



covenantmembership

Mission Community Church's Covenant Membership is birthed out of our love for the church body and its individual members, whom we hope will live life to the fullest as one finds a saving relationship with Jesus and helps others meet, know and follow Jesus. The primary purpose of this covenant is to serve as a teaching document with three functions:

- to clarify the biblical obligations and expectations for both the elders of Mission Community Church and the individual members of the Mission Community Church body
- to establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for the Mission Community Church body
- to serve as a tool for reflection and growth toward Christlikeness.

Each of these functions is in accordance with the document's overall vision to provide an accessible explanation of the Scriptures in hopes that Mission Community Church would grow in the grace and truth of Jesus Christ.

The Mission Community Church Membership Covenant is comprised of a section on the Church, the nature of covenants, the Statement of Basic Beliefs, the Statement of Theological Distinctives, the obligations of the Mission Community Church Elders to the Mission Community Church body and the obligations of individual members to the Mission Community Church body.

What Is the Church?

The church exists for the display of the glory of God because all things exist for His glory. Those of us who trust in and follow Jesus are caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. We have graciously been invited into God's redemptive purposes in the world as *a gospel people on a gospel mission!*

Since the beginning, God has been creating and calling forth His people for the display of His glory in a grand narrative of redemption and reconciliation. Though creation now suffers the curse of Genesis 3, the gospel is the means by which the world is being made right. The gospel also carries with it the promise of ultimate renewal, a restoration even more glorious than Eden, and thus believers eagerly anticipate the return of Jesus. The Church universal (i.e., all believers, everywhere) is the means by which God is fulfilling His purposes in the world (2 Cor. 5:17-20). The Church universal is being used to write God's beautiful and dramatic story of redemption and reconciliation. In light of this reality, the opportunity to join a local church body (i.e., a particular community of believers in a particular locale) is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in the community; it is also a sacred call to be involved in the redemptive work of our sovereign God to push back the darkness of a fallen world through the power of the Holy Spirit with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (Eph. 2:19), the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2,9) and the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31). First Corinthians 12 speaks of many members within the same body. Just as a human body relies upon mutual dependence of individual members for proper functioning, so the body of Christ requires sacrificial and



responsible service by its individual members. As the Scriptures say, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Cor. 12:21). Likewise, a member of the church cannot say to another member that he or she is unnecessary. We all have gifts that differ according to the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:3-8). Contrary to the beliefs of our culture, we need each other.

Membership at Mission Community Church is participation in a family, a microcosm of the universal household of God. All members are united to Christ and thus to each other. Unity within the church is expressed in love for God and a love for others, both those within the family and those who are not. Because of the identification of Christ with His Church, Christians are expected to display His gospel in a manner which is worthy of Him (Eph.4:1).

What Is a Covenant?

A covenant is generally defined as "a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action." Within the Scriptures, we find a number of examples of covenants, some between God and man (Gen. 6, 9, 15; Ezek. 20; Hos. 2; Jer. 31; Matt. 26), while others are solely between men (1 Sam. 18; 2 Sam. 5). In some covenants, one party binds his or herself to fulfill the obligations of both sides of the agreement. In others, the parties are reciprocally bound to adhere to the obligations. While God's covenant with the Church universal is an example of the former, the local church covenant represents the latter. If at any time one of the parties of this church covenant continues in a state of unfaithfulness to its provisions, the other is released from certain obligations.

The Membership Covenant of Mission Community Church contains many conditions that are merely general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, whether members of Mission Community Church or elsewhere, are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. . . . Such requirements are universal obligations for the follower of Jesus, regardless of any failure on the part of local church to live up to her covenant obligations.

If at any time an individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness, then the member is freed from his or her membership obligations and encouraged to seek membership elsewhere given the church's disobedience. In addition, certain circumstances may provide sufficient and righteous grounds to transfer membership elsewhere.

While focusing primarily in language on the responsibilities between the individual parties, the corporate church body, her elders and her individual members, the covenant is first and foremost an acknowledgement of general Christian obligations and an agreement to enter into those duties for God's glory and the good of the body and bride of His Son.

Our Beliefs (Essential Issues of Theology)

The gospel is the hope of the world. As we read the Scriptures, we see the overarching themes of God's providence, power and provision to reconcile mankind and the created world to Himself

through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. In light of this, we aim to be explicitly gospel-centered in all that we preach, teach and practice.

We believe:

- The Bible is God's written word of who He is and what He has done in rescuing man throughout redemptive history. Human authors wrote the Bible under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. Since the Bible contains the very words of God, it is without error and completely relevant to live an abundant, godly life. God's Word is His love letter to us! (Psalm 19:7-11; Proverbs 30:5; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21)
- The one, true God eternally exists in perfect relationship in three distinct persons, each with the same divine nature – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Each person serves different functions, yet each person is equally divine. God exists as a Trinity! (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6; Matthew 28:17-20; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14)
- God is incomprehensible and knowable; He is transcendent and imminent; He is great and good; He is all-knowing, unchanging, loving, just, gracious, merciful and above all, holy. He is ever faithful to His people and promises. God is heavenly Father! (Job 38-40:1; Psalm 104:1; Matthew 6:9-13; John 20:17; 2 Corinthians 1:3)
- Jesus is completely human and completely divine. Jesus is the only way to have a relationship with God the Father. Because He lived a sinless life, Jesus satisfied God's demand for perfection. Perfect Jesus was punished for the sins of all people and defeated death through resurrection so that mankind could have a relationship with God the Father. Jesus is our Savior and King! (John 1:1-4, 29; 10:1-18; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3; 1 Peter 3:18)
- The Holy Spirit brings the reality of God's presence to God's people. He is a person who draws people to the Father, exalts Christ, convicts people of sin and guides the community of faith in all truth. The Holy Spirit comforts, imparts gifts and makes us more like Jesus. God empowers every believer! (Psalm 139:7-10; John 14:26; 16:7, 14; Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 12:11)
- God created man in His very own image and likeness; therefore, man is more like God than anything else in all creation. Man was created to be in perfect relationship with God by glorifying God through worship. Although God has no unmet needs, man brings delight to His heart as he lives in right relationship with Him. God sings and rejoices over us! (Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 43:7; Zephaniah 3:17)
- God requires perfection because He is a perfect God; as soon as man sinned, our perfect relationship with Him was broken. Any time we do not uphold God's moral law or adhere to His holy character, we sin. We cannot maintain a right relationship with God in our own doing. Our sin keeps messing it up, but God continues to desire us anyway (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; 5:12; Ephesians 2:13)

- Man was created to exist forever. He will exist eternally either separated from God by sin in hell or united with God through forgiveness and salvation in Jesus in heaven. Heaven and hell are real places of eternal existence. God wants us with Him! (John 5:28-29; 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)
- God's salvation of His people involves rescuing people from sin and restoring them to a right relationship with Himself. God's only way of salvation is through the shed blood of Jesus on the cross, which provides forgiveness of sins. Salvation occurs when people place their faith and trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus as sufficient payment for their sin. God pursues us relentlessly! (John 3:18; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Timothy 2:5-6)
- The church is the community of God's redeemed people consisting of all who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation; it's a group of people with a common conviction based on faith and belief. There is ultimately one Church: the global community of faith on earth plus those already in heaven. In our world, the Church takes on the form of countless local communities of faith, who are committed to the teachings of Jesus, obeying His commands and bringing the Gospel to the world. As the church strives for love and unity, it gives glimpses of heavenly realities that are to come. God uses us to bring hope to others! (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:13-22; 1 Peter 2:5)

Our Distinctives (Defining Issues of Theology)

While the doctrines expressed above under "Our Beliefs (Essential Issues of Theology)" are recognized to be universal and primary within the Church, there are a number of secondary beliefs that we are passionate to proclaim. Not all Christians hold these beliefs, but they are nonetheless important and true as we understand the Scriptures. Complete agreement is not required for the sake of membership, but it should be known that we will preach, teach and counsel in accordance with these convictions

- God is the sovereign Creator of all that there is; there is no aspect of reality outside of His ultimate control. Though God is in control of all things, it is with respect to His ultimate control over the work of salvation that is a theological distinctive. Man is responsible for His sin; God is responsible for man's salvation. God draws men to Himself, reveals men of their sin and overcomes man's natural resistance to the gospel. (Psalm 115:3; 135:6; Ephesians 1:3-14; Romans 8:26-9:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:13)
- The same Spirit who gave gifts to the apostles and early church fathers is the same Spirit who empowers believers today. The gifts of the Spirit are given to us by the will of the Spirit and ought to be eagerly desired and practiced in submission to the Spirit. As Christians, we are to seek to live under His control daily. (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:1-16, 5:18)
- Once we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, baptism is a way for us to publicly declare our new life in Christ. It is also a step of obedience based on God's

commands and allows us to follow the example of Jesus, who submitted Himself to baptism to "fulfill all righteousness." Additionally, we as believers continue to remember and declare Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins and His conquering of sin and death by resurrection through the observance of the Lord's Supper. (Matthew 3:16-17, 28:18-20; Acts 2:41, 8:12; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32)

- The evolution of the church has taken place over the course of 2000+ years, yet we tend to focus all of our attention only on the last 500. The first 1500 years of church history is filled with rich traditions, but even more impressive are the foundations of the church that were developed by the apostles and early church fathers. Creeds, confessions and prayers passed down by the apostles and early church fathers served as "the rule of the faith" prior to the compilation of the Bible; therefore, we will honor the passing down of these traditions in order to preserve that which many gave their lives in defending.

Finally, I understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace; I will adhere to the "Our Beliefs (Essential Issues of Theology)" and I will not be divisive over "Our Distinctives (Defining Issues of Theology)".

Biblical Obligations of Mission Community Church

Elders to The Body of Mission Community Church

As shepherds and overseers of a local church, elders are entrusted with protecting, leading, equipping and caring for the corporate church body and her individual members. The following is a rather extensive overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures.

The elders covenant:

- to appoint elders and deacons, including staff members who serve in these offices, according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- to prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following of the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- to care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth and love (Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:1).
- to equip the members of the church for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- to be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).

- to lovingly exercise discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined and the health of the church as a whole (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).
- to set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below (Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:3).

Biblical Obligations of the Members to The Body of Mission Community Church

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as “living by the Spirit” (Rom. 8). The requirements of the Membership Covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible yet non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces.

I covenant:

- to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- to pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of spiritual disciplines (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22).
- to follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church:
 - by being baptized after my conversion, and
 - by regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through communion.
- to regularly participate in the life of Mission Community Church by attending weekly services, engaging in gospel-centered community and serving those within and outside of this church (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14).
- to steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, treasures (i.e. finances) and spiritual gifts. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in the community that is sacrificial, cheerful and voluntary (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- by God’s grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:1-3). Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit. Below are a few examples of actions addressed in the Scriptures:

- o I will practice complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity means, among other things, that regardless of my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, homosexuality, premarital sex and pornography (Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4).
 - o I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation at Mission Community Church before pursuing divorce from my spouse (Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11; for the role of the church in the process of divorce, see Paul's concern for the resolution of legal matters within the assembly of the church in 1 Corinthians 6).
 - o I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (Romans 1:28-32, 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18).
- to refrain from such activities that the Scriptures would deem foolish (Romans 14:14-23).
 - to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another (1 Corinthians 8:1-13).
 - to submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:
 - o following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another—the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
 - o receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11).
 - to do the following when I sin:
 - o confess my sin to God and to fellow believers (as appropriate)
 - o repent and seek help to put my sin to death (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10).
 - to submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5).
 - to do the following should I leave the church for righteous reasons:
 - o to notify the appropriate staff member on the campus I attend.
 - o to seek another church with which I can carry out my biblical responsibilities as a believer.

Signature of Member: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name of Member: _____

Signature of Witnessing Elder: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name of Elder: _____