

In 2017/18 we spent a year in prayer seeking God for his vision for Ebenezer, asking him what he is calling us as Ebenezer Baptist Church to be and to do as our part of the network of communities he is establishing with Hope Whitby to our North and RestoreFiley to our south, and FAMILYLights here in Scarborough. That vision was brought to our October 2018 Church Meeting and affirmed as what we believed God was saying to us. At the beginning of 2019 we used the words below to covenant together to live out that vision.

Our covenant is as a community of God's people. In the Bible faith is always expressed in community. The biblical authors had no concept of individualism as such, and we recognise that we are called to live out our lives as community. Our community here in Ebenezer is made up of those who have applied for and been accepted into membership, and those who worship with us regularly but have yet to take that step of covenant commitment into membership. We are one body in Christ.

There are seven things we believe God is calling us to be and to live out.

1. We are to be a place of strength and stability - a tree with deep roots

We recognise that all parts of a tree are vital for growth and fruit. Our foundation is in Jesus Christ, and wherever we are we are serving him.

We have a particular role in providing strength and stability to the Missional Communities in our network both within and outside Scarborough, to be a place of refreshment, nurture and encouragement for those involved as well as providing resources, support and help.

The apostle Paul wrote no-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Christ Jesus. If any person builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light.

We commit to being a people deeply rooted in Christ, bringing the best that we have in service of each other and the communities that God has established around us.

2. We are to be a place of mission with roots that spread out and break hard ground. We are to let our branches extend with a particular focus on local mission.

We understand that mission is about being family with people that we meet day to day, we can learn much from our Missional Communities but we realise that God will lead us in different ways as he will and that he will use each one of us according to the gifting that he gives us.

Jesus said "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." He also said "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

We are a missionary people sent and empowered by Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the kingdom of God and to demonstrate the kingdom's power to those we meet. We will be a light in the darkness wherever we find ourselves to be.

3. We are called to be a place of growth.

We are called to encourage those who can pioneer and we understand that we must be willing to go with the pioneers as they take risks for the kingdom of God. As Missional Communities spread we have seen that new congregations form where people live. We recognise that forming these takes vision, clarity and passion.

We commit to praying into the vision of beacons of lights on the east coast. We understand that beacons are not just visible, they are used to communicate to places where they can be seen.

We will attend to our own spiritual growth, worshipping together, fellowshiping, teaching and praying. We will connect relationally as we spread out always remembering that we are recognised by our love for one another.

God said through the prophet Isaiah "Enlarge the place of your tent". Acts records that every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

We will be faithful in prayer for the extension of God's kingdom in Scarborough and up and down this eastern coast as far inland as our tent extends. We promise to never give up the habit of meeting together, and we will seek to help each other to grow as disciples of Jesus and to encourage others to accept the offer of salvation that Jesus makes.

4. We are called to be a place of support - a hub supporting the spokes. We are to be a place of spiritual nourishment that provides refreshment and encouragement.

We see that our home groups are hubs that support the spokes, providing prayer cover, finance and practical help to our other groups as they form in Filey, Cayton, Scarborough, Allerston and Whitby, and in other places as God will lead us.

We understand the importance of sharing our stories, finding space and time to share them well and to encourage each other through them.

Strong trees grow slowly, plants which grow quickly are often insecure. A healthy tree has a strong trunk, then over time large mature branches support smaller ones. New growth produces fruit, but fruit requires regular and careful pruning.

The apostle Paul wrote "the body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

As one body we will watch out for and look after our many parts, providing refreshment and encouragement to each other. We will share the stories of God's goodness and provision with each other, and we commit to give generously to, pray wholeheartedly for, and practically serve God's mission around us.

5. We are called to be a place of empowerment - training, discipling, and releasing people in their gifts
Godly leadership submitted to the authority of Christ is vital within God's church and we commit to developing, training and releasing those that God calls into leadership amongst us. We recognise the need for spiritually mature Christians to lead, who can be a role model and who are accountable, not rushing to put people into positions of responsibility but ensuring they are ready in character, understanding and experience.

Life long discipleship is fundamental training for all Christians, and we will encourage places of intentional discipleship for everybody to focus on character and skills development. We each recognise the need to be in relationships of accountability with others, to offer to disciple others, and to be open to being disciplined by others.

The apostle Paul wrote "Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever."

We will lovingly watch over each other, striving always to help each other to run the race and win the prize. We will encourage and support each other as spiritual gifts are developed and released amongst us, and we will spur each other on to fulness in Christ.

6. We are called to be a place of unity, inclusive of all, determined to maintain unity.
When Nehemiah rebuilt the wall everybody worked together, each on their own section. We must attend to unity and make every effort to connect and remain connected with each other.

The letter to the Ephesians reminds us that we are fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

We commit to love each other, to make every effort as far as it depends on us to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. We will take our place in the work of God's mission to share the load, and to ensure that each one is supported and cared for.

7. Above all we are called to be a people who live lives dependent on God.
Although our lives can at times be busy we will yield them to God and put his calling on us as top priority both as a body of Christ together and individually. We will stand firm on the gospel, following God's leading and seeking him in prayer.

We understand that each of us has our own frontline where we encounter those who are not part of God's kingdom and we commit to supporting each other in those places. As a body we need to attend to God's call on us collectively and be ready to follow his leading, remembering that he has first call on our lives.

The letter to the Hebrews reminds us that faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Our faith is in God, it rests on his character and on his promises. It finds expression in trusting Jesus for our salvation, recognising God as our Father, and opening our lives to the empowerment and direction of God the Holy Spirit. We have been redeemed by God to love and serve him, to worship him, to glorify him, and to enjoy him forever.

With this in mind we break bread together and share the common cup.