



# Joining the Salt & Light family

Version 0.5

Author: Edited from an original paper by Steve Thomas and discussion at European Apostolic Team meetings.

## 1. Introduction

We are often asked “How do we ‘join’ the Salt & Light Family?” That question is rather like asking ‘How do I find a wife/husband?’

Marriage certainly doesn’t happen overnight; there is a process of getting to know one another, feeling comfortable with one another, being clear that our values and goals are the same – and that we love the one we are considering committing ourselves to (and are happy with their wider family too!). Nor is the marriage completed when we have just signed a piece of paper to commit oneself – that’s only the start of things!

That’s rather how it is with becoming part of the Salt & Light family.

## 2. Shared values

Foundational to being able to walk together is having shared vision and shared values.

We do not have a ‘basis of faith’ as many Christian groups, denominations or missions do, because we have never seen ourselves as an *organisation* but rather as a *relational network*. God has joined us together over the years on the basis of *who we are* rather than through *what we believe*. However, we have certain ‘values’ that are foundational to us and that we would expect all those who join our family to share with us. These include:

4 pillars: We want to be

- **Word-based**
- **Christ-centred**
- **Spirit-led**
- **Mission-minded**

We are also committed to:

- **Relationships in the Body of Christ** as essential to mutual upbuilding and the transmission of life to all of God’s people.
- **Five-fold ministries** as God’s plan to build up his church, so that each member of the church is strong and released to function in God’s world.
- **Personal discipleship** as a key to care, accountability and fruitfulness in every member of the church.
- **The church as family**, which comes together under leaders who exercise fatherhood in that family.

### 3. Shared vision

Values get worked out in vision. Our vision is expressed in our mission statement “a family together on mission.”

- We have a vision for the church as family, and want to see church internally strong, under clear caring leadership.
- We believe each church family needs to have a clear sense of vision:
  - to reach those around us with the good news of Christ
  - to bring the presence and love of King Jesus into their local community by word and action
  - to bless the nations as God directs
- We believe every local church needs to be well-related with other churches. There is more we can do together than any of us can do on our own. Strong external relationships will help us to further Christ’s mission on earth.

### 4. How do we differ from other networks?

We are often asked how we differ from other similar networks. In many aspects, we are very similar; but there are perhaps 2 things that mark us out:

1. We remain first and foremost a *family* of leaders and churches, rather than an organisation. This is reflected in our structures (or, at times, lack of them!). It also means that the reality of the relationship will always be felt more by leadership than their people.
2. We remain focused on the local rather than the collective. While some other networks’ collective mission can perhaps lead to local churches finding their identity primarily in the corporate (with perhaps a resultant passivity locally, waiting for initiative elsewhere), our focus is in helping churches find their identity primarily in the local. This creates greater diversity – and challenges! Both models have strengths and weaknesses, which we need to be aware of.

### 5. A process

Joining any family doesn’t happen overnight – it’s a process.

1. Strong relationships take time to build. Time is essential for the building of trust and the discovery of mutual appreciation and blessing.
2. An understanding of relational life needs to develop, both through teaching and experience. Leaders need to be introduced to the wider network of relationships to get a ‘feel’ of what they are joining.
3. A growing understanding of our mission statement is paramount, otherwise disappointment and disillusionment will set in.
4. Issues of diversity need honest exploration. While we encourage local diversity, there are limits, and over the years we have made certain specific agreements together about how we want to build. For example, we will not ordain women as elders, but we do not insist on a particular modelling of discipling. Relational life limits our freedoms, our out mutual deference and respect.
5. The mutuality of relationships must be understood. People need to join us on the basis of what they ‘give’, and not just for what they ‘get’.
6. The issue of financial blessing and commitment needs exploring. There are no ‘fees’! But what we value, we invest in. Generous sowing makes for generous reaping.

7. More than one person needs to be involved in the process (on both sides) so that all the issues are covered and properly defined.
8. The “who” and “how” needs to be clarified. An understanding of how spiritual authority in such relationships works is essential as well as a definition of what that spiritual authority is.
9. The general goals and strategies of the relationship should be defined early on, with some immediate steps in the short-term built into the definition to bring focus.
10. While a relationship may begin between pastors, ultimately the church itself needs to be at peace with the process so that it too sees itself as becoming part of a wider family that brings it added strength and resources – and allows it to give to others too!

As we develop the relationship, the point will come where we are ready to make a decision about committing ourselves to the wider Salt & Light family. At that point we all need to be clear about the answers to some key questions:

- For those coming into relationship:
  - a. Do we feel this relationship is the joining of God? Is it a ‘life relationship’, or just a cry for help in a crisis?
  - b. Are we willing to receive Ephesians 4 ministries to strengthen the Body of Christ locally, recognising that adjustment and change may also be needed?
  - c. Are we ready to receive ‘sons’ that the apostolic link may send on his behalf?
  - d. Are we ready to take our place in a wider network of relationships?
- For those receiving leaders and churches into relationship:
  - a. Do we feel this relationship is the joining of God?
  - b. Is this a field God that has assigned to us? (2 Cor 10:13)
  - c. Who will be the focus for:
    - i. pastoral care of the leader?
    - ii. apostolic accountability and input from team ministry?
  - d. Can I see others that I need to draw in to work alongside me for the better equipping of the church? (I don’t have all the gifts!)
- For us all: Are we comfortable with one another’s
  - a. Doctrine?
  - b. Church government?
  - c. Values and practices?
  - d. Vision?

Being clear about such things ‘up-front’ make for the avoidance of misunderstandings later! Of course, not every issue has to be settled – but we do need to know that we are most certainly heading in the same direction!