefore, Living Stones uses art as a means for people to engage with God. Sometimes Living Stones uses or displays art that secular artists create if it reveals common truth on the basis that all truth, if it is really true, is from God.

FIVE SOLAS OF THE REFORMATION

Sola Scriptura Scripture alone is the Word of God and, therefore, the only infallible rule for life and doctrine. (See Proverbs 30:5-6, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Timothy 3:16)

Sola Fide Salvation is by faith alone in Christ Jesus and not good works. (See Romans 4:3-5, Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Peter 1:3-5)

Sola Gratia Salvation is by grace alone and not merited by man in any way. (See Romans 3:23-24, Romans 11:6, Ephesians 2:4-10)

Solus Christus Christ alone is the only way to salvation. (See Isaiah 53:6, Acts 4:12, 1 Peter 2:24)

Soli Deo Gloria All glory is due to God alone. (See Isaiah 42:8, Romans 11:36, 1 Corinthians 10:31)

COMMON GRACE

Living Stones believes that all humans are made in the image of God and display His nature and character in many ways. In addition, God gives some graces to all people, even though some do not receive the special grace of salvation. These graces given to all image-bearers of God are called Common Graces. They include but are not limited to the ability to marry and experience the benefits of marriage, the ability to learn and communicate truth, the ability to create beautiful things, and the ability to work together for the common good of humanity. (See Psalm 145:9, Acts 17:26-28, James 1:17)

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH


The 1689 Baptist Confession is an accurate and faithful summary of the teaching of the 66 books of Holy Scripture. Therefore we adopted this Confession as the teaching doctrinal statement for Living Stones Churches with the following exceptions:

Articles 22.8, 26.4, 26.9

Our reasoning for these exceptions is as follows:

On 22.8, we disagree with the Confession's use of the definite article "the" when it states, "The Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord...."

While we believe that Christians are obligated to participate (inasmuch as they are physically able) in weekly corporate worship with other Christians, we do not believe



that the Lord's day is the only day for the weekly gathering to happen. All days are holy unto the Lord. (Col.2:16, Romans 14:5) Further, Jesus Himself is our Sabbath rest as well as the One who will bring full and final rest at his Second Coming (Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:10-1). In His person and work, the obligations of the Sabbath are fulfilled (2 Cor. 1:20, Romans 14:5). Because of this fulfillment and the Lord's establishment of the New Covenant, believers do not need to participate in a day of rest to fulfill the law's requirements. But since God rested on the seventh day, he wove the concept of a weekly day of rest into the fabric of creation. Therefore, healthy Christians should aspire to a day of rest, but it is not an act of sin to participate in this rest on a day other than the Lord's Day (Sunday).

On 26.4, we disagree with the Confession's assertion that the Roman Catholic Pope is the man of lawlessness so spoken of in 2 Thess. 2:2-9. While understanding the historical situation within which the authors of the Confession found themselves, we do not find the exegetical arguments concerning this assertion to be persuasive because we believe this man of lawlessness has yet to appear in history based on our interpretation of the Confession's cited passages. However, based on the Roman Catholic Church's own explicit teaching concerning the papacy - that "the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered"¹ - we believe that the Roman Catholic Pope acts as an antichrist. While not explicitly denying that Jesus is the Messiah, whoever sits as acting Pope is in opposition to Jesus by establishing himself, rather than Jesus, as the supreme authority over the Christian Church. In this way, the Roman Catholic Pope commits egregious sin against the Lord Jesus. By the very act of believing himself to be the supreme authority in the Church, the Pope denies the essence of the Lordship of Jesus by denigrating the Lord's ultimate authority and demoting Him, just as 1 John 2:22 teaches antichrists do.

On 26.9, we disagree with the Confession's assertion that Christ established the appointment of Elders to come by congregational vote. Contrary to this assertion, we see the Apostle Paul explicitly instructing both Timothy and Titus, under the superintending guidance of the Holy Spirit, to appoint Elders themselves rather than entrusting this obligation to the respective congregations (2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:5; c.f. Acts 14:23 where "they" refers to Paul and his ministry team, not the local congregation). The Biblical pattern is for Elders to appoint other Elders.

¹ See Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Edition), Paragraph 882

WORSHIP GATHERING

The goal of the Worship Gathering is to shepherd the congregation to praise, revere, enjoy, obey, and depend on God. When God's people gather in the name of Jesus, His presence dwells amongst them. Through the proclamation of his gospel, God saves, edifies, sanctifies, and mobilizes His people for mission.

LS Worship Gatherings are Liturgical

The Sunday *liturgy* ("order of service") is planned with prayerful care. The entire gathering is a demonstration of the gospel to the glory of God. Every gathering walks through elements that proclaim the storyline of the Bible, including Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation. The idea is that each congregant would hear the gospel preached and experience it throughout the service through various elements of worship.

Critical Elements of a Worship Gathering.

Every LS church is responsible for creating its own weekly liturgy and is free to order the gathering however it wants as long as it follows the flow of the gospel narrative.

Welcome (1-2 min.) - A brief moment to make members, guests, and unbelievers feel acknowledged and gladly received.

Call to Worship (1-2min.) - A time to turn the congregation's attention from themselves and their scattered lives to the greatness and beauty of God.

Songs (15-30 min. of gathering) - Prayers and declarations of truth in song, hymn, and anthem form (see more in LS Music section)

Prayers (1-3 minutes spread throughout the gathering) - Prayers include categories of thanks, lament, confession, adoration, intercession, and supplication.

Greeting (1-3 min.) - A time for congregants to acknowledge that they are in the presence of God and one another. Greeting is a time to "pass the peace" of Christ's reconciliation to one another with warm hellos, hugs, or handshakes.

Confession or Lament (1-3 min.) - Confession is a time to acknowledge that God is holy and we are not. God is also merciful and promises to forgive those who confess their sins to Him in genuine repentance and faith. Confession includes individual sins, corporate sins, and an acknowledgment that sin is a corrupting power as well as proud and rebellious actions. Lament is a time to acknowledge pain, loss, anger, and frustration from life in a corrupt and broken world. Lament may replace confession occasionally to remind the congregation that expressing grief to God can also be a healthy form of worship.

Assurance of Pardon (1-3 min.) - A time for the leader on stage to assure the congregation of the gospel and God's accomplished forgiveness through the blood of Jesus to those who turn to Him in faith.

Offering (1-2 min. explanation, 1-3 minutes to pass baskets) - A time of financial worship to God in which believers are encouraged and exhorted to honor God with the firstfruits of their income through tithes and offerings. Unbelievers are to be comforted with the explanation that they are not obligated to give. Giving is a time for those who call Jesus "Lord" to give to His kingdom and mission. Living Stones collects an offering in the following ways: passing baskets, LSGive.com, the LS app, through the mail, text to give, and, if available, giving boxes.

Reading of the Biblical Text (1-3 min.) - A time just before the sermon for reading the Biblical text of the sermon. The reader invites the congregation to stand and give reverence to God for his living, active, inerrant, and authoritative Word.

Prayer of Illumination (1-2 min.) - A prayer offered to God by the reader of the Biblical text that asks God to fill the preacher with the Holy Spirit for the clear and bold exposition of the text and proclamation of the gospel. It is also a prayer for the congregation to be filled with the Holy Spirit for enlightenment, reception, and transformation.


Sermon (30-40 min.) - A pastor explains, illustrates, and applies the text to the congregation's lives in a way that exalts Jesus as the hero and leads the congregation into worship.

Communion (1-2 min. explanation, 3-7 min. to partake) - One of the sacraments instituted by Jesus as a time to remember and meet with God. It is a physical reminder of His life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return. It is also a reminder of His actual spiritual presence among His people. Every Living Stones has leaders that pass out communion to the congregation with the phrases "His body broken for you" and "His blood poured out for you."

Baptisms (4-? min.) - As one of the sacraments instituted by Jesus, baptisms are for new believers to proclaim their new life in Jesus. It is a celebration that they have a new Lord and a new family, the church. Most baptisms occur during Sunday Gatherings, but it is appropriate for baptisms to be held at special services or events as long as a pastor and church members are present.

Benediction (1 min.) - To conclude the service, a leader from the stage excuses the congregation with a prayer of blessing for peace and favor from God based on the work of Christ.

Announcements (1-3 min.) - A time to inform and lead the congregation with important information and calls to action for their discipleship. There should never be



more than four announcements on a Sunday. Most LS churches average three announcements, giving vision for one (1 min.) and information for the others (30 sec.).

Videos/testimonies/spoken word/special songs/ various art forms (3-5 min.) - May be used to cultivate worship, inspiration, celebration, information, and calls to action.

Rotating Value Drip - Each week, one of the five LS Core Values is to be highlighted and discussed in the gathering to help members and newcomers understand our church's heartbeat. Any element of the gathering may highlight the particular value.

LS Worship Gatherings follow an annual liturgical calendar (see below).

Each element is to include Scripture or Scripturally-inspired truth.

Liturgies may include Creeds, prayers, and readings from faithful Christians as long as they are doctrinally sound.

The total length of a Living Stones gathering is between 75-95 minutes.

A well-crafted liturgy is part science and part art. It is a science, meaning that the above elements are needed for a gathering to portray the entire gospel narrative. It is an art meaning that skill and creativity are required to make the liturgical experience timely, clear, and powerful instead of wooden, lifeless, and dull.

An example of a Living Stones Worship Gathering Liturgy

Creation (God is holy and beautiful)

Welcome - 1 min.

Call To Worship - 1 min.

Song 1 - 5 min.

Song 2 - 5 min.

Fall (We are sinners and live in a broken world)

Confession or Lament - 2 min.

Redemption (Jesus has come to rescue and redeem)

Assurance of Pardon or Mercy - 1 min.

Song 3 - 5 min.

Prayer of Thanksgiving - 1 min.

Greeting - 2 min.

Offering - 1 min. explain

Prayer over offering - 1 min. (while baskets passed)

announcements - 3 min. (while baskets passed) - emphasize *In the City, for the City*

Reading of the Text - 2 min.

Prayer of illumination - 1 min.

Sermon - 35-40 min.

Restoration/Consummation (Christ will come again to renew and restore)

Communion - 5 min.

Creed or proclamation of faith - 2 min.

Song 4 - 5 min.

Song 5 - 5 min.

Congregational reminders - 1 min.

Benediction - 1 min.

Total Time of the above gathering = 85-90 minutes (depending on sermon length).

Annual Liturgical Calendar

The annual liturgical church calendar is a way for Living Stones to immerse the congregation in the life of Christ throughout each year.



A more detailed explanation of the calendar follows. Each season's color is included.

Season	Time/Duration	Theological Significance	Practice(s)
ADVENT Christmas	Begins 4 Sundays before Christmas and lasts until Christmas.	Advent is the beginning of the liturgical church calendar. The word "Advent" means the arrival of a very important person. This season anticipates the arrival of Jesus both at His first coming and his second.	Lighting of the Advent wreath each week. Each candle represents a different theme of anticipation: Hope, faith, joy, peace, and Christ. At Christmas celebrations, the Christ candle is lit, all congregants light small candles, and sing O Holy Night.
EPIPHANY	January 6th (or nearest Sunday)	Epiphany celebrates the visit of the Magi to the child Jesus and thus Christ's manifestation to and inclusion of the gentiles.	Acknowledged on nearest Sunday.
ASH WEDNESDAY	46 days before Easter	Ash Wednesday kicks off the Lenten season and is a time to reflect on our mortality as a result of sin. Salvation is only possible through repenting of sin and turning to Jesus who died in our place.	Encouraged to fast as a sign of mourning sin and death. Gatherings are conducted in which members are called to repent of their sin and turn to God. Ashes placed on foreheads.
LENT	46 days leading up to Easter (40 days not counting Sundays)	40 day period to reflect on the trials and sufferings that exist because of sin. 40 in the Bible represents suffering and trial. Before Jesus started his public ministry he went into the wilderness and fasted for 40 days and was tempted by the devil.	Encouraged to fast as a sign of mourning sin and death. Gatherings are conducted in which members are called to repent of their sin and turn to God. Ashes placed on foreheads.

Season	Time/Duration	Theological Significance	Practice(s)
HOLY WEEK Palm Sunday Good Friday Resurrection Sunday	PS - Sunday before Easter	Palm Sunday acknowledges Jesus fulfillment of messianic prophecy to ride into Jerusalem on the cold of donkey. When people recognized this they cut branches and shouted "Hosanna!"	On Palm Sunday, Living Stones passes out palm fronds to congregants to waive in worship.
	GF - Friday before Easter	Good Friday acknowledges the substitutionary atoning death of Jesus on the cross for his people's sin.	On Good Friday we fast and gather for a service of contemplative worship and preaching on Christ's death.
	RS - Easter Sunday	Resurrection Sunday acknowledges Jesus' resurrection as the firstfruits of new creation for all who would believe.	On Resurrection Sunday we gather with joy to celebrate the new life made available in Christ.
ASCENSION DAY	40 days after Easter	Jesus appeared to various disciples for 40 days after his resurrection. On the 40th day he gave the great commission and ascended up to heaven. On ascension day we recognize that Jesus has brought humanity back into the presence of God's throne for the first time since the Fall.	Acknowledge on the nearest Sunday. Some churches might choose to do a feast on this day in accordance with many historical church traditions.

Season	Time/Duration	Theological Significance	Practice(s)
PENTECOST	7th Sunday after Easter	<p>In The Old Testament Pentecost celebrated the early harvest as well as the giving of the Law by Moses. In the New Testament Pentecost is the day when God gives His Holy Spirit to indwell his people. On the day Moses gave the law 3,000 people died but on the day God gave the Spirit 3,000 were saved. This was the early harvest of the New Covenant era.</p>	Acknowledgement in Sunday Gathering
TRINITY SUNDAY	The week after Pentecost	<p>A day to recognize that God is a Trinity. He is one God yet eternally exists in three persons, The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person of the Trinity is fully God. As a community within Himself, God has always existed in loving communion. He did not need to create anyone or anything in order to be loving.</p>	Acknowledgement in Sunday Gathering
ORDINARY TIME	The time from Trinity Sunday to Christ the King Sunday.	<p>This season has no high holidays. It is a time to recognize that most of life is ordinary, yet God is still involved in every aspect of our ordinary life. Even Jesus lived 30 years in obscurity in a small town before he started his public ministry.</p>	Acknowledgement in Sunday Gatherings

Season	Time/Duration	Theological Significance	Practice(s)
REFORMATION DAY	The last Sunday in October	Reformation Sunday remembers the day in 1517 when Martin Luther posted the 95 theses and called the Catholic church to repentance and back to faith in Jesus. It is a day to remember that salvation comes by Grace Alone, through Faith Alone, in Christ Alone, according to the authority of Scripture Alone, for the glory of God Alone.	Each church takes a portion of their service to describe the 5 solas of the Reformation and their continuing relevance.
CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY	The Sunday just before Advent	This day reminds us that Jesus is the risen, ruling and reigning King. He is king over the ordinary. He is king over the miraculous. And he is King over all of History.	Acknowledgement in Sunday Gathering

Quality Assurance for Worship Gatherings

Decode "insider language" - To make outsiders insiders, we work hard to use accessible language for the de-churched and unchurched. We avoid "Christianese" and acronyms that only members would understand. We work hard to explain Biblical and theological terms that might be confusing to unbelievers.

Building cleanliness, orderliness, and organization/flow - Environments are powerful; they can make someone feel welcomed and at ease or stressed and uncomfortable. The church is the household of God, and when we gather, we welcome people to God's house. We need to make LS gatherings places where broken sinners can feel comfortable. LS gathering spaces must be clean, orderly, beautiful, pleasant, and welcoming.

Signage - must be professional, appealing, and abundantly clear, making it easy for newcomers to navigate their way through the gathering.


Branding (the look and feel) - The aesthetics of LS Gathering spaces should be professional with an appreciation for various forms of art. All Living Stones must use the same visual branding and campaign graphics provided by the LS Family staff. Yet each location should feel like a local representation of its city.

Appropriate background music - Before and after the gathering, welcoming background music sets the proper tone for the season. It must be loud enough to influence the room's vibe but not too loud so people cannot hear each other talk.

Welcoming culture - Living Stones makes outsiders insiders. No guest should ever come into an LS gathering and not be received warmly. This hospitality goes beyond door greeters. Every member and leader within the gathering must make it their goal to greet new people and engage them in friendly conversation, especially those who look isolated and alone.

Safety Team - Every Living Stones has a Safety Team of multiple members to protect LS kids at a bare minimum. Safety Team is also helpful for the gathering to protect congregants and diffuse distractions from unruly people.

Staff expectations at Worship Gatherings - LS staff members are expected to be "all hands on deck" from set up to tear down of the gathering. They are to regard themselves as owners of the gathering, not simply employees. Owners go above and beyond to welcome and connect people, solve problems, and accomplish whatever tasks need to be done.



Slides and media - Must be consistent with LS branding and visual excellence expectations. Poor quality video, graphics, and art are not to be displayed.

Start on time - To establish trust with the congregation, LS gatherings to start on time and end on time (75-95 min.).

Announcements - Inspiring announcements call people to action for the glory of God. They are to be "you-focussed" rather than "us-focussed," meaning they focus on what God has for the listener rather than how the listener can join what we are doing as a church.

Here is an example of an "us-focussed" announcement:

"Because we as a church are in the city for the city, we are serving the elementary school down the street. Come join us."

Here is the same announcement delivered in a "you-focussed" way:

"As a church, we are in the city for the city. Next week we are serving the elementary school down the street. I want you to consider signing up to help because God has gifted you in some way to serve and love these neighbors. They have a need, and you have gifts and resources that can help."

Musical Worship

GOAL / VISION OF MUSIC AT LIVING STONES CHURCHES

At Living Stones, we sing and make music to God because He is worthy of our praise, adoration, and dependent trust. We also participate in musical worship because music has a unique quality that stirs emotions and helps Biblical truth stick in our minds. For this reason, God's people are singing people. There are over four-hundred references about singing in Bible. More than fifty of them are direct commands for God's people to sing. In addition, musical instruments and physical expressions of praise such as dancing, clapping, and lifting hands accompany most songs, making musical worship a whole-body experience. God is worthy of our whole being, and our whole being rejoices because we know God.

Worship songs function as prayers and reminders of theological truth.

Biblical themes for these songs include:

- celebration
- adoration
- confession
- lament
- thanksgiving
- anthem
- crying out for help

Since God is omnipresent, and His special presence dwells with His gathered people, we sing to Him confident that He hears our prayers. There is no need to invite Him to the gathering; He is already there! Instead, our prayer is that His presence would be tangible to His people as they sing songs about who He is and who they are now because of Christ.

LS WORSHIP SONGS ARE:

God-centered - To and about God. Not narcissistic.

Theologically rich - As opposed to vague and shallow. This does not mean the song needs to be excessively wordy.

Doctrinally sound and clear - The song must be explicitly Christian and align with Biblical truths (if a Muslim, Jew, Mormon, or New-Age Spiritualist can agree with all of the content, it is not explicitly Christian).

Missionally-focused - The style and language of the music must be engaging to unbelievers in our present age.

Congregationally singable - The purpose of congregational worship is for the church members to sing. Some songs are beautiful but not suited for congregational worship because the song's range, style, or tempo does not encourage group singability.

GOSPEL-CENTERED AND THEOLOGICAL BALANCE

The good news of God's redemption contains many truths worthy of worship: "God has revealed Himself." "We are sinners." "Jesus has died to save." "Jesus resurrected." "We are the transformed people of God." "Jesus will return to judge and renew this broken world." "God is worthy of our praise."

Each statement is true, but since the worship gathering intends to demonstrate the whole gospel, worship sets for a Sunday must not focus only on one of these theological categories. There must be a theological balance.

Each Sunday, we sing songs of:

Revelation: God has revealed Himself to us through His Word.

Redemption: In Jesus, we have redemption.

Response: We respond with faith, repentance, gratitude, celebration, endurance, and reverential awe.

Return: We focus on what is in store for all the saints: to be with Christ and enjoy Him forever.

STYLE, TEMPO, AND EMOTIONAL BALANCE

Each aspect of the gospel produces different emotions. The incarnation of God in Jesus stirs reverence and awe. Good Friday evokes contemplation and repentance. Resurrection Sunday kindles hope and celebration. Pentecost awakens joy and excitement. The Return produces feelings of resolve and anticipation. Each LS worship set is to bear the mark of this emotional variety. It is not appropriate for the whole of the worship set to be slow, sad, and focussed only on the death of Jesus because He is now alive! It is also not appropriate for the whole set to be happy, clappy, and joyful because we are sinners, and our sin cost God the life of His Son. There must be variety. Choosing songs according to the following categories can help accomplish emotional and stylistic variety:

Hymn or Psalm (traditional songs): These songs can be fast or slow.

Confession / Lament: Speaks to the brokenness of the world and our lives. These songs are slow and contemplative.

Celebration / Gospel: The Gospel we sing is "Good News." Let's sing like it is. These songs are upbeat and joyful.

Anthem: Songs that reflect our citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven. These songs tend to build toward emotional triumph.

CATALOG DEVELOPMENT

- The local Music Director should update the music catalog every January and July.
- Each catalog should contain 25-35 songs, some new and some familiar for the upcoming season.
- The Music Director is also responsible for developing auxiliary catalogs of 6-12 songs for Advent and Holy Week.
- Each catalog must have emotional variety and theological balance, as discussed above.
- The Lead Pastor must approve the final catalog and new songs before the band plays them at a Living Stones Worship Gathering.
- The skill level of a church's band must dictate the types of songs selected. For example, if a band has amateur musicians, it does not make sense for instrumentally complex songs to be chosen.
- Music Directors should pick catalogs that fit their musical style, strengths, and passions well.
- Since we value unity and diversity, we select some songs in the catalog to engage minority populations.

BASE-LEVEL EXPECTATIONS TO LEAD OR BE ON STAGE

Stage leaders must be Christians walking in repentance and faith.

Suppose a band member is participating in unrepentant or grievous sin. In that case, the music director must remove them from their stage leadership for a time until the pastors can restore them in health and repentance.

Stage leaders must faithfully give Tithes and Offerings (Malachi 3:10, Matthew 12:41-44).

As leaders, we lead by example in all areas of worship on and off the stage.

Stage leaders must be members of the church or in active pursuit of membership in the church. They lead by living in faithful rhythms of WG attendance, community, serving (includes music), and giving.

Fill-ins

Occasionally, it is appropriate for musicians from other churches to fill in. They must meet the above criteria at their local church.

It is better to have a gap in musical leadership than to have unqualified leadership that is not seeking to honor Christ in everything.

OTHER NOTES FOR MUSICIANS AND VOCALISTS

You are not singing or playing to an audience. You are singing to God and leading a congregation to behold Him. Have reverence and joy before Him. Leading worship is not a game, and it is not a performance.

When selecting songs, it is wise for music directors to err on the side of vocally driven music rather than instrumentally driven music. Keep it simple if you do not have the instrumentalists to play complex music. It is better to be simple and excellent than complex and average.

Sing in the range and tempo that makes it easy for the congregation to participate. Congregational worship is not a time for you to show off.

Quality matters. Come prepared. Memorize your songs. A leaders' lack of preparedness causes a distraction for the congregation.

Be you and be your style. God made you and gifted you to be *you*. Do not try to be something you are not. Stay within your range when seeking musical diversity; otherwise, it will not feel like genuine worship.

You cannot take people where you have not been. So if your job is to help people behold God, you must spend lots of time before you get on stage beholding Him first. If not, you will be like a crummy tour guide in a city that is unfamiliar.

SERMONS

Sermon Series

At Living Stones, we preach through books of the Bible as our primary method for sermon series. The books we preach through are determined seasonally by the LS Family Elders. Occasionally, we preach short topical series for theological discipleship, cultivating vision, addressing acute needs, or following the church calendar year. All Living Stones churches preach the same text weekly (unless otherwise approved by the LS Family Elders).

Type of Sermons

LS sermons are exegetical and gospel-centered. "Exegetical" means that the preacher allows the text to be in the driver's seat in both content and mood as he expounds the text's main point. "Gospel-centered" means that the preacher's goal is to help the congregation behold God and the gospel from the text, leading them to worship Him.

Expectations of Preachers

Preachers must enter the pulpit completely prepared, having spent anywhere from 8-20 hours of uninterrupted study and prayer on the text. Sermons should be clear, engaging, understandable, and worshipful. A solid sermon includes explanation, illustration, application, and exaltation.

Length of Sermons



Sermons ought to be between 25 and 45 minutes, according to the gifting of the preacher.

The Preacher

Preaching is the authoritative feeding and governing of the flock of God, making it the job of only qualified, male Elders (1 Timothy 2:12, 3:2). Therefore, only Elders or EITs (Elder-in-training) may preach at Living Stones Churches. However, under dire circumstances, a male deacon on the path to Eldership may preach in the Sunday gathering if approved by the LS Family Elders.

SUNDAY VOLUNTEERS

God gives His people gifts to serve as members of the Body of Christ in the mission of making disciples. Living Stones has six categories for serving. Each category contains several individual ministries. Each church will vary in ministries according to the size and needs of the congregation. The following is an example of what an LS church might have for serving opportunities:

SERVING OPPORTUNITIES		
BEHIND-THE-SCENES	PEOPLE INTERACTIVE	
Set-up/tear down Communion Coffee Reset/cleaning Prayer team Offering/count Art/decor team	Door Greeters Connections Ushers Safety Team* Benevolence Soul Care team	
TECH	MUSIC & LITURGY	
Slides Lights Sound Video/media Sermon uploading	Lead Vocals Instrumentals Back up vocals Presiding Liturgy writing	
LS KIDS*	LS STUDENTS*	
Check-in Service lead Babies Teachers Helpers	Table leaders Helpers	
* Requires background check		
	LIVING STONES CHURCH Disciples Making Disciples	

Churches may organize their ministries in whatever fashion they choose as long as the essential categories stated here are covered.

Communication Processes

Tech and Music ministries use Planning Center for resourcing, scheduling, communication, etc.

All other ministries will use Church Community Builder as their volunteers' primary communication and scheduling platform.

Serving Card available for download:
bit.ly/LSserve

LS KIDS

Partnering with families to make little disciples of Jesus.

LS KIDS WINS

- Building trusting relationships with both the families and the kids
- Provide fun, inviting, Scripturally-rich, and Christ-centered worship gathering for kids
- Kids know, receive, and proclaim the gospel at an age-appropriate level
- Creating and maintaining a safe environment (physically, emotionally, sexually, and spiritually)
- Fully staffed and equipped volunteers.
- Allowing time on Sundays for parents/guardians to have unhindered worship.
- Provide discipleship resources for families
- Promoting and integrating kids to the next step of discipleship (i.e. going to LS Students, attending the main worship gathering)

CURRICULUM

Every Living Stones Church uses the same curriculum purchased annually by the LSF Corporate Budget. The curriculum will always be Biblical, Christ-Centered, and engaging for the children. The curriculum is decided collectively by the staff LS Kids directors from all of the churches.

PROCESSES

LS Kids uses Church Community Builder as the chief communication tool in the following categories:

- Communication to families and volunteers
- Kids check-in
- Scheduling volunteers
- Tracking (attendance, baptisms, first time guests, promotions, age ranges, postal codes)

SAFETY

Safety is a priority for LS Kids

LS Kids Hallway Security

- At least one Safety Team volunteer stationed at the entrance to LS Kids
- No clearance, no access - clearance badges kept in a secure location
- If Safety Team does not recognize someone and they don't have a tag, they're not allowed into the hallway (including Elders) without verification
- Back and side doors should be locked and secured

Those allowed in Hallway:

- Parents (with either a child or parent tag)
- Background-checked volunteers
- Elders
- Everyone to be background checked every 3 years

Background Checks

- All LS Kids volunteers are background checked every three years.

Bathroom Policy

- There must be two background-checked adults with eyes on each other while escorting a kid to the bathroom
- Extends to changing diapers and kids who are potty-training who need assistance

Classroom Ratios

Each church can lower these ratios if they would prefer, but these are the decided-on maximums for each age group

- Babies: 1:4
- Toddlers: 1:6
- Preschool: 1:8
- Elementary: 1:15

Classrooms that meet the adult-to-kid ratios close and do not accept any more children. At that point, the kids will go with their parents to the Worship Gathering. If the LS Kids leaders are overwhelmed, the Elders and Safety Team can help communicate the reason for closing classrooms to concerned parents.

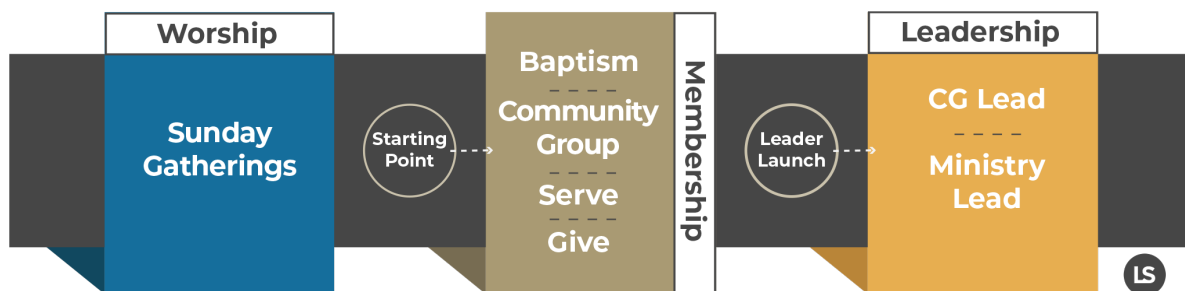
STARTING POINT

Starting Point is the next step after Worship Gatherings for anyone who wants to get more involved at Living Stones. It takes place after the gathering on the same day of every month. The location, day, time, and format of the meeting may vary according to each local church. The goal of Starting Point is to build relationships with newcomers and get them connected to the body of Christ. Community Group is the primary target for newcomers to get involved. It is also an excellent time to get people signed up for baptism and ministry serving opportunities.

At the bare minimum, the class should be 20 minutes long and should include:

- Time to get to know the newcomers
- Introduction of leadership sharing a bit of who you are as a person
- An inspiring explanation of the LS vision and goal
- A quick description of the LS values
- A clear onramp to the next step of Community Group. We want them to walk out with a plan of which group they will try.
- A way to gather all of the attenders contact information
- A quick explanation for other ways they can be involved (baptism, serving opportunities, membership class)

As a reminder, here are the LS pathways to involvement:



Starting Point should not be a long and demanding class. Instead, it should be a quick, low-commitment, relational meeting that inspires and makes it extremely easy for people to connect to the church. It is helpful to announce it every week as the **one easy way to get involved**.

BAPTISM

Below is the document given to baptism candidates in the LS Baptism Class. This document explains our view of baptism, who should be baptized, and how someone is baptized at Living Stones.

What is Baptism?

Sacrament (Romans 6:4-11)

Baptism is one of two sacraments (communion being the other) practiced by the church as an act of obedience to the command of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20. The sacraments are visible signs and seals that we are bound together as a community of faith by the death and resurrection of Jesus. By our use of them the Holy Spirit more fully declares and seals the promises of the gospel to us.

Baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus, declaration of faith, and identification with Jesus as one's Lord and Savior. Baptism is also a means by which God conveys grace to us, centering on what He does and has done.

You are here because you believe:

You believe in the virgin birth of the Son of God (Luke 1:27,31,35, Isaiah 7:14, Galatians 4:4).

Sin is the great destroyer and is passed from parent to child so that all perish. But Jesus Christ, the eternal son of God, was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the virgin Mary; hence, He was not contaminated by sin (Hebrews 2:17, 4:15). He had a sinless birth, lived a sinless life and died a sinless substitute (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15). One who denies the virgin birth of Christ cannot believe in the sinless Son of God is an indispensable foundation to Christianity.

You believe that Jesus died in your place for your sins (Matthew 20:28, I Peter 3:18, John 6:51, Romans 5:6-8, 8:32, I Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 2:9).

Jesus identified with us and we with Him in death. He became sin for us and in return we were made righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 3:24-25). As a substitute, Jesus died for the sinner and suffered the just penalty for our sin. Without the blood of Christ a sinner could not be forgiven, redeemed, or declared righteous in God's sight.

You believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Romans 4:25, Acts 2:23-24, Matthew 28:5-7, 2 Corinthians 15:4,14).

If Jesus had remained in the grave, then the benefits of His death as well as His promises were unfulfilled. But Jesus physically resurrected on the third day, as He predicted and demonstrated His victory over sin and death. The physical resurrection is an absolute necessity to complete the plan of salvation (1 Corinthians 15:17). Therefore, it is foundational to the Christian faith.

You believe that Jesus Christ will physically return to earth to fulfill all that He promised (Acts 1:11, John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians. 4:13-17).

The plan that God began must be completed. Christ is coming for His people. He will judge the sinner and reward the saint. His promises to His people will be fulfilled and those who are saved will live with Him forever in the new creation, free from all sin, evil, and suffering.

New Lord, New Life, New Family

All who trust in Jesus alone for salvation freely receive a *new Lord*, a *new life*, and a *new family*.

New Lord

Baptism tells the world that you now have a new Lord, Jesus Christ. A lord is a supreme master, someone who has ultimate authority in a person's life. Through baptism you are declaring that the things you once viewed as most valuable in your life are no longer of ultimate value. You are demonstrating that Jesus, because of who He is and what He has done, is most valuable in your life and you desire to live for Him by obeying and enjoying Him.

New Life

When you have a new Lord, a new life follows. Baptism is a declaration that you not only have a new Lord but you will also live a new life. When you live life obeying and enjoying Jesus, many aspects of your life change, including how you view and *approach* your identity, relationships, and rhythms. Everything changes because you no longer live for your wants or desires but for the glory of Jesus.

New Family

Baptism is also a proclamation that you have a new family. Christ's blood unites all Christians as family members. Although you once were an enemy of God, you are now an adopted child of God and have received a new family (Romans 8:14-16). The Apostle Paul states that Christians are "baptized" the Body of Christ, which is the family of God (1 Corinthians 12:13). This is why our church applauds, shouts for, and publicly affirms those being baptized; this is our church's way of celebrating and welcoming home those who are being baptized.

Who should be baptized?

Since baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus, declaration of faith, and identification with Jesus as one's Lord and Savior, those who are baptized must trust in Jesus alone for salvation, affirming the belief statements articulated above. Those being baptized should be old enough to articulate the Christian faith that was "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Pastoral contact

For those desiring to be baptized, a pastor will call you the week prior to your baptism to hear your story. He will specifically be listening for your desire to be baptized as well as evidence of repentance (admitting sin to Jesus) and faith (trusting in all that Jesus has done for you). This is also a great opportunity for the pastor to answer any questions you might have about baptism or our church.

Common Questions About Baptism

What should I wear? Should I bring a change of clothes?

We ask that you wear dark clothing for your baptism. Most people wear dark shorts and a dark t-shirt. It's best to wear your baptism clothes to service so that you're not having to leave to change into them.

You should bring a towel for drying off as well as a change of clothes for post-baptism. You'll be able to change in the church's restrooms after your baptism.

When in the service does baptism take place?

Baptism takes place at the last quarter of our gathering, after the sermon and immediately after communion.

What questions will I be answering during my baptism?

During the baptism ceremony you will answer “Yes” to the following questions:

- Do you believe in God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth, whom you have sinned against?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord, who through His life, death and resurrection has reconciled us to God?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who empowers and renews us, and do you commit to serving and belonging to God’s church?

After you answer these questions, your pastor will turn to your new church family and ask the following question:

- Church, do you now receive [] into the church family?

After answering these questions, your pastor will say out loud, “Based on your public proclamation of faith, I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

How will I be baptized?

Your pastor will have you hold your nose with one of your hands as he supports you by placing his hand on your back with one hand while also holding your arm with his other hand. For support, you will then grab his forearm as he lowers you into the water, symbolizing the death of your old life with Jesus. Your pastor will then pull you out of the water, symbolizing your new life with the resurrected Jesus.

If I have already been baptized, can I be re-baptized?

If you have been previously baptized in the Christian church the question is, “Were you truly trusting in Jesus alone for salvation when you were baptized?” There will be ups and downs in the life of a Christian. Believers must not be re-baptized if they have fallen away from Jesus and then return to the church. In this case, he or she should celebrate God’s grace in this season through enjoying communion.

However, if you believe that your original baptism was prior to you truly trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior, you should pursue obedience in this area of your life by being baptized now.

Can I invite my friends to the service?

Absolutely! When you are baptized, you are invited to go and share your story with others and share how Jesus has changed your life. Your baptism is a great opportunity to do this.

I've been baptized. Now what?

Now that you have been baptized into the family of God, God designed you to live in relationship with His people. There is a danger in coming to a church without being connected to that church. God has uniquely gifted each of us for the building up of others and the church as a whole (see 1 Corinthians 12-14). Therefore, we strongly encourage you to not just attend Living Stones but be an active member of the church by actively participating in a Community Group and joining a Serving Team.

Community Groups meet weekly to pray, share life, study the Bible and care for one another. We do these things to help people thrive in their relationship with God and others.

Serving Teams are groups of people that help with the facilitation of the ministries of Living Stones. There are varying serving opportunities available in the following categories:

- Behind the Scenes
- People Interactive
- Tech
- Music/Liturgy
- LS Kids
- LS Students

If you would like to get connected to a Community Group or Serving Team, please let us know! If you're not sure you are ready to connect to Living Stones in this way, we would encourage you to attend Starting Point to hear more about our church and meet some of our staff, pastors and Community Group leaders. Starting Point is held the first Sunday of every month after each gathering.

Finally, the pastors are here to serve you and would love to meet with you to get to know you and answer any questions you may have.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Why do we have Community Groups?

When God made us in His image, He designed us for God-centered community. God is a Trinity and eternally exists in a loving community within Himself. After creating everything, God declared all of it "good". Yet there was one aspect of His creation that God called "not good": man was alone. So God gave the man a wife and told them to be fruitful and multiply. In other words, God understood that it was not good for us to be alone, so He gave us community and told us to make more communities.

In the New Testament, we see Jesus saving His people and calling them into loving relationships with one another. The church is called a Family, a Body with many members, and a temple built with many living stones. Because it is not good for us to be alone, God commands us to prioritize meeting together. He says, "Do not neglect to meet with one another as is the habit of some" (Hebrews 10:45). Other commands tell us to bear one another's burdens, build one another up, rebuke, exhort, encourage, and forgive each other. God expects His people to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. These commands require us to know and be known by others in a consistent, God-centered community.

What are Community Groups (CGs)?

CGs are groups of 5-20 people who meet weekly to help each other follow Jesus in everyday life. These groups meet in scattered places, homes, apartments, coffee shops, and bars at different times throughout the week.

Wins for Community Groups

To make outsiders to insiders - Many new and unchurched people attend LS Worship Gatherings each week. We expect Community Groups to invite them to participate in their group and learn how to follow Jesus with them.

Life Together - Community Groups are expected to care about each other's lives. They are to rejoice together when things are good and bear each other's burdens with weeping when things are bad. God expects them to forgive each other as He forgave them, working out conflict to reconcile as a healthy family.

Spiritual Formation - We are disciples making disciples. Community groups help one another grow into Christian maturity through the learning and practicing of various spiritual disciplines: Bible reading, prayer, silence and solitude, financial generosity, service (using our gifts to serve in the church and city), evangelism, confession, repentance, fasting, feasting, and sabbath.

Leaders developed, empowered, and sent to lead - If groups do well at inviting and making disciples, eventually, the group will need to multiply. Community Groups strive for healthy multiplication by developing and empowering new leaders.

Jesus' ministry is a model of these wins:

- He assembled disciples and lived with them for three years (life together).
- He formed His disciples spiritually through teaching, prayer, acts of service (spiritual formation).
- He constantly evangelized people outside of His ministry (outsiders becoming insiders).
- He resurrected He sent His disciples out to make more disciples worldwide (leaders developed and sent out).

Weekly Format of Community Groups

We want you to have the freedom to lead while also providing structure and support to be unified as a church body.

Connect (15-20 min.) - Invite people into the gathering space. Make purposeful connections with one another.

- Week's high's and low's
- Personal stories
- Ice breaker

Word (40-60 min.) - Engage the text. Discipleship Guide and LS Curriculums will assist with this.

- A Leader's role is to facilitate discussion, NOT teach.
- Engage in the Word, together exploring the depth and different facets of the text.
- It is necessary to say, "I don't know."
- Engage all people in your group during the discussion, not just those comfortable talking.
- Prepare for 20-30 minutes beforehand. Familiarize yourself with the text, look over Discipleship Guide questions, and pray.

Prayer (10-30 min.) Pray with and for one another. Every week, the Discipleship Guide will provide ideas of how to expand our prayer lives.

- Frontline Prayers. (Prayer for God to reveal glimpses of His glory. Prayer for more people to know Him and for those who know Him already, to know Him more.)
- Pray for people in the group, but don't get stuck there.

Leader Expectations

- Uphold the character qualifications of a Deacon (1 Tim 3)
- Attend leader meetings and coaching meetings as determined by the local church.
- Lead by example in your faith, pursuit of Jesus, confession, repentance, use of your gifts, and invitations to group.
- Communicate regularly with your group on a platform (texts, GroupMe, Facebook, etc.).
- Take attendance on Church Community Builder as a form of tracking and shepherding the people God has called you to lead.
- Give 10% of your income to the mission of making disciples through Living Stones.

Suggestions for beginning a Community Group

- Have a meal together.
- Start with WHY a Community Group is essential.
- Have core team members share how Community Group has been impactful for them.
- As weeks go on, have someone start the group by sharing their story for 10 minutes. These stories will help bond people in the group.
- Schedule Group meeting dates and activities weeks in advance.
- Establish how you will communicate with one another.
- Keep meeting even if it is small or several members cancel. Inconsistent group gatherings will lead to inconsistent group attendance.
- Empower others in the group to lead prayer or portions of the discussion, coordinate food and events, keep track of attendance, etc.



MEMBERSHIP

What does Jesus expect from His followers? He expects them to be healthy members of His body, the church. Christians in the New Testament are also called members of a family and sheep of a flock, for whom Elders will have to give an account. For this reason, all LS Churches practice Covenant Membership. Covenant Membership inspires Christians to use their gifts and presence for the communal effort of making disciples. It also helps leaders track and care for the people God has entrusted to them.

The LS Covenant Membership packet in its entirety follows.



**COVENANT
MEMBERSHIP**



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LS STORY, VISION, & VALUES

THE LIVING STONES STORY

Living Stones was started by Harvey Turner as a Bible study in Reno, NV, in 1998. Many of Harvey's friends had no interest in attending church, so he started the Bible study to bring the Word of God to them. The study became popular with college-aged students who were hungry for community and the gospel of Jesus. Over time, it grew to about forty people packed into multiple rooms in a two-story house. Seeing this movement, Grace Church in Northwest Reno opened its doors for Living Stones to start evening worship gatherings on Friday nights. These worship gatherings quickly grew to a few hundred people and experienced many baptisms.

In affirmation of God's blessing and work of renewal, Grace sent out Living Stones in 2009 to start as a separate church. In 2011, Living Stones multiplied to its second congregation. Since then, our family of churches has grown to eight congregations across Northern Nevada.

THE NAME "LIVING STONES"

The name "Living Stones" comes from 1 Peter 2:4-5, which says,

"As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

These verses are an illustration explaining the church as the *new temple* or *dwelling place* of God. Jesus is *the Living Stone*, or foundation stone, upon which the entire church is built. Every person who believes in Jesus becomes like him and becomes a living stone. When stacked together these living stones make up the "spiritual house" or temple, the place where God is present.

This passage also informs our philosophy in ministry. It describes the church doing three things:

"come to him" - this happens as we gather in **Sunday Worship Gatherings**

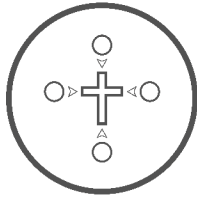
"be built up" - this happens as we live life together through **Community Groups**

"be a holy priesthood" - this happens as we live life on **Mission**. The priests were people who brought God to people and people to God. That is our mission.

WHY DO WE EXIST?

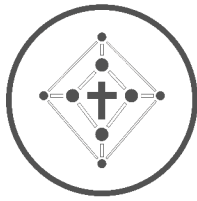
To see a fundamental shift in the spiritual climate of Northern Nevada.

Northern Nevada is one of the least church places in the United States resulting in very few people knowing and loving Jesus. In the history of the world there has never been an intentional church planting movement in our area. We hope to see that change in our lifetime and are praying for God to bring revival.



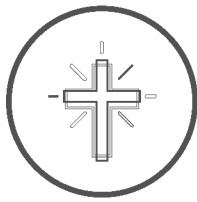
We strive to make outsiders insiders

Like Jesus, Living Stones does everything possible to make outsiders insiders in the Kingdom of God. We make it our aim to remove all obstacles that would block people from knowing Jesus. We also intentionally pursue outcasts and irreligious people who do not normally feel comfortable in church settings. No one should be blocked from the gospel and the opportunity to be reconciled to God.



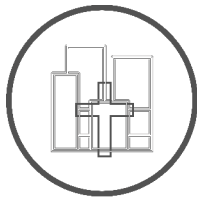
We are Disciples Making Disciples

Disciples are people who follow Jesus, find their identity in Him, and enjoy relationship with God. Part of following Jesus means we invest our whole life to help others grow spiritually as they learn to know, love, and follow Him too. According to Jesus, discipling is not only the job of pastors and deacons, it is the job of every believer. Every follower of Jesus at Living Stones is expected to use their gifts to make disciples.



Unity in Diversity

The church of God is to be a house of prayer and worship for all peoples and ethnicities. This is the heart of God and will be fully displayed around His throne in heaven. Our prayer is for the diversity of our cities (age, ethnicity, subculture, political affiliation, marital status, socio-economic status, etc.) to be represented and integrated in every level and function of our churches.



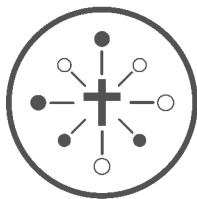
In the City, for the City

Living Stones wants to be a blessing to cities rather than a burden. Like God with his people, we want to be for our cities, not against them. There are three ways we exercise this value:

Physically - by being present to care for physical needs of the hurting and underprivileged in our city.

Culturally - by participating in and shaping what is good and beautiful in the culture of our city.

Spiritually - by praying for and guiding people toward the freedom and fulfillment that can only be found in Jesus through the proclamation of His gospel.



Churches Planting Churches

Church planting is the most effective way to see people come to the knowledge and love of Christ. Since the church is the temple of God, church planting is God's plan to bring His presence to the ends of the earth. We are constantly seeking to raise up new leaders and send out more church plants. We invest 10% of our money every year into church planting throughout the United States and the world in partnership with the Acts 29 church planting Network. (www.Acts29.com).

THE LS FAMILY OF CHURCHES

At Living Stones, we believe we can do more together as a family of churches in Northern Nevada than we would be able to do as independent churches. Currently there are eight LS Churches located in Reno, South Reno, North Valleys, Sparks, Carson City, Fernley, Elko, and Winnemucca.

Each LS church is united together in doctrine, vision, values, relationships, and Elder accountability. Each church has its own board of governing elders, who operate under the authority of the LS Family board of elders. There is a small LS corporate staff who seeks to serve and help the operations of the LS Family and each LS local church.

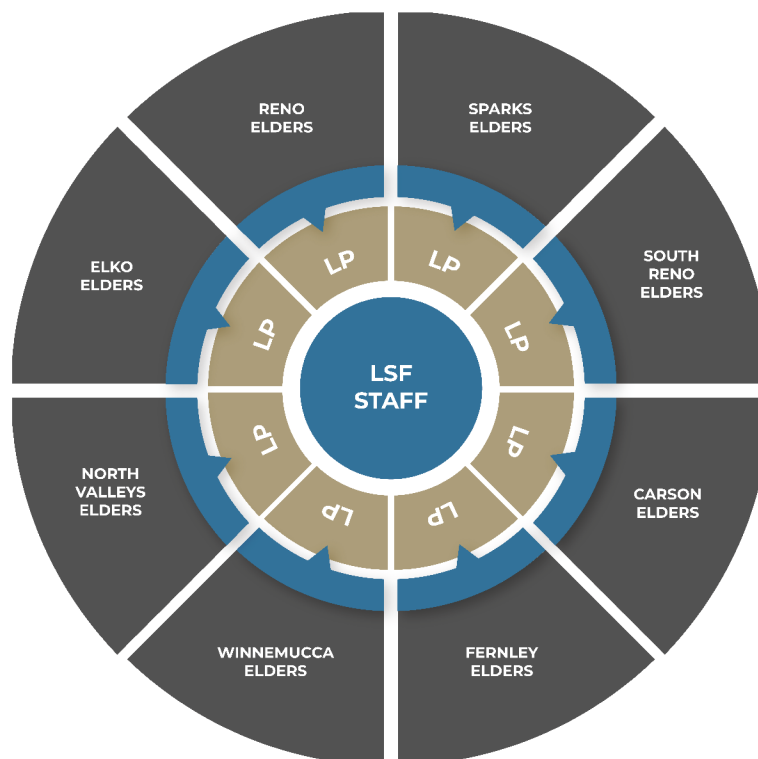
Here's how the LS Family of churches is structured:

The LS Family Elders govern the **LS Family** (Lead Pastors from each location).

The LSF Staff serves the **LS Family**.

The LS Family Elders are held accountable by the **LSF Full Council of Elders** (every Elder from each church).

Local church Elders lead each LS local church.



WHAT IS COVENANT MEMBERSHIP?

Group Activity

At your table discuss the following questions. Write a few observations below as your answers.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20. According to this passage,

WHAT IS A MEMBER?

According to your own knowledge, and your understanding of the Bible,

WHAT IS A COVENANT?

Read Acts 16:30-31.

WHAT IS REQUIRED TO BE A MEMBER OF CHRIST'S UNIVERSAL CHURCH?

COVENANT MEMBERSHIP

The word “membership” simply means you belong to something. 1 Corinthians 12 describes the church as Jesus’ body with him as the head of the body. When a person becomes a Christian, they belong to Jesus AND his body. This is to be expressed in membership at a local church. Just as the body cannot function properly with missing parts, the church suffers when Christians do not participate in membership. Further still, just as a body part cannot continue to live if it is no longer connected to the body, a Christian’s relationship with God will significantly deteriorate if he or she is not connected as a member of a local church.

The word “covenant” can be defined as a ***commitment between two parties, that is founded in love, and is not intended to be broken.*** Covenant members at a local church are committed to each other in love. The church, and its leadership, is committed to serve and care for the members, as the members are committed to serve and care for the church.

What does it take to belong to the Universal (global and everlasting) Body of Christ?

The answer to this is simple: **Faith Alone**. All that is needed to belong to the Body of Christ is *saving faith* in the *real Jesus*. When the Philippian Jailer in Acts 16 asked, “What must I do to be saved?” The answer was, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” Therefore, saving faith has two components:

1. To believe that you are a sinner in need of salvation, and that Jesus Christ alone has entered human history to grant you that salvation through his life, death, and resurrection.
2. To surrender to the Lordship of Jesus. It means to have Jesus as your new Lord, or King of your life.

These two components of saving faith are inseparable. Many want Jesus to be their Savior, but they do not want him to be their King. Others are fine with Jesus being their Lord and telling them how to live, but they do not want to admit their utter need for a Savior and that their good works account for nothing in salvation. Saving faith, on the other hand, happens when one says “I need Jesus to be my Savior, and I surrender to him as my Lord.” This faith will display itself in many acts of love and righteousness, but nothing else is needed to belong to the Body of Christ as a Christian, simply *Faith Alone*.

Membership Summary

With the above information, membership at a local church involves three things:

- 1. Belief in Christian doctrine (Saving Faith)**
- 2. Desire to be a member of the flock (community)**
- 3. Active participation in the Body**

These three elements will be unpacked in the following pages.

BELIEF IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Must Believe

All that is necessary to become a Christian is saving faith in the real Jesus.
(see John 3:36; Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:16-17, 10:9; Eph. 2:8-9)

Must not reject

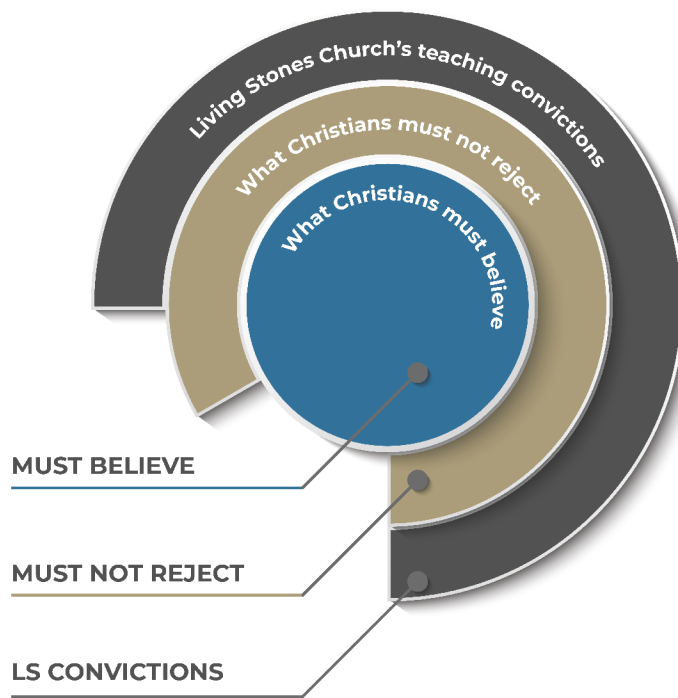
As someone grows in their understanding of the Bible they will learn more truths about God and the Christian faith that *must* be embraced. These truths include the doctrine of the Trinity, the authority of the Bible, the Great Commandment, and more. These doctrines are clearly taught in the Bible and must not be rejected. At times, people may wrestle with or even experience personal doubt about these doctrines, which is a normal experience of faith, but at the end of the day they must not be rejected by a person who wishes to adhere to orthodox Christianity.

LS teaches and thinks people should believe:

Furthermore, there are some doctrines within orthodox Christianity that churches have differing opinions on according to their convictions and interpretation of the Bible. These doctrines include the active work of the Holy Spirit in the present age, the order and nature of salvation, the role of men and women in leadership in the home and church, and more. Living Stones has strong convictions about these doctrines, as should all churches, and will teach these convictions in all ministry environments. Christians are welcome to be members at Living Stones even if they do not adhere to LS convictions, but they must be okay with Living Stones teaching these convictions, and be willing to not stir up division if they disagree.

BELIEF IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE DIAGRAM

See next page for a visual representation of these categories.



MUST BELIEVE

Jesus is God and our *only* Lord and Savior

(John 3:36, 14:6, 17:3; Acts 4:12, 10:43; Rom. 10:9; 1 Tim. 2:5)

MUST NOT REJECT

Apostles' Creed (p 15) • **Nicene Creed** (p 16) • **The Bible is inerrant & authoritative Word of God** (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:16-21) • **10 Commandments** (Ex. 20:1-17; Matt. 5:17-19)

Great Commandment (Matt. 22:36-40) • **Doctrine of Imago Dei** (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:18-23)

Gender - God made mankind male and female (Gen. 1:27, 2:22-24)

Sexuality - God beautifully designed and intends his people to participate in sex only within the union of marriage between one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24-25; Matt. 19:1-9; Rom. 1:26-28)

LIVING STONES TEACHING CONVICTIONS

The 1689 Baptist Confession is our teaching doctrinal statement exceptions: 22.8, 26.4, 26.9.

66 book Canon 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3 • **Gospel-centered** Luke 24:44-48

Believer's baptism Acts 2:38; Col. 2:11-12; Gal. 3:26-27 • **Continuationism** Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12,14

God's sovereignty in every aspect of salvation John 6:37; Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:3-6

Complementarian leadership in the church & the home Gen. 1-2; 1 Tim. 2:11-14; Ti. 2:2-6

Elder-ruled, Deacon-led, & Member-served 1 Tim. 3:2-13; Ti. 1:7-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-5

We are a family of churches whereby the local Elders of each church lead under the authority of the Living Stones Family Elders, made up of the Lead Pastors from each LS church.

MEMBER PARTICIPATION

HOW WILL YOU BE DISCIPLED AT LIVING STONES?

In Matthew 28:16-18, the resurrected Jesus said,

"All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to obey all my commands. And behold, I will be with you until the end of age."

This is what the church is called to do: **Be Disciples Making Disciples**

A disciple of Jesus is someone who

- Has a **gospel identity** that is found in Jesus and what he has done for them.
- Lives in **gospel relationships** with God, believers, and unbelievers.
- Lives in **gospel rhythms** of worship, community, and mission.



DISCIPLESHIP CHART

This means Living Stones will disciple its members to participate in the five following ways:

1. Christian Baptism
2. Weekly Worship Gathering participation and partaking in the Lord's Supper
3. Community Group involvement
4. Serving the church body and the city
5. Regular and joy-filled financial tithes and offerings

We understand that participation in some of these practices may take some time and may vary according to special circumstances of life, but members of Living Stones are expected to work towards active participation in these rhythms as taught by the Bible.

PATHWAYS TO INVOLVEMENT

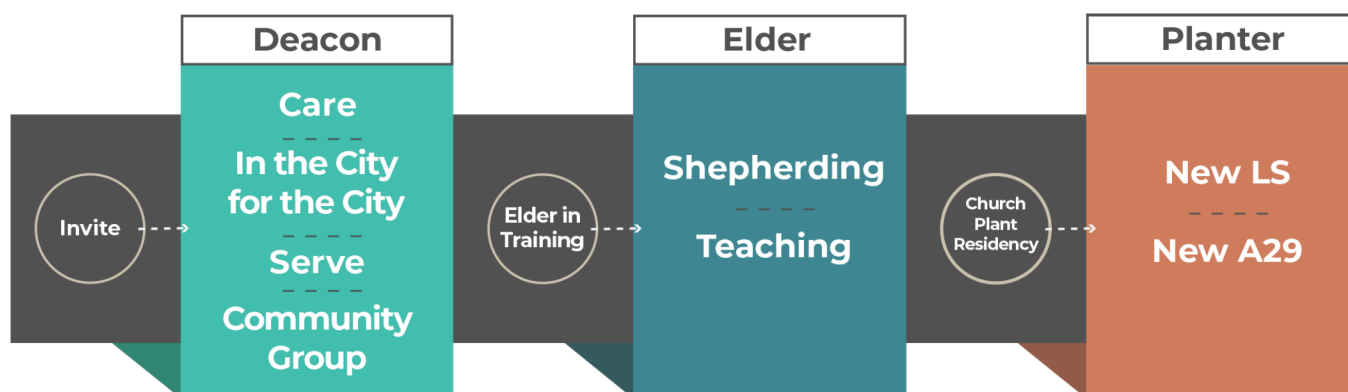
When someone walks through the door at Living Stones, we want to make it as straightforward as possible for them to get connected and fully integrated into membership as a disciple of Jesus. Therefore, each Living Stones church seeks to move people through three stages of involvement: Worship, Membership, and Leadership.

The easiest step for most people to take after attending Worship Gathering is Starting Point, a monthly class that connects newcomers. Before someone becomes a member, they must join a Community Group, get baptized (if they have not already), serve, and start giving. Healthy Covenant Members may then pursue Leadership. The primary places to lead are in Community Groups and volunteer ministries. Every church offers a stage-one leadership training program called Leader Launch to develop these leaders.



PATHWAYS TO DEACON, ELDERSHIP, & CHURCH PLANTER

Additionally, Living Stones has established pathways for those who sense that God is calling them to serve as Deacons, Elders, or Church Planters.



Elder in Training is a 1-2 year-long process to develop potential Elders.

Church Plant Residency is a process for the development of church planters.

LIVING STONES COVENANT

IT MEANS THE ELDERS COMMIT TO:

- Living by example and in obedience to all that the Bible commands
- Praying for you when you are sick or unwell
- Shepherding and caring for you
- Teaching you the Word of God and pointing to you to the gospel of Jesus
- Equipping you for the work of the ministry
- Providing Godly counsel, wisdom, and when necessary, discipline

IT MEANS YOU COMMIT TO:

- Following Jesus, striving to walk in obedience and repentance as described in the Bible
- Showing up and participating as an active member of the local church (living in the rhythms of worship, community, and mission)
- Using your gifts and resources to glorify God through the church
- Loving one another as described by the Bible
- Following and submitting to the Elders as long as the Elders are submitting to and following Jesus and the Bible

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell (the dead).

On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic (universal) Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,
 the Father, the Almighty
 maker of heaven and earth,
 of all that is, seen and unseen.
 We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
 the only Son of God,
 eternally begotten of the Father,
 God from God, Light from Light,
 true God from true God,
 begotten, not made,
 of one Being with the Father.
 Through him all things were made.
 For us men and for our salvation
 he came down from heaven:
 by the power of the Holy Spirit
 he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.
 For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
 he suffered death and was buried.
 On the third day he rose again
 in accordance with the Scriptures;
 he ascended into heaven
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
 He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
 and his kingdom will have no end.
 We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of Life,
 who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
 With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.
 He has spoken through the Prophets.
 We believe in one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
 We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
 We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,
 and the life of the world to come. Amen.

INERRANCY

As defined by the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's Divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

NEXT STEPS TO BECOME A MEMBER

Option 1:

- ☐ I am not interested in becoming a Living Stones member at this time

Option 2:

- ☐ I am interested in becoming a Living Stones member. Fill out or check all that apply:

- ☐ I believe that Jesus is my Lord and Savior.

- ☐ I do not reject orthodox Christian doctrine.

- ☐ I was baptized at a Bible-believing Christian church.

- ☐ I would like to get baptized.

- ☐ I am in a Community Group. List who's group and when

_____.

- ☐ I am serving in _____ ministry.

- ☐ I would like to start serving but need help determining where.

- ☐ I am tithing regularly. (If you have questions about this, feel free to talk to a pastor at your pastor follow-up meeting.)

- ☐ I participate in the worship gathering on average _____ times a month.

- ☐ I have questions that I would like to ask a pastor before becoming a member.

PASTORAL MEETING

This is a quick 30 minute meeting in which you can ask any questions and can receive any further help you need for membership.

Please list your contact information below:

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

BEST DAYS/TIMES TO MEET

Please list the best days and times to meet with a pastor regarding Covenant Membership:

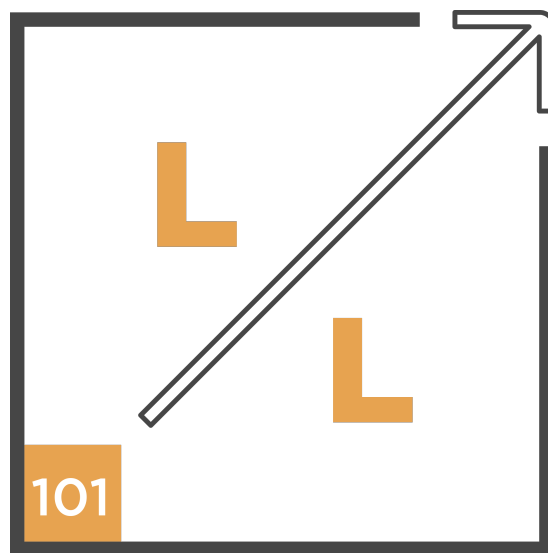


Scan the QR code with your
smartphone camera
to go to the LS website

LIVING STONES CHURCH

LEADER LAUNCH

Leader Launch is primarily a level 1 leadership development program intended to train and empower members to become leaders. Every Living Stones offers Leader Launch in some form. According to the local church, the program lasts between 8-12 months and varies in frequency. The LS Family Corporate Staff develops the curriculum annually. Each local church uses at least 2/3rds of the provided material.



DEACONS

God has commissioned two formal offices for His church; Elders (used interchangeably with pastor or overseer) and Deacons. Elders are called to lead the church through preaching the Word, governing oversight, protecting sound doctrine, and pastoral care. Deacons lead the church by caring for specific needs of the church, its members, and the city it seeks to love. Together these offices equip the church to accomplish the God-given commands to preach the gospel, love God, and love our neighbors.

Other resources exist to explain the office of deaconship biblically and historically. This brief document exists to define the role, qualifications, appointment, and function of Deacons at Living Stones.

Living Stones Definition of Deacon

Deacons are God-given male and female servant leaders of reputable character, who are full of the Spirit and of wisdom, and appointed by the Elders to serve crucial needs of the church so that the Elders can devote themselves to the ministry of the Word and to prayer (Romans 16:1, Acts 6:1-7, 1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Deacon Qualifications

In order to be a deacon at Living Stones, three qualifications must be met:

1. Before being appointed to the office, their life bears witness to the character qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13:

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. [Women] likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. (*women can also be translated "wives")*

2. They have been a Covenant Member in good standing for at least one year.
3. They affirm orthodox Christian theology as well as the distinctive beliefs of Living Stones.

Appointment of Deacons

Each local Living Stones Elder Board will appoint deacons annually according to the needs of the church. No formal training is required for the appointment of deacons except that each one has a good understanding of the gospel, and of the office they are being appointed to. After deacons are selected, they will be presented before the congregation for a formal commissioning by the laying on of hands and prayer. The term for each deacon is one year. Deacons may serve multiple terms in a row according to the determination of the Elder Board.

Deacons will gather together no less than 3 times a year with the Elder(s) for alignment, prayer, encouragement, and direction.

Deacons can be removed at any time by the Elders for violation of character or after a crucial task is completed.

Tasks and Responsibilities of Deacons

Every member of the local church is called to serve in some capacity. The difference is that deacons are members who aid the Elders in ministries and directly report to the Elders. This means that not every leader at Living Stones is a Deacon. Rather, Deacons are appointed to lead and carry out specific and crucial tasks according to the needs of the church as it pertains to the ministry of the Elders and the church's mission in the city. The number of Deacons at each local Living Stones will vary according to what tasks and responsibilities need to be accomplished. Some examples of these responsibilities at Living Stones include:

- Working on staff in an associate, director or executive role (any support level staff do not need to be deacons)
- Managing Benevolence
- Leading a group of Sunday ministries or a single large ministry (ie. prayer, LS Kids)
- Women's ministry leader
- Soul Care Leader
- Community Group Coach
- Mission to the city ministry on behalf of Living Stones (ie. Foster/Adoption, Gospel Mission, Scarlet Hope, etc.)
- Band/Music Leader
- Advisory council to the Elders

Deacon Covenant

I, _____, commit to fulfilling the office of deacon at Living Stones
_____(specific location) for one year starting in the month of
_____(month), _____(year).

I agree to fulfill the requirements of my office to the best of my ability, empowered by the Holy Spirit. If I disqualify myself in character, am unable to fulfill my duties as a deacon, or am no longer able to hold to my membership covenant, I will make it known to the Elders, and if necessary, will step down from the position in the healthiest way possible for the sake of Christ's church.

Signature _____ Date _____

Those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. - 1 Timothy 3:13

STAFF

Structure

A Lead Pastor leads every Living Stones staff. As the church grows, the Lead pastor will hire other staff members to complement his giftings and accomplish the mission. The categories of staff leadership are as follows:

The Lead Pastors and Executives serve as the bosses of the staff. They are responsible for the direction, health, compensation, hiring, firing, and transitioning of the staff. They are under the authority of the Local Church Elders and the LS Family Elders (For more information on this see Elders: office, authority and terms).

The Lead Pastors and Executives serve as the bosses of the staff. They are responsible for the direction, health, compensation, hiring, firing, and transitioning of the staff. They are under the authority of the Local Church Elders and the LS Family Elders.

(For more information on this, see *Elders*)

Lead Pastor	Leader of the organization, elders, & the staff.
Executive Roles	Leaders of Directors & managers of staff.
Associates/Directors	Leaders & shepherds of particular ministries.
Support Staff	Administration & support of executives & ministries.
Paid Interns	Part time servants of various ministries.
Unpaid Interns	Volunteer servants of various ministries.
Contract Workers	Outside workers paid by LS for particular projects.

Staff Compensation

The Lay Elder Compensation Committee determines LS Staff Compensation.

Living Stones Compensation Philosophy

Living Stones wants its employees to feel financially honored and cared for by the congregation. Since vocational ministry carries so much stress, we do not want our staff members, especially pastors, to worry about making ends meet. We do not have a poverty philosophy that believes pastors and employees must be poor. Nor do we have a prosperity philosophy that believes pastors and employees must be rich. Instead, Living Stones has a generous philosophy that believes pastors and employees should get paid well according to their work and responsibility.

As the Scriptures declare:

"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." (1Timothy 5:17-18)

"Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?... Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:8-11, 13-14)

What is the purpose of the Compensation Committee?

This committee will provide outside wisdom into salary recommendations so that Living Stones employees do not have to set their own salaries or their boss's salary. It aims to help LS Staff members be compensated fairly according to their role, responsibility, budget, size of church, and cost of living for their place of mission.

Who is on this committee?

All Living Stones Lay Elders plus the Living Stones Financial Administrator.

Duties of Committee

1. Convene once a year before the final determination of Living Stone's budgets.
2. Approve or adjust the Salary Ranges Chart presented by Living Stones Family Administrative Director.

Process Of Determining Staff Compensation

1. Lay Elders will convene with the LS Financial Administrator to approve salary ranges.
2. The LS Family financial administrator will give the salary ranges will to the Living Stones Family Elders (Lead Pastors from each church)
3. The Living Stones Family Elders will use the ranges to set each Lead Pastor's and Executive Pastor's Salary.
4. The Living Stones Family Elders will type up their reasons for setting these salaries.
5. These determined salaries will go from the Living Stones Family Elders to their local church's Lay Elders for final approval.
 - *Suppose a Living Stones church does not have any Lay Elders. In that case, the church that is closest in size will have its Lay Elders approve the salary of that church's Lead and Executive Pastors.*
 - *Suppose a church only has one Lay Elder. In that case, that Elder will join the Lay Elders of the church that is closest in size to approve the salary for his church's Lead and Executive Pastors.*
6. Upon final approval from local Lay Elders, the LSF Financial administrator will input the Lead and Executive Pastor salaries into the annual budgets.
7. Then the Lead Pastor and Executive Pastor at each church will use the Salary Ranges Document to set the rest of their staff's compensation.

Benefits

Because Living Stones believes in caring for the employee's family, we give generous benefits that include the following in addition to the approved salary for full-time employees:

- Cell phone stipend (for Elders and some other director-level employees)
- A health care package that does not come out of the employee's paycheck.
- 7.5% of salary into retirement (for Elders only) - This is because Elders have the option to deny Social Security. The amount the church would pay toward social security would be 7.5%. If a pastor chooses not to opt out of Social Security, he will get taxed as self-employed. This 7.5% compensates for the additional tax rate should he choose this option.

MALE AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP

Complementarianism

Complementarianism is the theological perspective that defines how men and women complement each other to represent God's image on earth fully. The term often describes the leadership authority structure and practice in the home and the church. This document exists to define Living Stones' position and practice of Complementarianism in marriage and our church leadership.

The Doctrine of Complementarianism

Four statements summarize the doctrine of Complementarianism¹

1. Men and women are equal image-bearers of God.
2. Men and women are different image-bearers of God.
3. Men and women need each other to represent God's image on earth completely.
4. God assigned different leadership roles to men and women in the home and the church.

1. Men and women are equal image-bearers of God.

Genesis 1:27 describes the creation of humanity as follows:

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

God exists as a Trinity. He is one God who eternally exists in three co-equal persons that mutually and willingly submit to one another in love. God created men and women to reflect this Triune relationship. The Scriptures teach that men and women are equal in value, dignity, and essence as image-bearers of God. God does not look at one gender with greater love and affection than another. Any culture that assigns more significant value and worth to one gender over the other is out of step with God and His perspective on humanity.

¹ The term "complementarianism" comes from The Danvers Statement, which is a statement of belief summarizing the Bible's teaching on this doctrine.

2. Men and Women are different image-bearers of God.

As well as being equal image-bearers, God intentionally created men and women differently and distinctly¹. Equal does not mean interchangeable. Men and women are different:

- Anatomically - having different bodily structure and design
- Physiologically - having bodies and organs that function differently
- Psychologically - having minds that develop and approach the world differently
- Sociologically - relating to other humans and relationships differently

These differences are beautiful, good, and unique expressions of God's image on earth

3. Men and women need each other to represent the image of God on earth completely.


The differences between men and women exist to complement each other. It is important to note that "complement" (with an "e") is different from "compliment" (with an "i"). Complement means completing or bringing to perfection, whereas compliment means praising or admiring. Complementarianism means that the represented image of God on earth is not complete with males alone or with females alone. Both genders are needed to work together in harmony according to God's design to accurately and completely express God's image and Kingdom on earth. Therefore, both genders need each other and complete each other.

4. Men and women have been assigned different roles of leadership in the church and the home

THE CHURCH

From the beginning to the end of the Bible, men and women co-labor side by side for God's glory, playing complementary, God-ordained roles in the leadership of His congregation. In both the Old Testament and the New, women frequently use their many gifts, including leadership, prophesying, and administration. Men hold roles of spiritual oversight: priests in the Old Testament and Elders/Overseers in the New Testament (used interchangeably in this document with "Pastor"). Jesus is well known for valuing and elevating his female disciples far beyond what was comfortable for many in the culture of his day. At the same time, He affirms the created order and Old Testament pattern of male spiritual oversight in his church by only appointing male Apostles. Those Apostles went on to confirm the God-ordained role of male spiritual oversight by only appointing men to the office of elder. Paul's instruction to Timothy says that he does not permit women to teach or exercise authority over

¹ For more information on the differences between men and women, as well as a systematic theological discussion on the topic, please see the article "Men and women in the church", available at www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/men-and-women-in-the-church/



men in the church. He then establishes that one of the chief roles of elders as spiritual overseers of the church is to teach (1 Timothy 2 and 3). There is no mention of female Elders/Pastors in the New Testament, but there are descriptions of females holding the office of Deacon (Romans 16:1, 1 Timothy 3:8), as well as serving and leading in many other capacities.

With that said, Biblical Complementarianism REJECTS the following:

Elders get to domineer over women and treat them as subservient.

- God commands elders specifically to "not domineer." Elders are given authority with the expectation that they would use it to serve, lead, protect and care for the flock of God. Elders are also equal image-bearers of God alongside the women of their church.

All men in the church are the spiritual head of all women in the church.

- God does not call women to submit to ALL men. Instead, God calls women to submit to their own husbands. Simultaneously He commands men to love their wives sacrificially as Christ did the church. And together, God commands both men and women to submit to their local Pastors for spiritual leadership.

Women are less capable of leading, governing, or teaching the Bible than men.

- Women are as capable as men. Complementarianism is not a matter of capability but a matter of what God has commanded and beautifully ordained for creation and the church.

Women cannot hold high-level leadership positions in the church or society.

- On the contrary, women in the Bible hold many high-level positions, including National Ruler, Prophet, Business Owner, and Deacon. The Scriptures name many powerful and gifted women as prominent financial supporters and co-leaders alongside men in the movement of the New Testament Church. The Bible does not indicate that men should be the primary breadwinner of their households or that the woman has to make less money than the husband. Of the many names commended as great leaders in Romans 16, ten are women.

Women are forbidden to teach the gospel in every setting.

- The Scripture permits women to teach authoritatively to other groups of women. It also permits women to evangelize and expound the Word of God in public spheres of influence and privately in groups to teach and edify their brothers in Christ.

Based on our beliefs in Biblical Complementarianism, we hold to the following:

Only men can hold the office of Elder/Overseer/Pastor.

- Therefore only men who are ordained elders/overseers/pastors, or actively participating in the elder-in-training process, are permitted to authoritatively preach to the weekly gathered Co-ed congregation.

Women can vocally lead and contribute to the gathered congregation.

- Both the Old Testament and the New Testament demonstrate women singing songs, writing music, declaring prophecy, reading scripture, offering encouragement, leading in prayer, sharing visions, speaking in tongues, and sharing testimonies in the corporate gathering of God's people. These are all good (including presiding or hosting a Living Stones worship gathering) and encouraged aspects of vocal leadership from women in the church. Additionally, anything a male Deacon can do in the church, a female Deacon can do.

Women can fill any level of leadership besides Elder/Pastor in the church and society.

- Women can be directors of ministries, lead businesses, and even countries. For example, It would be Biblically acceptable for a woman to be the President of the United States.

Eldership is not the "top rung" of the "leadership ladder" in the church but is a call from God upon certain men.

THE HOME

God has given men and women different roles as they relate to one another within the marriage covenant.

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are

members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." (Ephesians 5:22-32)

In the marriage relationship, God calls husbands to be the spiritual heads of the house. The husband's role as the head is to sacrificially love, lead, protect and serve his wife and family as Christ did the church. God calls wives to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. These commands require both husband and wife to die to their own interests for their spouse's good and God's glory.

This means:

Husbands are NOT permitted to be authoritarian.

- God commands husbands to love their wives as themselves while dying to themselves and giving their lives up for their wives. They must spiritually and emotionally nourish and cherish their wives.

Wives are NOT to follow their husbands into sin or abuse.

- The passage above says, "Submit in everything as to the Lord." Therefore, if a husband tries to lead his wife into sin, he is not leading her to the Lord. God calls her to follow Jesus and not her husband if this were the case.

Wives DO have a shared responsibility of leadership in their family.

- In Genesis 2:18, God calls Adam's wife his "helper" fit for him. This word helper means "the one who does for us what we cannot do for ourselves."¹ Wives co-lead their families with their husbands. In a sense, the wife fills in the husband's gaps. The command for a wife to submit to her husband is not a command to follow without question or challenge, but to respect him constantly, even amid disagreement, and willingly allow the husband to make the final call. But this should not be without her voice or presence. Finally, wives can encourage and point their husbands to Jesus. They can point out sin as a fellow Christian. If sin patterns persist, she may need to contact the Elders for pastoral guidance. In cases of criminal activity, the wife may need to call on civil authorities for help.

¹ A definition of the word "helper" seen tied to women in Genesis two can be found here: <https://netbible.org/bible/Genesis+2>

Specific practices of complementarian leadership at Living Stones Churches

- Only locally commissioned men will hold the office and conduct the official duties of Elder/Pastor. Elder responsibilities include authoritative preaching to the gathered Co-ed congregation, oversight of baptisms and communion, setting and protecting of sound doctrine for Living Stones, the governance of the church, the commissioning and oversight of Deacons and missionaries, the interpretation of prophecies and visions, and tongues when no interpretation is available, and the execution of church discipline and restoration. Elders are encouraged to carry out their responsibilities with the input and advice of trusted and godly women in the church, especially when making decisions that affect women specifically.
- Both men and women hold the office and conduct the official duties of deacon as determined by the local elder board.
- Women can and are encouraged to hold any position in the church besides Elder/Pastor. Co-ed Community Groups strive to have a male leader and a female leader.

Ways we are currently trying to improve our complementarian expression of leadership

Over the years, Living Stones Churches has worked hard to develop and mobilize leaders as an expression of Disciples Making Disciples. While we have often done this well for men, we see that it has been to the neglect of the empowerment of female leaders in some ways. Therefore, we aspire to do more for the development and empowerment of female leaders. Below are some steps for future improvement:

- Each church will strive for ministry execution in complementarian partnership. One example is investing strategic time and development into elders AND their wives, not just the elders. We want Living Stones to be where men and women do ministry together.
- Each church will empower more female leaders to have visible voice and representation in our church.
- Each church will develop and empower female theologians and teachers to lead studies and ministries in Living Stones.
- Each church will create female advisory boards to the Elders made up of mature, godly women filled with the Spirit.

ELDERS

Elders: Office and Authority

Elders

Jesus is the chief Shepherd of the church¹. The church belongs to Him because He obtained her with His own blood². He is the head, and the church is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all³. To care for His church, the Holy Spirit has appointed Elders (or overseers) to shepherd local congregations of elect worshippers known as local churches⁴. Elders are to exercise oversight over these souls as stewards who will have to give an account to God for them at the end of time⁵.

At Living Stones the term “Elder” and “Pastor” are used interchangeably. This is because Elders are commanded to shepherd and the latin word for shepherd is “pastor.” Elder is a title for the office, while Pastor describes the function of the office.

Qualification of Elders

An elder must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, hospitable, able to teach, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, disciplined, and well thought of by outsiders.

An elder must not be a drunkard, violent, quarrelsome, quick tempered, a lover of money, greedy for gain, arrogant, a recent convert, or have children that are open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

An elder must hold fast to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict it. He must also manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? (Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 1 Peter 5:1-5)

¹ 1 Peter 5:1-5

² Acts 20:28

³ Ephesians 1:23

⁴ Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7

⁵ Hebrews 13:17

Official Duties of Elders

Elders are to:

- Teach and pray for God's people (Acts 6:4)
- Administer the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism (Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:42)
- Provide governing oversight and leadership (1 Peter 5:2, 1 Timothy 5:17)
- Train and empower leaders to teach and preach the gospel (1 Timothy 2:2)
- Equip church members to use their gifts (Ephesians 4:11-12)
- Conduct worship in an orderly fashion (1 Corinthians 14:26-33)
- Pray for the sick (James 5:14)
- Provide ongoing care for church members through counsel, admonishment, and encouragement. (Acts 20:28, 1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- Do the work of evangelism (2 Timothy 4:5)
- Protect the church from division and false doctrine (Titus 3:9-11, Acts 20:29-31, Titus 1:9)
- Lead by example (1 Peter 5:3)
- Enact church discipline and restoration (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:8)


These duties are to be conducted willingly and eagerly in a way that does not domineer over the flock or seek shameful gain. (1 Peter 5:1-5)

Types of Elders and Their Basic Assignments at Local LS Churches

Lead Pastor - The Lead Pastor is the lead Elder of the Local Elder board. His job is to build a fruitful ministry. His role on the Elder Board is to set direction, develop healthy team dynamics, call and manage meetings, and guide decision making processes. Most of the time the Lead Pastor is the church's primary Preaching Elder. The Lead Pastor also serves on the LS Family Board of Elders.

Executive Elders - Executive Elders assist the Lead Pastor in the management and operation of the church as an organization. This includes budget and staff supervision as well as directional leadership for the Elder team.

Preaching Elders - Preaching Elders are gifted by the Holy Spirit to preach and teach the Word of God with clarity and conviction in a sound manner that leads God's elect into worship. Preaching Elders serve by preaching on Sundays, midweek services, and teaching classes. Teaching Elders are commissioned by the LS Family Elders to fill any Living Stones pulpit upon request of a Lead Pastor or Elder Board.



Staff Elders - Staff Elders are paid by the tithes of congregation to offer shepherding oversight in a particular ministry. They serve in Associate and Director roles. This includes but is not limited to: music and liturgy, Community Groups, university campus ministry, mission to the city, leadership development, Soul Care, family ministry, and student ministry.

Lay Elders - Lay Elders are unpaid Elders who participate on the local governing board as well as offer pastoral care to the congregation through prayer, counsel, teaching, discipline, and various forms of oversight.

Elder Requirements

- All LS Elders must complete the LS Elder In Training Process before being commissioned as an Elder. (Exceptions may be made for new Elders who are already Acts 29 assessed and approved).
- Lead Pastors must complete and pass the Acts 29 assessment within two years of their commissioning.
- Teaching Elders must complete and pass the LS Teaching Elder assessment.

Voting Authority on Local Elder Boards

Living Stones Elders seek to make as many decisions in unanimous Elder agreement as possible. Some decisions, however, will need to go to a vote. Two-thirds vote is needed on a Local Elder Board to pass a decision. Further, in efforts to pursue wise and ethical decision making, every Elder will not have voting authority on every decision. Voting authority for the Local Elder Board is as follows:

Full Local Elder Board has has voting authority on:

- Direction of the local church
- Doctrinal issues
- Member care
- Member discipline and restoration
- Ministry obstacles
- The appointment of Deacons

Lay Elders have voting authority on:

- Staff compensation ranges (determined by Lay Elders from all LS churches)
- Final approval of Lead Pastor's and Executive Elder's salaries
- Lay Elders + Lead Pastor and Executive Elder(s) have voting authority on:
 - Annual budget approval
 - Staff compensation that is outside the pre-approved range
 - The hiring, firing, and transitioning of church staff, including Staff Elders.

Lead Pastors + Executive Elder(s) have voting authority on:

- Staff compensation within pre-approved ranges by the Lay Elders
- Staff Elders + Lead Pastor and Executive Elder(s) have voting authority on:
- Day to day ministry decisions and operations (ie. liturgy planning, curriculum decisions, volunteer management, etc.). For day to day ministry decisions, a tied vote goes to the Lead Pastor.

If an Elder team gets stuck with a split vote, they may appeal to the Living Stones Family Elders to decide the direction forward.

Types of Elder Boards at Living Stones

- **Local Elder Boards** - A church's Local Elder Board consists of all the Elders, paid and unpaid, commissioned at that local church. Each Local Elder Board gathers on a monthly basis for the sake of governing and care of the church. Local Elder Boards are Led by the Lead Pastor.
- **Full Council Of Elders** - The Full Council Of Elders consists of every Elder, paid and unpaid from all Living Stones Churches. The Full Council gathers once a year for an annual meeting of encouragement and worship. It may be called to convene for other meetings regarding doctrinal and character matters that affect all Living Stones churches.

- **LS Family Elder Board** - LS Family Elders consists of the Lead Pastors from each church. It is led by the LS Network Director. This team gathers weekly and monthly to make ministry decisions regarding the collaborative operation and advancement of LS Churches. They are responsible for decisions regarding:
 - Corporate LS Budget approval and major financial decisions (ie. the purchase of a building for a local congregation, Missions donation approval)
 - Lead Pastor and Executive Elder Salaries for each local church
 - Preaching Elder assessments and approvals
 - The sending and planting of new churches
 - The hiring, firing and transitioning of Lead Pastors
 - Mediation and arbitration for major member, staff, Deacon, or Elder conflict that has appealed to this level.

Elder in Training Process

Each Lead Pastor is responsible for the development and empowerment of Elders. As the Scripture says, "Entrust these things to faithful men who are able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2) The Lead Pastor and his Elder board must identify faithful men who love God, are filled with the Spirit, have godly character, and show pastoral calling to invite into the Elder In Training (EIT) process. The EIT process lasts between one and two years. It is the same for all Living Stones churches.

Suppose a local Elder board wants to substitute content in the process. In that case, they may do so upon approval from the LS Family Elders. Living Stones only commissions Biblically qualified men who complete the EIT process. In some cases, the LS Family Elders will approve an alternate program for an EIT (i.e., seminary or a residency).

Elder Commitments & Covenant

"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with His own blood." Acts 20:28

The above passage was a commission from the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian Elders, and it stands as commission to every Elder of God's universal church. The commission clearly states that the church belongs to God. He purchased it with His own blood, and through His Holy Spirit, He has appointed Elders to be "overseers" that care for His flock.

When a purchase is made and entrusted to the care of another, the purchaser always expects the one entrusted to exercise careful stewardship. The more expensive the purchase, the higher the expectation of care. In this case, God has purchased His people with the infinite expense of His own blood. The church is God's prized treasure for whom He left everything in heaven, and gave up everything on earth to obtain. For this reason it is vital that the Elders of God's church "pay careful attention to themselves, and to all the flock." The office of Elder should not be taken lightly, and it would be wise for Elders to continuously evaluate their care and motives in their oversight of God's precious people.

This passage also calls the church God's "flock." They are the sheep of His pasture. He is the Chief Shepherd and intends that His church gets spiritual guidance, care, food, protection and healing correction. He has appointed local Elders to be "under-shepherds" and provide this in every local church. The latin word for shepherd is "pastor" which describes the role and responsibility of elders and overseers. For this reason, Living Stones uses the terms "Elder," "Overseer," and "Pastor," synonymously. "Elder" and "Overseer" describe the office, while "Pastor" describes the function of shepherding God's people.

This document is a way for each Living Stones Elder to annually reevaluate his call to the office of Elder according to the Biblical qualifications of the office. It is a chance for all of the Elders as a whole to "pay careful attention to themselves, and to all the flock." Below are the expectations for what it means to be an Elder at Living Stones Churches.

Personal Character: Who Elders Are

Be a man who daily pursues the Lord

Elders lead people to worship. They take the sheep to the Shepherd. This requires Elders to daily pursue God themselves. If they do not know the Shepherd's voice, how can they lead anybody else to Him? This requires Elders to daily practice the disciplines of prayer, Bible reading, silence-and-solitude, and other disciplines of the faith.

Be a man of character according to qualifications from 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1

Elders must be:

- above reproach - cannot be accused of a disqualifying sin, or living in a pattern of unrepentant sin
- the husband of one wife - has eyes, heart, mind, and body dedicated to one woman, his wife
- sober-minded - has the ability to be "level headed" and not overcome by substances or over-exaggerated feelings
- respectable
- hospitable - Hebrews defines this as welcoming to strangers (Heb. 13:2)
- able to teach (teachable) - can be translated both ways. Regardless, Elders ought to be both. Able to teach does not mean that preaching is the main gift, it simply means that if an opportunity to teach arises, Elders must be willing and able to do so
- a lover of good
- self-controlled - as opposed to controlled by substances or sins
- upright - someone others can look up to
- holy - living a life that is "set apart" for honoring God
- disciplined - has control of his life and how he pursues God and loves others.
- well thought of by outsiders - by people outside the church

Elders must NOT be:

- a drunkard - living in a pattern of excessive drinking
- violent (he must be gentle) - in physical, emotional, or verbal confrontations
- quarrelsome - always looking to argue or fight
- quick tempered
- a lover of money or greedy for gain - including only pastoring for the salary
- open to charge of debauchery - excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures
- open to charge of insubordination - defiant to authority
- arrogant - thinking himself higher than others
- a recent convert

Elders also must:

- Hold fast to the trustworthy Word as taught - the Bible, the gospel, and Christian Orthodoxy as confirmed by the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasius Creeds
- Manage their own household well
 - with all dignity, keeping his children submissive - children that respect and follow leadership of their fathers.
 - children are to be believers (faithful)
 - non-adult children are to be faithful to their father and in their participation in the Christian faith.

Be a man who is known in Biblical community within the local church

"Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire" (Proverbs 18:1)

God is a Triune God who created His people to be in community. This is no exception for Elders. This is why Paul calls Elders to "pay careful attention to themselves" (Acts 20:28). This can only happen within a community where an Elder allows himself to be known, and in which he strives to know others. To be known means to "allow others in" and to share your life. This would include things like day-to-day happenings, desires and dreams, struggles and sins. To know means to seek genuine interest in others and in their well-being. This does not mean that Elders are required to be in community with every person in their church. It simply means Elders are not to live in isolation from the community within their church. It will look different in each context.

Be a man who pursues and loves his wife and kids (if applicable)

This is stated above in the "qualifications" section in terms of managing the household well. Ephesians 5:22-6:4 expands this a bit further to call all Christians to sacrificially pursue their spouse and children. If this is the call for all Christians, it certainly is the call for Elders. Elders' wives and children need to know that they are loved. If asked, they ought to respond with specific ways in which their Husband/Father serves and cherishes them. It is vital for the Elder's family to know and to feel that they are priority over the church.

Be a man of humility who repents of sin and treats all people with dignity

1 Peter 5:5 calls Elders as well as all church members to “clothe themselves with humility toward one another.” Humility is a mark of Elders because they are under-shepherds of the Great Shepherd Jesus who clothed Himself with humility, even to the point of death. Elders also remain humble because they understand that their church is not really “theirs” but God’s, for Jesus purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). An Elder’s humility plays out in his willingness to repent of sin, be teachable, and in the ability to treat all people with dignity, for all people are image bearers of God.

Official Duties: What Elders Do

Teach and pray for God’s people

Elders are to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. They are to teach right doctrine and correct false teachings of this world. (Acts 6:4, Titus 1:9, 1 Tim. 6:2b-3, 2 Tim. 4:1-2).

Govern God’s people by providing oversight and leadership

Shepherds provide oversight for their sheep. They make governing decisions to lead them to food, water, safety and places where the sheep will find health and flourishing. This is what Elders do for God’s people (1 Tim. 3:1, 1 Peter 5:2, Hebrews 13:17).

Exemplify a life of worship for God’s people

Elders are not to domineer in their leadership but to lead by example. If the main task of the Elder is to lead the people to worship, this means that Elders must exemplify what a life of worship looks like. When the people ask, “What does it look like to worship God at church and in all of life?” They should think of their Elders (1 Peter 5:3).

Equip and train leaders in the ministry of the gospel

Elders are to entrust leadership and the gospel to faithful men who are able to teach others also. This is exemplified in the leadership of our Lord Jesus with His disciples. It is God’s plan to reach the whole world with the good news of His grace. To be an Elder means to actively and continuously recruit, train, and send leaders to lead in God’s church. This will look different for every Elder, but it must be done (2 Tim. 2:2).

Equip church members to use their gifts

The church is a body with many members. God gives each of His people certain gifts to be used for the building up of the body of Christ. It is the Elder’s responsibility to help the members identify gifts and use them in an edifying and evangelistic way (Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12).

Conduct worship in an orderly fashion

"God is not a God of confusion but of peace." Therefore gathered worship should be an experience that does not breed confusion and chaos. This will be challenged at times, and it is the job of Elders to make sure things are done orderly (1 Cor. 14:26-40).

Pursue and welcome outsiders

The kingdom of God is a kingdom that seeks outsiders. This is to be exemplified by Elders pursuing and welcoming those outside the faith with the love of God. This hospitality should take place in daily life and any time the people of God are gathered (Hebrews 13:2, 1 Tim. 3:2).

Pray for the sick

As representatives of God and His people, Elders are to pray for the sick. God often will hear their prayer and grant healing (James 5:14).

Provide ongoing care for members in good standing (1 Peter 5:2) including:

- prayer (James 5:14, Acts 2:42, 1 Thess. 5:17)
- counsel and advice (1 Thess. 5:12)
- admonishment, encouragement, and help as needed (1 Thess. 5:14)

Do the work of evangelism

The kingdom of God advances through the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the job of Elders to commit their entire life to proclamation of the gospel in private and corporate settings (2 Tim. 4:5, Romans 10:14-17).

Protect the church

One of the main role of shepherds is to protect the sheep. Elders are to protect God's people from division, false teachers and people who want to harm the members (Titus 1:9-11, Titus 3:10).

Enact church discipline when necessary

As an act to provide protection from sin for the church, and restorative healing for a member in grievous, unrepentant sin, it is the job of an Elder to discipline members. This begins with confrontation and counsel and may end in excommunication. It is meant to be done in a loving way that is good for the church and for the person at fault (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 5:4-5).

Official duties are to be conducted in a willing and eager manner that does not domineer over the flock or seek shameful gain. (1 Peter 5:2-4)

Expectations at Worship Gatherings

Whenever the people are gathered, be present with the people.

This looks like:

- Being physically present at Worship Gatherings, events, & Living Stones functions
- Actively welcoming and including outsiders
- Continuously offering prayer, counsel, encouragement, exhortation to members
- Exemplifying what it looks like to worship God when His people are gathered.
- Actively participate in and engage in all the elements of worship
This is not a time to show up late, hide in an office, mess around on your phone, talk to buddies, or keep to yourself.

Be a team player

Living Stones is a complex organization with multiple elder teams. Therefore it is vital that all Elders:

- Have unity of mind according to the Doctrine, Vision, Strategy, and Mission of Living Stones.
- Fulfill your role as assigned. Don't try to fulfill someone else's role on the Living Stones team. Do your job.
- Attend, be engaged, and contribute at ALL of your designated Elder meetings. Come prepared and be ready to offer positive input or constructive feedback. (If for some reason you are unable to attend, clear it with your elder team and Lead Pastor ahead of time.)
- Assume the best of your fellow elders. If you cannot, ask questions before you make assumptions or accusations.
- When conflict arises in your heart, handle it with the Elder(s) involved. Do not let bitterness or gossip fester.
- Be bought in financially to Living Stones demonstrated by your tithe (at least 10%). As the ones who get to see God at work on the front lines, it would make sense to see Elders continually striving to exceed 10% in their giving.
- Be committed to the local body and city God has called you to. Do not view this calling as a stepping stone to "greater things."

Closing Thoughts

The writer of Hebrews says to the church,

“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.” (Hebrews 13:17)

Do not take this lightly, for all Elders will stand before Almighty God to give an account of the souls He’s entrusted to them. If you decide to fulfill this office, do it with joy, for you get to see God at work in His beloved treasure.

Elder Covenant

I, _____, choose to fulfill the office of Elder at Living Stones
_____ for the entire year from _____ to _____. I agree to
fulfill the above requirements to the best of my ability, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

If I fall short, I will be open to challenge and rebuke. If I begin to struggle in my character or in my official responsibilities as an Elder, I will seek to make it known to my fellow Elders. If for some reason, I become disqualified, I will step down from this position in whatever manner my local Elders decide is best for the church.

Signed _____

Date _____

ELDERS/STAFF CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

Process for Staff and Elder Conflict Management

Should an Elder or staff member fall short of their character, attitude, or job performance responsibilities, Lead Pastors and Executive Elders must walk through the following steps of loving correction.

Step 1: Shepherding conversation - The Lead Pastor or Executive Elder(s) will directly and lovingly address the problem and request a change in a manner that disciplines the offending party toward Christ.

If the problem persists,

Step 2: Deliberation amongst the Local Elders - The Lead Pastor or Executive Elder(s) will bring the case to the Local Elder Board for deliberation. The local Elders will speak wisdom into the situation and one or two may be asked to participate in shepherding conversations with the staff member or fellow Elder.

If the problem persists,

Step 3: Written and formal call to repentance - The Lead Pastor or Executive Elder(s) will put in writing their admonishment and exhortation to the offending party, clearly describing the areas of fault and expectations for adjustment. The offending party will be expected to sign this document and the full Local Elder Board will receive a copy.

Should the problem continue, or if conflict arises because of disagreement about the issue,

Step 4: Mediation - The Lay Elders will convene to mediate between the Lead Pastor or Executive Elder(s) and the offending Elder or staff member. They must listen to both sides and determine a fair and suitable way forward. All Staff Elders not involved in this meeting will be notified of the meeting and the results.

If problems still exist,

Step 5: Arbitration - The full Local Elder Board will convene for a process of arbitration. A case for both sides will be heard followed by any necessary deliberations. A vote will take place with the Lay Elders plus the Lead Pastor and Executive Elder(s) to determine whether or not the offending party may remain in office or continued employment. A two-thirds vote is needed to decide the outcome.

In the case of a split arbitration, or if a termination was decided and the Elder or staff member would like to appeal to a higher court,

Step 6: Family Elder Arbitration - The Family Elder board will convene for a process of final arbitration. A case will be made from the offending party and Lead Pastor or Executive Elder(s). Other Elders may be asked to speak their opinion. Any necessary deliberations will be had and a vote will take place by all of the LS Family Elders (unless one of them is the offending party) to determine the final decision and way forward. A two-thirds vote is needed to decide the outcome.

Conflict with a Lead Pastor

Should a Lead Pastor fall short of his character, attitude, or job performance responsibilities, the Local Elder Board must walk through the following steps of loving correction.

Step 1: Shepherding conversation - At least two Elders will lovingly address the problem and request a change in a manner that disciples the Lead Pastor toward Christ.

If the problem persists,

Step 2: Deliberation amongst the Local Elders - At least two Elders will bring the case to the Local Elder Board for deliberation. The local Elders will speak wisdom into the situation and plan a way forward.

If the problem persists and two thirds of the Elders are still calling for a change,

Step 3: Written and formal call to repentance - The Local Elder Board will put in writing their admonishment and exhortations to the Lead Pastor, clearly describing his areas of fault and expectations for adjustment. The Lead Pastor will be expected to sign this document and the Family Elder Board will receive a copy.

Should the problem continue, or if conflict arises because of disagreement about the issue,

Step 4: Mediation - The Family Elder Board will convene to mediate between the Local Elder Board and the Lead Pastor. They must listen to both sides and determine a suitable way forward.

If problems still exist,

Step 5: Arbitration - The Family Elder Board will convene along with the Local Elder Board for a process of arbitration. A case for both sides will be heard by the Family Elders followed by any necessary deliberations. A vote will take place by the Family Elder Board minus the Lead Pastor involved to determine whether or not the Lead Pastor may remain in office and employment. A two-thirds vote is needed to decide the outcome.

FINANCES

Income:

Living Stones operates off of the income that comes from the tithes and offerings of God's people. Smaller churches may also receive outside funding as a form of mission support.

People can give to Living Stones on the following platforms: LSgive.com, the LS app, Text-To-Give, Mailed in Check, Offering Baskets, Offering Boxes, or Bill Pay.

Budgets:

Each church is responsible for its annual budget. The Lead Pastor and Executive Pastor create the budget with the help of the corporate staff. The lay Elders give final approval for the budget of that church. If a church does not have lay elders, the nearest-sized LS church's Lay Elders will approve its budget.

The LS Fiscal Year operates July 1 through June 31. Annual Budgets are created and approved during May and June.

The LSF Director, Executive Pastor, and Financial Administrator create the LSF Corporate budget. It receives final approval from the LS Family Elders.

Corporate Fund:

Each Living Stones church contributes 10.5% to the corporate fund to cover LS Family operations (corporate staff, accounting, banking fees, website, software, soul care trainings, shared resources, etc.)

Missions Fund:

Each Living Stones contributes 10% to the LS Missions Fund to support church planting in the West Coast and worldwide. This money is allocated primarily to Acts 29 church plants. The LS Family Elders decide whom to support after recommendations from the LS Corporate staff.

New Living Stones church plants and the sending church may also receive funding from LS Missions if needed. The LS Family Elders also make this decision.

Average Budget Analysis:

Each Living Stones church differs according to its needs and location, but below is a demonstration of the average LS Budget Breakdown:

10% - Missions and church planting

10.5% - Corporate operations

45% - Staffing

25% - Facilities

9.5% - Ministry Operations

The Year-End Gift

In 2010 Living Stones started a tradition of collecting a Year-End Gift (YEG). This offering is a gift that members give above and beyond their general giving throughout the month of Advent. Living Stones splits the money 50/50. 50% goes to the local mission of making disciples at Living Stones. The other 50% goes to an organization called Living Water International. Living Water digs clean water wells in impoverished communities and entrusts the care of those wells to local church pastors. They desire to provide clean water to the thirsty, in Jesus' name.

Living Stones also partners with Living Water International annually to send members to help drill some of the wells funded through the YEG.

Every Living Stones participates in the YEG through the entire month of December. Each church collects the large offering at its Christmas services.

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ANNUAL PLANNING

The Lead and Executive Pastors at each local church are expected to develop an Annual Plan (Due by Dec. 1 of the previous year).

Range:

January 1 - December 31

Thematic goal to move the ball forward (cross 200 barrier, create a culture of invitation, hire 2 staff and reorganize, plant roots in local community, get the CG system thriving, Develop a team of Elders and Deacons)

- Assessment and Adjustment for standard operating objectives
- Annual Calendar

Expectations Annually for each church

1 In the City, for the City event a quarter (or 1 in Spring, Summer, & Fall)

1 leader party and celebration a year

Lead Pastor Acts 29 Cohort 2x a year

Leader Launch

Monthly Starting Point

At least 2 leader meetings

2 Frontline Prayer gatherings

Monthly Elder meetings

Annually commission deacons for 1 year term

Observe the liturgical High Holidays

Baptisms at least seasonally (Spring, Summer, Fall)

Annual A29 conference

Every other year - LP/Wives A29 retreat

Annual all elder/wives retreat

Annual all LS staff retreat

Crosspoint 3x / year (coupled with other events)

Lead Pastor's weekly touchpoint and Monthly Business meetings

DIRECTORY OF LS CHURCHES

Living Stones Church, Reno

445 South Virginia St., Reno, NV, 89501

Sundays at 9am & 11am

Living Stones Church, South Reno

95 Foothill Rd., Reno, NV, 89511

Sundays at 9am & 11am

Living Stones Church, Sparks

300 Los Altos Pkwy. Suite 109, Sparks, NV, 89436

Sundays at 9am & 11am

Living Stones Church, Elko

506 Silver St., Elko, NV, 89801

Sundays at 9am & 11am

Living Stones Church, Carson City

511 West King St., Carson City, NV, 89703

Sundays at 10am

Living Stones Church, Fernley

868 Cottonwood Lane, Fernley, NV, 89408

Sundays at 10am

Living Stones Church, North Valleys

310 East Patrician Dr., Reno, NV 89506

Sundays at 9am

Living Stones Church, Winnemucca

403 Hanson St., Winnemucca, NV, 89445

Sundays at 10am

