

## Wychwood Baptist Church Baptist Principles

The Church further believes in the following distinctive Baptist emphases:

1. The **DIRECT LORDSHIP OF CHRIST** over every believer and over the local church. By this we understand that Christ exercises His authority over the believer and the local church directly, without delegating it to another.
2. The **CHURCH** as the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The local church, being a manifestation of the universal church, is a community of believers in a particular place where the Word of God is preached and the ordinances of Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper are observed. It is fully autonomous and remains so notwithstanding responsibilities it may accept by voluntary association.
3. **BELIEVER'S BAPTISM** as an act of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and a sign of personal repentance, faith and regeneration; it consists of the immersion in water into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
4. The **CONGREGATIONAL PRINCIPLE**, namely that each member has the privilege and responsibility to use his/her gifts and abilities to participate fully in the life of the church. We recognise that God gifts His Church with Overseers (who are called Pastors or Elders) whose primary function is to lead in a spirit of servanthood, to equip and provide spiritual oversight, and Deacons whose primary function is to facilitate the smooth functioning of the Church. This principle further recognises that each member should participate in the appointment of the church's leaders, and that a constituted church meeting, subject to the direct Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture, is the highest court of authority for the local church.
5. The **PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS**, by which we understand that each Christian has direct access to God through Christ our High Priest, and shares with Him in His work of reconciliation. This involves intercession, worship, faithful service and bearing witness to Jesus Christ, even to the ends of the earth.
6. The principle of **RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**, namely, that no individual should be coerced either by the State or by any secular, ecclesiastical or religious group in matters of faith. The right of private conscience is to be respected. For each believer this means the right to interpret the Scriptures responsibly and to act in the light of their own conscience.
7. The principle of **SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE** in that, in the providence of God, the two differ in their respective natures and functions. The Church is not to be identified with the State nor is it, in its faith or practice, to be directed or controlled by the State. The State is responsible for administering justice, ensuring an orderly society, and promoting the welfare of its citizens. The Church is responsible for preaching the Gospel and for demonstrating and making known God's will and care for all mankind.