UNITED

God's Tribe Church

TABLE OF CONTENTS **PAGE**

Welcome ……. 2

Beginnings ……. 2

Advance ……. 2

Statement of Faith ……. 3

Vision ……. 8

Values ……. 9

Philosophy of Giving ...……. 12

Leadership ……. 13

Membership ……. 14

Sources ……. 19

WELCOME

It is great to have you with us at United, a time where we take a look at

where we've come from,
where we are going,
and how you can be part of God's Tribe Church.

At God's Tribe Church, we love God, love people and love the city. With Jesus Christ as our foundation, we are excited about building people in God and building the city of Dar.

We are a diverse group of people and our diversity signifies that Jesus Christ died to redeem people from every tribe, language, people and nation. We accept each other just as we are, because that is how God accepts us. However, we know that God loves us too much to leave us the same - that is why he sent his Son Jesus to die for us.

We are really glad that you are thinking of joining God's Tribe Church and hope that this time together will

help you understand God's Tribe Church better,
and know whether this is the church for you.

There will be opportunities to ask questions, and this booklet will help you follow along.

BEGINNINGS

Sheshi Kaniki was born in Dar es Salaam Tanzania. At a young age, his family left Tanzania and he spent over 30 years living in several countries across the world, mainly in Southern Africa. He is married to Trudie, a Zimbabwean national, and they have three sons and one daughter. They lived in South Africa for over nine years. During this time Sheshi served as an elder at GodFirst Church in Johannesburg South Africa for about seven years.

It was while living in South Africa that God spoke to Sheshi about returning to the city of his forefathers. God called him to help rebuild the city and people's lives through planting churches. Sheshi, Trudie and their children arrived in Dar es Salaam in December 2012.

Kelvin and Belinda Massingham are originally from Cape Town in South Africa. They also arrived in Dar es Salaam in December 2012, with their three children. Kelvin and Belinda served on the leadership team of Jubilee Community Church in Cape Town for about 15 years. Over the years, God had spoken to them about going to other nations to rebuild broken walls in people's lives through church planting. The Massinghams now live in Nairobi and are part of OneTribe, the Advance church there.

Several families and individuals joined the team during the course of 2013. The church launched with a core group of about 15 adults and 20 children in September of that year.

ADVANCE

God's Tribe is part of Advance. **Advance** is a movement of **churches partnering** together to advance the **Gospel** through **planting** and **strengthening** churches. The name Advance is a practical way of describing our partnership, and expresses our primary purpose of taking new ground for the Gospel in cities and nations. For more information see http://www.advancemovement.com

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Introduction
This is the Statement of Faith for God's Tribe Church. These truths are what we regard, from our study of Scripture, as the core of the Christian Faith. We expect all members to be able to affirm this statement with a clear conscience.

The Bible
The Bible, made up of 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books, is the fully inspired Word of God (2 Peter 1:21). This book is God's revelation of Himself to mankind (1 Corinthians 14:37). Because it is God's revelation, it is free of error and our only authoritative guide for all of faith and life. Each book is to be interpreted according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord who speaks through it in living power. Scripture is not to be added to or taken away from. All believers should diligently study and apply the Bible to their lives (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Trinity
We believe that there is one God, infinite, eternal, all-powerful, holy, loving and true who exists in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each person is co-existent, co-equal and co-eternal. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit, yet each is truly God. The doctrine: One God, existing as Father, Son and Spirit, is foundational to all of Christianity. (Deuteronomy. 6:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 3:16-17)

God the Father
God the Father is the Sovereign Creator of heaven and earth, which He created out of nothing but His powerful Word (Genesis 1). By this same Word, He sustains all things in existence (Hebrews 1:3). Both His creating and sustaining is done so that He might rightly elicit praise for His glory from all of His creation. He rules over everything and none of His purposes can be thwarted, and all of His promises will be fulfilled (Isaiah 46:9-10; Ephesians 1:11). In His astounding grace, He gave His Son Jesus Christ to a lost and broken world, that it might be redeemed (John 3:16).

Jesus Christ
Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God (John 5:18), begotten not made (Hebrews 1:5-6), who is the Word made flesh (John 1:1-3). He was incarnated as a man, by being conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. He is both fully God (Colossians 2:9) and fully man and is perfect in every way. While being sinless, He has chosen to identify Himself with sinful humanity that it might be redeemed. Through Him all things were made, but He Himself is before all things, and in Him, all things hold together. He is the ultimate revelation of the Father: the true image of the invisible God. He offered Himself up for death on a cruel Roman cross as a substitute for those who would believe in Him. By rising from the dead, Jesus demonstrated that His sacrifice was accepted by the Father. He has now ascended into heaven, never to die again, from where He rules as Lord of all, interceding for His people, who eagerly await His return.

The Holy Spirit
The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity (Genesis 1:2) and comes to reveal to the world the Father and the Son (John 16:15). He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8-11). Through the preaching of the gospel (Romans 10:17), the Spirit

comes and makes people who were dead in their sin alive to God (Ephesians 2:4-5). He does this by uniting a new believer to Jesus, thus making a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). It is in this new person that the Holy Spirit then lives in (1 Corinthians 3:16). The Spirit leads the people of God to understand God's word (1 Corinthians 2:13); bear spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22-23) and becomes more like Jesus in character.

While all genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion (Ephesians 1:13-14), the New Testament indicates the importance of an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion as well. Being indwelt by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit are theologically distinct experiences. Believers are to continue asking God to fill them with His Spirit (Acts 4:29-31, Ephesians 5:18). The Holy Spirit empowers believers to live a godly life, to be witnesses for Jesus, and equips them with supernatural gifts (Galatians 5:16-26; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12 & 14; Romans 12; 1 Peter 4:10-11). All of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are in operation today, are vital for the mission of the church, and are to be earnestly desired and practiced.

Man

God made man, both male and female, in His own image, as the pinnacle of creation (Genesis 1:26, 27). Man was created to fellowship with God in a unique way. However, after being tempted by Satan, man rebelled against God and became estranged from his maker and subject to divine wrath. Incapable of returning to God without miraculous intervention on the part of God, man is ruined by sin, which affects all of him: mind, will and emotions (Romans 3:23). Unregenerate man lives under the dominion of sin and Satan, and is hostile to God (Ephesians 2:1-3). However, all people, whether regenerate or not, still bear the imprint of their Maker, and are therefore capable of great achievements in business, art, literature, politics, education and every sphere of life.

The Gospel

The Gospel is the exceedingly magnificent news that God has sent His Son to live a perfect life on behalf of sinful people who never could, and then die the death they deserved to die (John 3:16). The story of the Person of Jesus is therefore the Gospel. God, being perfectly holy, demanded justice for sin and could not "just forgive" anyone without His holiness being corrupted. Since before the foundation of the world God the Father chose us in Christ (Ephesians 1:4). The members of the Trinity planned amongst themselves to act in great love toward humanity by the Father sending His only Son to bear His just wrath for sin so that those who put their trust in the Son by the power of the Spirit may be acquitted of their rebellion. At the cross we see the perfect mix of God's love, mercy, holiness and judgement – and to the believer, this is an awe-inspiring sight (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Because even one sin cannot go unpunished by God, we learn in the Gospel that no amount of good works could ever make up for our accumulated sin. Therefore, we can only be saved by grace through trusting in Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf, and all religious systems or worldviews that suggest we can be made right with God through doing good works, are unbiblical (Ephesians 2:8-10). The Gospel both destroys any pride (since it is a *gift* of grace) and gives us great confidence (since God is the one who has done the work for us).

We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1; 38–39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; 1 Peter 1:5). While we cannot earn a right standing with God by doing good works, a life of righteousness and good works is the only appropriate response for someone who has believed the Gospel

(Galatians 5:13). So while the Gospel is good news to be believed, a holy lifestyle is an outworking and implication of believing the Gospel (James 1:22-26).

The Church

The church is known variously as the Family of God (Ephesians 3:15), People of God (1 Peter 2:9), the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 1:23), or the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:21-33; 2 Corinthians 11:2). Each of these phrases teaches the incredible value with which God regards His church. The church is not a religious institution, denomination, or building. Rather, the church consists of all those who have been regenerated by God to become genuine followers of Jesus, and who now no longer live for themselves, but for God who redeemed them. The church exists to worship God as our highest calling and joy, and to sweep others into this same joy by serving them and sharing the gospel with them. It is in the community of the church that believers learn how to follow Jesus as His disciples.

Jesus has promised to build His church and to give her the keys to unlock the kingdom of heaven on earth (Matthew 16:18-19). It is through the church that God plans to make his manifold wisdom known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10).

The church is universal and local. Local churches are led by qualified men known as elders, who are recognised as having being set apart by the Holy Spirit for this calling to guard, guide and govern the church. Elders are to be recognised according to strict standards of calling, competence and character, as laid out in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4). Deacons (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:8-13) assist the elders by leading areas of service in the church. Members (Ephesians 2:19; Colossians 3:15) are expected to participate joyfully and diligently in the life of the church, and must be prepared to follow the lead of the elders with a clear conscience.

The ascended Jesus has given the church apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers, to equip every believer for acts of service, so that the church may be built up and become mature (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptism is a visual demonstration of a person's union with Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). It signifies that his former way of life has been put to death and vividly depicts a person's release from the mastery of sin. Baptism is only intended for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become His disciple (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:41). Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the church, oneself and the world; a believer should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Lord's Supper symbolises the giving of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on our behalf, and is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death (Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). As we partake of the Lord's Supper with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls, and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body. As with Baptism, the Lord's Supper is to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are rich visual representations of the gospel, and are given for our assurance and comfort.

The Great Commission
The gospel of the kingdom is to be proclaimed to all nations before the end of this age comes (Matthew 24:14). We will follow the Great Commission that has been given to us by our Lord. He has commanded us to go and make disciples of all nations, to baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and to teach them to obey everything that he has commanded (Matthew 28:19-20).

We are called to go beyond making converts to making disciples. Jesus himself, during his time on earth modelled this in making disciples, primarily of 12 men. The great commission is not an optional extra but is a clear command given by Jesus to his followers.

Spiritual Warfare
Believers are engaged in spiritual warfare against the devil who seeks to steal, kill, destroy and devour (John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8). We are struggling against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12-13). Believers are to resist the devil and stand against his schemes (Ephesians 6:11; 1 Peter 5:9, James 4:7). Jesus has given believers authority to overcome the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19). With the armour of God we can be strong in God's mighty power and stand our ground in the day of evil (Ephesians 6:13). The weapons we use in spiritual battle have divine power to demolish strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Marriage
God ordained marriage as a covenantal union between one man and one woman, which he established at creation and which the Lord Jesus and his apostles affirmed (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15-25; Matthew 19:4-6; Colossians 3:18-22; Hebrews 13:4). God instituted monogamous marriage between male and female as the foundation of the family and the basic structure of human society. Marriage is exclusively the union of one genetic male and one genetic female. God intends marriage to reflect the union between Christ and the Church. Men and women are made in the image of God and therefore have equal dignity and worth. However, a husband and a wife have been given different roles within the marriage relationship to fulfil God's design. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, while a wife is to submit herself to the loving leadership of her husband just as the Church willingly submits to the headship of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Corinthians 11:3-12).

Scripture prohibits sexual acts outside the bounds of God-ordained marriage—including fornication, adultery, homosexuality, polygamy, and any other sexually immoral practices (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4). But forgiveness of sin and cleansing is offered to all in the name of Christ through repentance and faith (1 Corinthians 6:11).

The Consummation
The consummation of all things will be inaugurated by the physical, visible and glorious return of Jesus Christ, who will return in great power and glory to be seen by all (Acts 1:11; Titus 2:13), unlike his first coming in relative obscurity. Satan, his followers and all those outside of Christ, alive or dead, will be judged and cast eternally from the benevolent presence of God into a place known as hell, and will experience eternal conscious punishment for their sins (Revelation 20:10)

Those who have experienced the saving grace of God will, however, be given glorious bodies that will be united with their eternal souls (1 Corinthians 15). These ransomed people will live and reign with God forever and ever, enjoying life free of sin, and an earth redeemed from the curse of sin. And so the People of God will be with God in His place, serving, working, playing, eating, drinking, reigning, and singing, to His glory and their joy, forever and ever, without end. Then shall the eager expectation of creation be fulfilled and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God, who makes all things new. In this we put our hope.

VISION

The vision of God's Tribe is:

Make disciples, plant and strengthen churches, leading to transformed lives and communities.

Let us break down the vision:

Disciples of Jesus
In obedience to the Great Commission, the primary goal of God's Tribe is to see people come to faith in Jesus and grow into mature disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). We aim to have disciples that have a deep love for Jesus, demonstrated by a radical commitment to obeying what he commands (John 14:15; John 14:23) and a sincere and genuine love for one another (John 13:35).

Planting New Churches
God in his sovereignty has chosen to reveal his wisdom through the church (Ephesians 3:10). He has also called the church to stand against the gates of hell and has entrusted the keys of his kingdom to the church (Matthew 16:18-19). New churches are presented in the bible as the most effective means of establishing communities of believers. The church is the primary engine for God's redemptive work on earth. The church puts on display God's love for the lost.

God's Tribe Church will plant churches that: are led by called and gifted leaders, honour God's word, rely on the Holy Spirit, equip their people for good works, remember the poor, and continually make disciples.

Strengthening Existing Churches
This refers to strengthening foundations (what holds up the church) and rebuilding walls (what demarcates and protects the church) (Isaiah 58:12; Nehemiah 1:17-18).

God's Tribe believes God has called us to restore the church in East Africa. Areas that will be included in this restorative work include doctrine, the work of the Holy Spirit, building up of disciples, and church leadership.

Transformed Lives and Communities
God wants to transform our lives, not just give us information. Renewed minds, different priorities, and new behaviour are marks of a disciple. As we experience this life change individually and corporately, our communities will also be transformed.

VALUES

Things We Especially Value About God:

His Gospel: The gospel is Jesus. Gospel literally means "good news", and it refers to the message about Jesus' life, death and resurrection and the resulting benefits that come our way. The two primary works of the Gospel are to **save us** and to **empower us** to live saved. Most Christians have got the concept of the Gospel as the means of entering the Christian life, but thereafter are unsure how to grow in the Gospel by steadily applying it to their lives. The result can be schizophrenic Christians who understand that they **got saved** by the Gospel of grace, but thereafter try and **live saved** through their own efforts. Effort is important, but is in vain if not rooted in the life-changing truth and supernatural power of the Gospel. Paul says that we initially receive the Gospel and thereafter we need to take our 'stand' on the Gospel, hold firmly to it, and become established in it. We gradually grow into the Gospel of grace.

His Sovereignty: The doctrine of God's Sovereignty 'lies at the foundation of Christian theology… the centre of gravity in the solar system of Christian truth…the cord upon which all other doctrines are strung like so many pearls, holding them in place and giving them unity'. Although our choices and actions really matter, understanding that our Sovereign Father is actively ruling and reigning now lays the axe to a man-centred "gospel", producing believers and churches that are humble yet confident, worshipful yet hard-working, purposeful but not driven, peaceful but not apathetic, and who sleep well at night!

His Grace: Closely related to God's Sovereignty is His grace. Newcomers often remark on the atmosphere of friendliness and acceptance. This flows directly from our theology of grace. Here's how it works: God's acceptance of us is undeserved and unconditional. (In fact, it is better than unconditional because He accepts us as we are, but graciously then works to form us into the image of Jesus). And, Jesus said that we should love each other as he has loved us, which means that we accept one another unconditionally, not on the basis of performance, but on the basis of grace. Grace makes for a secure, free and joyful community of people.

His Word and His Spirit: The church was established through the Word and the Spirit. Paul encouraged fullness of both Word and Spirit. Early church life throbbed with both rich theology and signs and wonders. To this end, in our Sunday meetings we set aside at least half an hour for preaching from the Bible, and we allow the Holy Spirit to lead our meetings. We eagerly desire the spiritual gifts, and have regular opportunities for being filled with the Holy Spirit. Remember, just Word and you dry up. Just Spirit and you blow up. Word and Spirit you grow up.

Things We Especially Value About The Church:

The Community: God exists as a community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus came to live in close relationship with His disciples, and built authentic community with them. He explained to them that others will know they are His disciples by the love they have for one another. The bible presents the church as a close community that pursues unity, eats together, shares each other's burdens and makes sacrifices for each other.

The Mission: Without biblical clarity on the primary purpose of the church, the measure of 'successful church' becomes the aspect of church that a person is most passionate about. We are certain that biblically there is only one contender for the top spot – mission, meaning that the primary function of the Church is to help unbelievers become believers. So, we regard ourselves primarily as missionaries, and the primary role of our leaders is to model, equip and organise the church to mission in Dar es Salaam, other parts of Tanzania and the East African region. No one gets bored with church or looks for super-spiritual thrills, because they are increasingly thrilled and effective in seeing people saved and discipled.

The Diversity: We are committed to building a diverse church that includes many different cultures, languages and age groups. This stems from our theological conviction that diversity glorifies God more than uniformity: "With your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). Did you see it? Who could make us all one – only Jesus! Only He has the ability to be relevant to all nations, and make us God's Tribe. God is more glorified by diversity than by uniformity because it reveals His Lordship over all things.

The Kingdom: The Kingdom of God refers to the reality of God's reign in all areas of society, not just within the 'four walls' of the church. The Church is part of the Kingdom, and within the Kingdom all callings are sacred and we are all in 'full-time' Christian work, being salt, light and yeast in the workplace. To this end, we are committed to empowering believers to influence society with Kingdom values.

Groups of People We Especially Value

The Lost: This group is obviously our top priority. We work hard to evangelise with the conviction that every follower of Jesus has a mandate to help unbelievers put their faith in Him. We also contextualise the gospel to make it as easy as possible for unbelievers to explore the claims and teachings of Christ. Our message is unchanging but our culture is changing, therefore the communication of our message needs to be contextualised. The Bible determines what our message is, but our cultural context influences how we present that message. Therefore, we are students of not only the Bible but also of culture. Contextualisation means connection, not compromise. We receive the good in culture, and reject or redeem the bad.

The Next Generation: The race that we are running is a relay race where success includes getting those behind us to the tape as well as ourselves. As we read in Judges, this does not happen automatically.

"And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110 years. And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel" (Judges 2:8-10).

Whilst honouring the role of the nuclear family, we also feel a corporate responsibility for raising the children in the church. To this end we hope to have top-notch kids and youth departments, are alert to single parent families, and place a high value on marriage and parenting.

The Poor: We believe that the poor have a very special place with God. Gifts given to the poor please Him. The early church leaders instructed Paul to remember the poor. To this end we aim to support poor people within and outside our church community. This support will take various forms including financial, in-kind and empowering initiatives such as education for underprivileged people.

The City: We believe that God has brought us to Dar es Salaam to settle down, engage, and work for the health and prosperity of the city. Our aim is to build the city by building its people on the foundation of Jesus Christ. We thank God for the pace, passion, wealth and entrepreneurial spirit of the city, and for its influence across the nation and East Africa, and we work to harness these characteristics for the advance of God's kingdom.

"Build houses, settle down, marry, have sons and daughters, increase in number there, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jeremiah 29:4).

Actions We Especially Value:

Worship: Both the Old and New Testament explain that God formed his people so that they declare praises to Him. All of life is worship. However, there is a special place for worship through music which includes singing and instruments, and actions such as clapping, dancing, and raising hands. We believe that God's presence is available to true worshipers and desire our church to be a place where He is passionately worshipped in an atmosphere of freedom.

Discipleship: Following Jesus is joyful, yet costly. It requires losing one's life in order to gain it. We are committed to helping each other grow in godliness. Jesus said we should make disciples, baptise them and teach them to obey everything that he has commanded. To be a disciple means multiplying yourself in the lives of others. Discipleship is about bearing fruit for God in your own life, and helping others to do the same in their lives.

Prayer: A person's level of prayer reflects his level of dependency on God and closeness to God. Prayer is a high privilege that keeps us peaceful, powerful and effective. To this end we encourage individual prayer, and have various contexts for corporate prayer. Weekly prayer meetings started shortly after our arrival in Dar es Salaam.

Serving: Jesus himself did not come to be served, but rather to serve. We don't just serve in order to get the job done, but to imitate Christ and develop godly maturity because serving is a fundamental characteristic of the Christian life. Jesus said that greatness in His eyes is to serve and demonstrated this by washing His disciples feet and ultimately by dying on the cross for the sins of mankind.

Hospitality: The primary biblical metaphor for the church is a family, and we are passionate about protecting the family atmosphere of our church. The main gift that ensures this is that of hospitality – words, actions and attitudes of love and acceptance towards others. Some may prefer a more structured approach, others a more spontaneous approach. We hope to regularly invite people to share a meal in our homes. We also regard the Sunday venue as a place to show hospitality by being there early and late, meeting and greeting, and keeping an eye out for those that are not part of our community.

Generosity: We are committed to imitating God's generosity by being generous with our money. Here is a good place to talk about our philosophy of giving.

PHILOSOPHY OF GIVING

Giving away money is a huge theme in Scripture. It is ultimately an issue of worship: you cannot serve both God and Money. The Bible speaks of the benefits of giving and warns of the perils of not giving. A helpful passage is 2 Corinthians 8:7:

But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

As good as contributions in other areas might be, they don't excuse lack of **excellence** in giving. That doesn't compensate for lack of giving, and our giving should be **excellent**. But notice he says **the key** is to understand how **grace** relates to giving.

People **often ask if we *have to* tithe today**, similar to what happened in the Old Testament. Of course not. The Bible says we are not under law but under grace (Romans 6:14). However, we now have a motivation to give way more. While those in the Old Testament experienced God's grace, compared to us, they had limited understanding of how far God would go to save His people. Now that we see that God did not even spare His very best – His own Son – and the radical nature of God's grace has become abundantly clear, we are now more motivated and empowered to give radically and sacrificially.

So, in terms of "how much should I give", the answer is that **it would probably be strange to give *less* now** that we know what God has done for us in Jesus!

How Do we Apply These Principles to Church Membership?

Church membership can only be meaningful if we agree on some application of biblical principles to church life. For example, we apply the biblical imperative of meeting together as attending Sunday and Life Group meetings.

Similarly with giving, it is helpful to have a shared application for membership. Our application is for each member to give in the zone of 10% gross income per month. This comes from a combination of considering the following biblical principles:

1. Giving **generously** in view of the gift of Jesus to us.
2. Giving **proportionally**. Setting a baseline amount (e.g. 10%) is a huge assist in helping us be consistent and disciplined in giving.
3. Giving being both **bearable** yet **sacrificial**.
4. **Leadership wisdom and application**: Experience shows that each member giving around 10% gross income to the church is what it takes for us to do the mission of God well and sustainably.

This amount might seem a lot to those who have not done this before, and it might take a while to work up to giving this amount. Conversely, it might seem a little to those who have been in this kind of habit for years, and who may well give more. Either way, our heart is "how much can I give" not "how much can I keep."

Application: We want all our members embrace our philosophy of giving whole-heartedly in order to stay free from the love of money, and to finance the mission of God through the church.

LEADERSHIP

How Do We Try To Lead?
In keeping with the leadership layout of Jesus and Paul, we try to lead gently, humbly, and approachably, in a down-to-earth manner, with servant hearts, through example, with God's authority but respecting individual conscience, and through team (based mostly on Hebrews 13:7-24).

How Do We Try To Follow?
In turn, we encourage followers to follow by emulating our example, honouring the reality that we must give account to God, obeying us (within the bounds of God's Word and conscience), helping us enjoy our leadership, and by praying for us (based mostly on Hebrews 13:7-24).

Who's Who?
Jesus is the head of the Church. This means we prayerfully look to Him for direction and leadership style. God's Tribe is led by an eldership team led by Sheshi Kaniki. The eldership team develops **pastoral teams** and **serving teams** to help them lead the church. We also receive external support, advice and accountability from a wider network of **apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor/teachers** through Advance.

MEMBERSHIP

Why Membership?

Five Reasons Why we Believe in Membership
John Piper gives the following as reasons for church membership:

1. **Membership is implied by the way the New Testament requires elders to shepherd the flock under their care**

Acts 20:28 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.

As shepherds, there is a particular flock that elders are to keep watch over. There is a particular flock that is under your care. A shepherd is not concerned for all the sheep that he sees grazing in the pasture. He is concerned about his sheep.

2. **Membership is implied in the biblical requirement that Christians be submissive to their leaders and leaders give an account**

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

This presents a relationship with boundaries. Submission is to those who lead you. You can't submit to the universal church in this tangible way. You can't submit to the elders of a local church down the road in this way. You can only submit to a local church that you are a member of in this way.

Leaders will have to give an account of their leadership to God. This is one of the most sobering aspects of leadership. There needs to be a way of defining who they are accountable for. They can't be accountable for every Christian, otherwise it is a completely hopeless situation. They can only be accountable for those who are members of the church they lead.

3. **Membership is implied by the metaphor of the body**

1 Corinthians 12:12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

We are members (parts of) Christ's body. The context of these verses is Paul teaching about spiritual gifts to the church in Corinth. He uses the image of the body to explain that people in a church have been given different spiritual gifts. Just as there are different body parts, there are also different spiritual gifts.

When we talk of being dis-membered we are talking about losing one of our body parts. In this description of the church as the body of Christ, all the body parts are included. This is a helpful way of looking at a local church like ours. Gifts have been given by the Holy Spirit to allow us to have ears, eyes, mouth, spine, heart, feet, legs, arms, hands and everything else. In order for the body to function well, every body part must be doing its part.

4. Membership is implied by the way the church is supposed to undertake discipline
Matthew 18:15-17 If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

This process of discipline assumes a group of people to whom you can bring the issue of offence to. It assumes a group that you can go through this process of discipline with. Who is that group? It isn't the universal church. They do not know you, they do not know the person who has sinned against you. It must be a local church where you and the offender have relationship with other believers that can help you resolve the issue. It must be a local church where you are members.

5. Membership is implied by the fact that excommunication exists
1 Corinthians 5:12-13 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

The problem of sexual immorality plagued the city at large and the church in Corinth, so it kept coming up in Paul's letter to them. Paul's concern here is not so much those outside the church, but primarily those inside it. Such a removal – being expelled – can only happen where there is membership. You cannot be expelled from something you are not a member of. You can only be expelled if you are a member of a local church.

Individuals who have never experienced the joy and delight of belonging to a loving and vital Christian body have missed one of the thrills of the Christian life. Mere "church-going" was never in God's plan for you. He wants you very closely knit with a group of dear friends with whom you can share your life. (Terry Virgo)

Expectations
Each of us will express our membership in unique ways due to our individual passions and gifts, but here are the main things that we all do:

1. Submit to leadership
Willingly submit to the leadership team of God's Tribe Church within the bounds of God's Word and conscience.

2. Together through Sunday meetings
Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near

In today's individualistic and independent culture where many things compete for our time and energy, it is important to reaffirm the importance of meeting together as a church on Sundays. We gather on Sundays to worship God, to hear his Word, to imitate Jesus and the early church, to mature and grow, and to provide a context for non-Christians to come to faith.

3. Together through life groups
Life Groups are communities of 8 to 20 people where we can feel a sense of belonging and be on mission as a team of friends. All God's Tribe members are attached to a Life Group to ensure pastoral care and healthy connection.

4. Together through serving teams
Jesus came to serve, rather than to be served and the Bible heralds serving as a sign of spiritual maturity. To this end, every member is part of some kind of Serving Team. Many are Sunday Serving Teams (welcome, hospitality, kids, set-up, etc.), and others are teams that serve in other ways and at other times (admin, counselling etc.).

5. Together through sharing our faith
We are all witnesses for Jesus. We all know and meet people that are not Christians. Every member is committed to regularly sharing the gospel with people they are in relationship with and others.

6. Together through financial giving
As outlined previously, we want all our members to embrace our philosophy of giving whole-heartedly in order to stay free from the love of money, and to finance the mission of God through the church.

Membership Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can I become a member if I am not a Christian?
We expect that non-Christians become part of the God's Tribe Church community, enjoying the friendship, vibe and teaching whilst they take time to explore the claims and teachings of Christ. Crossing **the line of faith** is the moment that you become part of "the body of Christ" which is the worldwide church consisting of all believers. This step needs to be taken before crossing **the line of membership** to the local church. Why not do that now? Or if you need more time, please remain fully part of our God's Tribe community whilst you consider becoming a Christian.

2. Can I be part of two churches?
Common sense and experience says "no", due to the tensions of trying to chase two rabbits at the same time. Exceptions might include professionals, students, volunteers and others who are temporarily living away from their home town or country.

3. How do I leave God's Tribe?
When you joined us, you allowed us the privilege of sharing in that decision, and ideally a decision to leave us would be made with similar consultation, and a warm and brotherly spirit. Therefore, if you begin to sense that you should leave (for whatever reason), please talk to your pastor as soon as you reach that point. Please try to avoid making the decision and then informing us afterwards, as this isn't particularly brotherly or honouring.

Please Unite With Us

And Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will do good to you, for the LORD has promised good to Israel." But he said to him, "I will not go. I will depart to my own land and to my kindred." And he said, "Please do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us. And if you do go with us, whatever good the LORD will do to us, the same will we do to you." (Numbers 10:29-32)

Like Moses we….

are confident in our calling, and therefore bold in asking you to join us. We will "treat you well." It would be a privilege to lead and serve you.

Like Hobab, you…

might be a little resistant to change and nervous about a new adventure.

If so, like Moses we…

are not giving up on you so easily! Please join us. We need you, and you may need us too. One thing's for sure: we can do more together than apart.

How Can I Become A Member?

1. Kindly fill out and hand in the Membership Information Form.
2. Get involved in the life of the church.

What If I am Moving Church?

For some of us, God's Tribe Church is our first church because this is where we crossed the line of faith. Others of us have moved into our part of Dar from other parts of the city, nation or world. At times people feel their season at their current church is over and want to join us. There are several viable reasons for changing church, either from another church, or from us to another church.

1. Doctrinal reasons

As individuals and churches develop, theology sometimes adjusts. For example, churches can either veer into more or less of the Holy Spirit, or more or less into grace or legalism, or more or less into belief in the sovereignty of God. If you are not able to line up your conscience with the core doctrines of your church, then you need to change churches to be in one where you are theologically comfortable. We are talking here about differences in major doctrines, not peripheral interpretations or personal preferences.

2. Leadership/vision reasons

You need to follow the leaders and vision of your church with faith and a clear conscience. Again, we are talking about the big picture rather than smaller issues and minor rubs and niggles. If you finally get to a place where you can't follow with joy, faith and a clear conscience then you need to respectfully relocate to a church where you can follow the leaders and vision with a clear conscience.

3. Fresh challenge reasons

If you are sure that by moving to God's Tribe Church you will be significantly more provoked to (a) being a more radical and holy Christ-follower and (b) being a modern-day urban missionary, then those are probably good reasons to move.

But only you and God know your motives, and if you are actually running away from your church because of rebellious and divisive attitudes, then you need to stay put and work through those issues.

If you are leaving, it is important to leave as well as you possibly can with respectful and clear communication with your former leaders at your previous church, and with your new leaders at God's Tribe Church.

SOURCES

Piper, J. (2008), http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/how-important-is-church-membership.

Smyth, P.J. (2012), Get Connected. GodFirst Church Booklet for Those Considering Membership.

Smyth, P.J. (2015), Elder Led Churches. Notes at Advance Global 2015.

GodFirst Fourways, http://godfirst.co.za/site/fourways/

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version.