



CHURCH MEMBERSHIP PACKAGE

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MEMBERSHIP PROCESS & CHECKLIST

Joining a church is a serious decision. You will have to know something about the church before you decide to join it. You will want to understand the beliefs and practices of the church, as well as what you are committing yourself to when you join the church. The church also wants to know something about you! We need to know that you understand the gospel and that you have repented of your sins and put your faith in Christ alone.

The following process for prospective members will be followed in most cases. Please feel free to use this as a checklist, so that you know where the process is at and what needs to be done next.

Step 1: Application

- Read and consider *Am I Born Again?*
Do not rush past this! Before we even consider church membership, we must consider what it means to truly be a believer in Jesus Christ.
- Personal Information and Testimony
Complete pages 1 and 3 of this Application and give to a pastor. This will start the process. The pastors will contact you about moving to the next step.

Step 2: Evaluation

- Meet with pastors
This initial meeting will be to discuss your evaluation of *Am I Born Again?* together with you. Before we jump into membership classes, we need to get to know you! This will include discussion about the gospel and the fundamentals of the faith. In most cases, two pastors will meet with you in the same meeting for the sake of accountability and discernment. If you are a single female, we will likely include a pastor's wife in the meeting as well.

Step 3: Instruction

- Read *What Is Church Membership?* (in this package)
- Attend *Discovering Grace Life*
This is a 4-part class that will take place periodically during the Sunday School time at 9:30-10:15 AM Sunday mornings. The emphasis will be on the beliefs and practices of the church, including teaching on baptism and membership. It is open to all who wish to know more, even if you haven't yet decided to join the church.
- Read *Duties of Christian Fellowship* by John Owen
This book, written in 1647, provides a faithful summary of how God calls Christians to live in relationship to a local church. It is a simple and accessible book divided into 22 short chapters. We would encourage you to do each chapter on a separate day, to read carefully and consider the Scriptures associated with each chapter, and to think through the study questions after each chapter the best you can.
- Read and consider the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Church Covenant*
These documents (included in this package) are important in the life of the church. The Statement of Faith is a summary of faithful biblical doctrine, and all members must be able to support this statement with a clear conscience. The Constitution and Bylaws

describe how we apply those doctrines in the practices of the church. The Church Covenant is a summary of the biblical commands regarding the Christian life. All members must agree to abide by the church documents. The *Discovering Grace Life* class will not cover the details of the documents but will cover the doctrines and practices contained in them.

Step 4: Discussion

- Meet with a pastor
After you have completed Step 3 and if you want to proceed to the next step, please contact a pastor and let him know that you wish to proceed. He will review the instruction of Step 3 and ask about your understanding and support of the doctrine and practices of the church.
- Covenant Membership Agreement
If you decide that you want to move forward with membership, you will be asked to sign the Covenant Membership Agreement (sample in this package). It simply states that you have read and agree to support the doctrine and practices of the church.
- Finalize testimony
The pastor who meets with you may have some suggestions for edits that may help make your testimony clearer. This is the testimony you will read to the church on Membership Sunday. The process cannot proceed until your testimony is finalized.

Step 5: Affirmation

- Pastors recommend you to the church for membership
All previous steps must be complete before Step 4 can proceed. The pastors will meet and discuss your application. They will recommend you to the church for membership at least two weeks prior to Membership Sunday. If any members happen to have questions or concerns, they are expected to bring those up with the pastors before that Sunday so they can be addressed privately and properly.
- Membership Sunday
This is the day! At the designated time in the service, a pastor will call you up to share your written testimony with the church. Then he will ask the following questions:
 - 1) Do you believe that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone?
 - 2) Have you repented of your sins and placed all your hope in life and death in Jesus Christ?
 - 3) Have you been baptized upon credible profession of faith?
 - 4) Do you gladly affirm the Statement of Faith of Grace Life Church, and do you commit to loving Christ and his church in accordance with our Church covenant?

The church will be asked the following question:

- 1) Do you receive _____ as your brother / sister in Christ, and do you, by God's grace, commit to live in fellowship with them in accordance with the Membership Covenant of Grace Life Church?

At this point, the members will stand, and we will read the Church Covenant together. If required, baptism would take place at this point.



GRACE LIFE C H U R C H

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Street/mailling address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please send me weekly emails about church events and announcements:

Occupation: _____

Names of Spouse and Children (if applicable):

I am requesting (check all that apply): To learn more about the church
 Membership
 Baptism

Previous church (if applicable): _____

Member Attender

Reason for leaving _____

Baptism:

I have been baptized upon profession of faith
Church _____ Date _____

I desire to be baptized

What kind of ministries are you looking for from the church? _____

How do you think you can serve the church? _____

TESTIMONY OF GRACE

A testimony is not a full life story, but a testimony to God's saving grace in Christ at work in our lives. For sharing with the church, we recommend a testimony that is 3-5 minutes long. Please write your testimony below, using the guide provided. This written testimony tells us about your story and forms the start of what you will share with the church should you decide to join the church. Feel free to use Bible verses in your testimony! If you want to type this up instead, please feel free!

Briefly introduce yourself and tell us about life before Christ. (75-125 words)

How did you come to saving faith in Christ? Include baptism if applicable. (90-150 words)

What is the gospel? (90-150 words)

Why do you desire to join Grace Life Church? (45-75 words)

AM I BORN AGAIN?

WHY ASK THIS QUESTION?

Asking “Am I born again?” may seem like a strange question to start with. Isn’t everyone who believes in God a Christian? If I once went forward at an altar call or repeated the sinner’s prayer, doesn’t this mean I am a Christian? I’m a Christian because I grew up in the church, made a sincere decision, and still hold that decision as important to me, right? It might surprise you that the answer to all the questions is “no”.

In Matthew 7:20-23, Jesus said some shocking things:

Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"¹

Take note of three things.

1. *There are some who call Jesus “Lord” who will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*
These people are not Muslims or Buddhists or atheists. These are people who believed themselves to be following Jesus, yet they will not enter the kingdom of heaven.
2. *There will be many such people on the day of judgment.*
Jesus teaches us to expect that *many* people will be deceived into believing they are saved when they aren’t. Therefore, we want to pay careful attention to his teaching.
3. *Only those who do the will of God enter the kingdom of heaven.*
Yes, some may do many works that they believe were important, but they did not truly obey the commands of God. Jesus says that true believers are known “by their fruits”. They are not known by their profession of faith alone, but by the evidence that Christ has transformed their life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

One night a top religious leader named Nicodemus came to visit Jesus. If anyone thought they were entering the kingdom of God, it would be him! But listen to what Jesus says to him:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God... ‘You must be born again.’” (John 3:3, 5, 7)

Nicodemus had to be born again. He had to become a whole new person. And so do we. A friend of mine was once proclaiming the gospel to a man he met in a coffee shop. After a while the man said, “It sounds like you are telling me that I have to

¹ All Scriptures are ESV.

become a whole new person!" That is exactly what is needed! The person who is truly saved has been transformed by the Holy Spirit of God. What we need is a new heart.

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

We need to notice that this transformation changes how we live. Do you remember that the one who enters the kingdom truly does the will of God (Matthew 7:21)? In Ezekiel 36 the result of a new heart is that we walk in obedience to God.

The questions we must ask is not "Do I believe in God?" or "Have I made a decision for Jesus?" or "Did I pray a particular prayer?" True salvation will involve belief in God and making decisions to follow Jesus and prayer, but you can have those things and not be truly saved! The question we must ask is this: "Am I born again? Have I been transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit?"

EVIDENCES OF TRUE SALVATION

We have already seen that mere confession of faith, thinking we are saved, having certain emotional feelings, being baptized, or even doing many religious activities are not necessarily evidence that we are born again. What *are* some evidences that we are born again?

1. TRUE FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

The great and precious promise of the gospel is that everyone who believes in Jesus will not perish but have eternal life. Hidden in this verse is some bad news. Without Jesus, we will perish. The Bible tells us that we have all sinned. We have all rejected God and have loved other things more than we love him. We have rejected his rule over us and have made ourselves to be 'god' in his place. And because of this, we stand under the righteous judgment of God. The penalty for our sin is death, which is eternal conscious punishment in hell. In his love, God sent Jesus to die on the cross in our place. On the cross, Jesus paid the price of sin for all of God's people. On the third day, he rose from the dead, triumphing over sin and death. He ascended into heaven where he intercedes for his people before the throne of God, and he is coming back one day to judge the living and the dead. And we are saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus if we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus.

But what does it mean to believe? James 2:19 says that even the demons believe true things about God... and they tremble in fear! You can believe the facts about Jesus without having saving faith in him. So what is saving faith?

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. (John 6:35)

Here we see what it means to truly believe in Jesus. It means to come to him for the satisfaction of your soul. Remember that we are born in rebellion against God. In our sin, we do not come to him because we do not love him! But true belief is when the Holy Spirit makes us new and now we have a desire to have fellowship with Jesus Christ. Now we see him as glorious and precious and more beautiful than anything else in this world. We want to be with him and to become like him.

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. (Matthew 13:44)

This little parable tells us what this looks like in a person's life. When someone truly believes in Jesus, he will see Jesus as a great treasure. He values Jesus so much that he gives up everything else in life to have Jesus. He gives up his sins, his obsession with money and success, and his desire to be loved by the world in order to have Jesus. And he does this with joy because Jesus is far greater than everything else in this world. True believing is not just to know facts about Jesus, but to treasure Jesus more than anything else, even your own life!

Questions for reflection

1. Does the parable in Matthew 13:44 describe what has happened in my soul? Do I consider it a joy to give up the things of this world that I might gain Christ?
2. Do I see Jesus as the food and drink that my soul desires, or do I find myself running to other things to make me happy (money, entertainment, food and drink, sexual immorality, being liked by others)?

2. TRUE LOVE FOR THE WORD OF GOD

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103)

But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. (Isaiah 66:2)

Perhaps one of the clearest signs that someone has been born again is how they now desire to God's Word in Scripture. Before the new birth, people are often not interested in the Bible. The words of Scripture do not affect their soul. Or, in other cases, they even hate the Word of God. There are many people today who identify as Christians and yet hate many things that they find in the Bible, especially if those things are considered offensive in today's world.

They love the 'god' as they invent him, but not God as he has revealed himself in the Bible. But the true believer will delight in God's Word, and they will find that the Word of God produces change in their hearts. The true believer longs for the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

Questions for reflection

1. Do I find that my the Word of God in Scripture creates joy in my heart?
2. Is my heart inclined to trust God's Word in all things, even if it is unpopular today or if it exposes my sin?

3. TRUE REPENTANCE AND TURNING FROM SIN

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

Many people believe that they are saved even though they continue in their sins. For this reason the Bible often warns us to not be deceived into thinking that people who go on in sin can inherit the kingdom of God (see also Galatians 6:7; Ephesians 5:5). Those who truly belong to God will have changed lives. Such were some of you. True salvation doesn't mean that you will never sin again. Instead, it means that you are no longer at peace with sin. It means that you now grieve your sin and that you are now making war against the sin in your life. And the true believer will have true victory over sin.

Questions for reflection

1. Have I repented (turned from) known sin in my life?
2. Do any of the sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 define my life?

Sexual immorality (pornography, sex outside of marriage, lustful thoughts)

Idolatry (loving anything more than God in his place)

Adultery (sexual relations and lustful thoughts that violate a marriage covenant)

Homosexuality (sexual relations and lustful thoughts with members of one's own sex)

Thieves (stealing, cheating on taxes, dishonest business practices)

Greedy (being willing to sin to gain riches)

Drunkards (consuming alcohol or any other substance to a state of intoxication)

Revilers (speaking evil of others, could include gossip)

Swindlers (similar to thieves)

3. If I have committed those sins, have I truly repented of them? Have I had true sorrow for my sin because my sin was a rejection of God? Have I turned from those sins?

4. TRUE OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1 John 2:3-6)

Love for God and doing his commandments are not the same thing! First, we must have a true love for Christ that we saw earlier. But true belief, which is a true love for Christ, will *always* produce true obedience in our lives. We cannot trust Jesus but still go our own way. We cannot say that Jesus is our satisfaction but then keep running to sin to make us happy. We cannot say that Jesus is Lord but refuse to obey him!

Questions for reflection

1. Do I truly desire to obey the commands of God?
2. Do I submit myself the commands in the Bible, or do I ignore those and create my own standards of righteousness?
3. Would the people I'm closest to be able to see obedience to Christ in my life?

5. TRUE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:19-24)

You could try to make an elm tree look like an apple tree by tying apples to the branches. In the same way, some people like to do good things to make themselves look like changed people. But the Bible says that these good things grow on our lives like fruit. As we trust in God and his Spirit is at work in us, our lives are transformed and we bear the fruit of the Spirit. Sometimes we won't be able to see this fruit as clearly in ourselves as other people will, so it might be helpful to ask people if they can see the fruit of the Spirit in your life!

Questions for reflection

1. Read the "works of the flesh" and the "fruit of the Spirit" again. What kind of fruit is growing on the branches of your life?
2. Can you see the Holy Spirit removing the works of the flesh from your life and replacing it with the fruit of the Spirit? Are you growing in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?

6. TRUE LOVE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:10)

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? (1 John 3:17)

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. (1 John 4:20-21)

Some Christians may find that this is one of the more surprising signs of being born again. Many people, "I love Jesus but not the church." God says that these people do not truly love God! But why is this the case? Remember that Jesus came into this world to suffer and then to be crucified on a cross under the weight of sin. Why did he do this? Because he loved the church and wanted to transform all of God's people into his glorious image (Ephesians 5:25-27). If the Spirit of Christ dwells in you, then your heart will desire the same things! Even though God's people are not perfect, we will love them, and we will want to spend time with them. The person who has no desire to gather regularly with God's people and to help them become more like Jesus does not have the heart of Christ.

Questions for reflection

1. Do I prefer the company of Christians to those who do not know God? If so, what might that tell me about my own heart?
2. Does gathering with the saints give me joy, even if there are hard things about it?
3. Do I desire to live my life to help God's people become more like Jesus?

EXAMINE YOURSELF

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. (2 Corinthians 13:5)

To know whether or not you are truly born again is the most important thing you can know about yourself. We have seen things that are not biblical evidences of true faith, and we have seen true evidences of faith. It is so important that we consider these things carefully. Remember that there are *many* who believe that they are entering the kingdom of God but are not. If you are unsure about where you are at with the Lord, consider reaching out to a member of the church to ask them to help you. Feel free to ask one of the pastors to help you walk through this.

Am I truly believing in Jesus Christ?

Am I truly delighting in and trusting the Word of God?

Am I truly repenting and turning from my sin?

Am I truly (not perfectly) obeying the commands of Christ?

Am I truly putting off the works of flesh and growing in the fruit of the Spirit?

Am I truly demonstrating Christ's heart of love for his people?

Am I truly born again?

WHAT IS CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

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

INTRODUCTION

Church membership isn't in the Bible. Or at least that is something we often hear. Of course, the word "member" is used to describe a Christian in relationship with the church, so what do people mean when they say membership isn't in the Bible? Maybe they mean they don't find the words "Thou shalt be a member of a church" in the Bible. Or maybe they mean that all Christians are members of his universal church, but that membership in a particular local church isn't in the Bible. Or maybe they think that church membership only means the right to come to a business meeting to argue about the brand of toilet paper in the washrooms, and *that* is certainly not found in the Bible. So maybe it just depends on what we mean by church membership? This is what we mean when we talk about church membership:

Church membership is (1) a covenant relationship between a Christian and a local church in which (2) the church affirms their profession of faith, (3) the church watches over and supports the Christian, and (4) the Christian watches over and supports the other members.²

That is a dense definition, so let's unpack it and see if the Bible supports it.

1. COVENANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A CHRISTIAN AND A LOCAL CHURCH

Although we may not use the word *covenant* very often today, we are familiar with covenants. A covenant is a relationship with defined partners and defined responsibilities. A marriage is a covenant because two specific people make specific promises to one another. When you take out a loan, you are responsible to pay back the money. But how is church membership a covenant?

First, there are defined responsibilities. The Bible is filled with "one another" commands that teach us how to live faithfully with other Christians. We are probably familiar with commands to love one another or pray for one another, but we might be less familiar with the command to judge those in the church who are living in unrepentant sin (1 Cor. 5). Following Christ is committing ourselves to *all* his commands (Mat. 28:18-20). Our Church Covenant is a summary of the biblical commands for all believers to follow.

Second, there are defined covenant partners. In other words, it is clear who is "inside" the church and who is "outside" the church, and those inside have specific responsibilities to the others who are inside (1 Cor. 5:9-13). The Bible says that normal church gatherings include both "insiders" and "outsiders" (1 Cor. 14:24). This may sound exclusive and offensive to us, but it is what the Bible plainly teaches. Church membership is also how pastors know who they will give an account for, and how Christians know which leaders they are to follow (Heb. 13:17). Since the church is to enact church discipline according to the Bible, membership is

² Adapted from Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 2020, 2017.

how we know who is part of the church that shares in that Christ-given authority (Matt. 18:15-18; 1 Cor. 5:4-5; 2 Cor. 2:6). In the Bible, church membership is 'formal', which means that it is clear to everyone who is "inside" the church.

We might wonder how the biblical churches knew who was "inside" the church. Normally, this would happen in baptism. Baptism is the Christian's public profession of faith in which he declares that he is a disciple. The church would then treat that person as one who is "inside" the church (Acts 2:42-47). When people would move to another place, their church would send a letter of commendation to the new church so that the new church would recognize this person as a true brother or sister in Christ (Rom. 16:1). Today we call this membership transfer. Informal church membership or "whoever shows up on Sunday is a member" is not supported by Scripture.

2. THE CHURCH AFFIRMS THE CHRISTIAN'S PROFESSION OF FAITH

At the centre of church membership is the authority of the whole church to exercise the authority of the keys of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Mat. 18:18 ESV)

Since we live in such an individualistic age in which the greatest command is "thou shalt not judge", this is probably the strangest aspect of membership to many Christians today. And yet the Bible clearly calls us to judge those inside the church (1 Cor. 5:12). When a person joins the church, they are making a public profession of faith and are letting the church know that they want to obey the commands of Christ in the context of *this* local church. The church affirms them as a brother or sister in Christ. They say, "We receive you as one who belongs to Christ. As we continue to watch over your soul and see the evidence of God's grace in your life, we will continue to affirm you in the Lord." In cases where a church member is in a pattern of unrepentant sin, the church exercises church discipline, which is saying that because the person will not repent, they can no longer affirm their profession of faith.

This is an important aspect of membership for a few reasons. First, it protects the purity of the church. If the church does not affirm its members, then we would have no way of knowing that the members of the church are even true Christians! Second, it protects the witness of the church. Anyone can claim they follow Christ, but membership is how we say, "Yes, this person truly represents Christ." Third, it is a source of great assurance for the members. If we are in good standing with the church, we can have confidence that others are seeing the grace of Christ at work in us. We can have confidence that if we drift from Christ, they will warn us. What a joy it is to know that even if I feel like a failure, those around me can see grace at work in me!

Does this mean that if someone isn't a member, we are saying they aren't true Christians? No! The church has no authority to affirm or disaffirm those outside the church (1 Cor. 5:12). But if someone is not a member of the church, the church has no way of evaluating their profession and therefore cannot say, "As a church, we affirm you in the Lord."

3. THE CHURCH WATCHES OVER AND SUPPORTS THE CHRISTIAN

When someone joins the church, the church is promising to watch over their soul and to support them in every necessary way as they are able. For this discipleship to be truly meaningful, every member of the church must submit to the church. The word “submit” means to “order your life under” something or someone. The incoming member recognized that Christ has given the church the authority both to watch over them in the Lord and to correct them when correction is needed. The Bible is clear that Christians are called to exhort one another, whether that comes in the form of admonishment or encouragement (Heb. 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:14). While the members submit to the whole church, in another sense they also submit to the pastors in a particular way because the pastors have a particular responsibility to watch over the souls of those in their congregation (Heb. 13:17). This does not mean pastors have unrestrained authority. It means that they have the authority to teach and apply God’s word and that Christians are called to incline their hearts to follow the teaching, correction, and leadership of their pastors.

4. THE CHRISTIAN WATCHES OVER AND SUPPORTS THE OTHER MEMBERS

When someone joins the church, the church makes a commitment to them, but the Christian also makes the same commitment to the other members of the church. To join a church is to join a family where each person has a job to do. The call to join a church isn’t *merely* a call to submit to the discipleship of the church, but also to participate in the discipleship of the church!

CONCLUSION

Church membership may seem extreme and radical, and maybe the churches you have attended in the past do not practice church membership. But church membership is the term we use for the *ordinary* Christian life as we see it in the pages of Scripture. In the Bible, *ordinary* Christians are devoted to a local church and are recognized as being “inside” that church. *Ordinary* Christians submit themselves to the discipleship of the church. *Ordinary* Christians commit themselves to gather with the church regularly, to contribute to the financial needs of the church, and to be actively engaged in making disciples of the other members of the church. These things are not reserved for “super-Christians” or “next-level Christians”. These things are an essential and basic part of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, because being a disciple is to learn to follow *all* of Christ’s commands (Matt. 28:18-20). Today, people like to talk about being part of the universal church, which is indeed a precious reality for Christians. But in the Bible, membership in the universal church is always lived out in the context of membership in a local church with real people, real problems, real pastors, and real discipleship.

But what if I don’t want this kind of relationship with a local church? What if I just want to show up when I feel like it? What if I don’t want to attend member meetings and participate in the hard and painful work of dealing with sin in the church? What if I don’t want people watching over my soul and correcting me when I fall into sin? What if I don’t want to commit to loving people that are hard to love? What if I want to be an independent Christian, free from commitment to any one local church? If that is the case, the simple truth is that you do not the kind of Christian life we see in the Bible. Ask the Lord to help you to love the church just as Christ loves the church. Christ died to have close fellowship with the church and so that he might make the church pure. If we have his Holy Spirit living in us, we will love what he loves, and we too will want to devote ourselves to the building up of the church (1 Cor. 14:12).



GRACE LIFE
C H U R C H.

**CONSTITUTION
BYLAWS
CHURCH COVENANT**

Last modified: February 9, 2018

GRACE LIFE CHURCH OF BEAUSEJOUR CONSTITUTION

Preamble

This Constitution is made to:

- Preserve and secure the principles of our faith.
- Respect and honour each individual member of the church.
- Provide for orderly conduct of internal affairs, in dealing with others, and of governing church members.

Article I: Name and Location

The name of this organization is Grace Life Church of Beausejour Inc. (hereafter called Grace Life Church). Grace Life Church currently meets at 1035 Park Ave, Beausejour, MB. Grace Life Church's mailing address is Box 656, Beausejour, MB, R0E 0C0. Grace Life Church shall have full power and authority to change the principle office and meeting place from one location to another. Grace Life Church is established and operated exclusively for charitable purposes by advancing religion and will devote all resources (financial, personal, and property) to carry out its activities.

Article II: Purpose

The purpose of Grace Life Church is:

- To establish, maintain and support a house of worship with services conducted in accordance with the tenets and doctrines of the Christian faith.
- To support and maintain missions and missionaries in order to propagate the Christian faith.

In keeping with this purpose, Grace Life Church's objective is to glorify God by obeying the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The process is designed to produce disciples of Jesus Christ, which involves these values and practices:

Article III: Statement of Faith

THE BIBLE

We believe the Bible to be the complete and sufficient Word of God; that the sixty-six books, as originally written, comprising the Old and New Testaments were verbally inspired by the Spirit of God and were entirely free from error; that the Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice and the true basis of Christian union.

GOD

We believe in one God, Creator of all, holy, sovereign, eternal, existing in three equal Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

JESUS CHRIST

We believe in the absolute and essential deity of Jesus Christ, in His eternal existence with the Father in pre-incarnate glory, in His virgin birth, sinless life, substitutionary death, bodily resurrection, triumphant ascension, mediatorial ministry and personal return.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the absolute and essential deity and personality of the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; who regenerates, sanctifies, illuminates and comforts those who believe in Jesus Christ.

SATAN

We believe that Satan exists as an evil personality, the originator of sin, the archenemy of God and man.

MAN

We believe that man was divinely created in the image of God; that he sinned, becoming guilty before God, resulting in total depravity, thereby incurring physical and spiritual death.

SALVATION

We believe that salvation is by the sovereign, electing grace of God; that by the appointment of the Father, Christ voluntarily suffered a vicarious, expiatory and propitiatory death; that justification is by faith alone in the all-sufficient sacrifice and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and that those whom God has effectually called shall be divinely preserved and finally perfected in the image of the Lord. Saving faith is of necessity accompanied by repentance, which involves the recognition of, sorrow over, and the turning away from all known sin, with a new desire to live in obedience to Jesus Christ.

FUTURE THINGS

We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ; in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust; in the eternal blessedness of the redeemed and in the judgment and conscious, eternal punishment of the wicked.

THE LOCAL CHURCH

We believe that a church is a company of baptized believers, called out from the world, separated unto the Lord Jesus, voluntarily associated for the ministry of the Word, the mutual edification of its members, the propagation of the faith and the observance of the ordinances. We believe it is a sovereign, independent body, exercising its own divinely awarded gifts, precepts and privileges under the Lordship of Christ, the Great Head of the church. We believe that its officers are elders and deacons.

ORDINANCES

We believe that there are only two ordinances for the church regularly observed in the New Testament in the following order:

- Baptism, which is the immersion of the believer in water, whereby he obeys Christ's command and sets forth his identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.
- The Lord's Supper, which is the memorial wherein the believer partakes of the two elements, bread and fruit of the vine, which symbolize the Lord's body and shed blood, proclaiming His death until He comes.

THE LORD'S DAY

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's day and that, in a special sense, it is the divinely appointed day for worship and spiritual exercise.

MARRIAGE

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female and that these two genders are distinct and complementary. We believe that marriage is the union of one man and one woman in exclusive union for life, to the exclusion of all other definitions.

THE CHURCH AND STATE

We believe in the entire separation of church and state. We believe in religious liberty; that every man has the right to practice and propagate his beliefs. We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interest and good order of society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honoured and obeyed, except only in the things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the only Lord of the conscience and Prince of the kings of the earth.

Article IV: Affiliation

Grace Life Church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of any denomination control. Recognizing, however, the benefits of cooperation and inter-dependence with other churches, our church gladly affirms and serves alongside other churches of like faith.

Article V: Government

The government of Grace Life Church is vested in its members under the leadership of its Elders. The membership retains unto itself the right of exclusive self-government in all phases of its life and organization. It recognizes the needs for mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common among Baptist churches.

Article V: Incorporation

Grace Life Church shall be incorporated as a nonprofit organization under the Corporation Act of Manitoba. The names listed as legal directors shall be Elders and Deacons, with a minimum of three directors total.

Article VI: Records and Reports

Grace Life Church will maintain the following records and reports:

- Adequate and correct books and records of accounts (financial records).
- Minutes of the proceedings of its congregational meetings and all other teams.
- A record of its members, giving their names and addresses.
- Contribution statements for contributors.
- Reports of annual review of all church financial books, records, and proceedings.

Article VII: Membership

Church membership shall be open to all who profess personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and who agree to support the statements of belief and objectives of Grace Life Church and to abide by its constitution, bylaws and church covenant. Members under 18 years of age shall not be permitted to vote but shall retain all other privileges and responsibilities of membership.

Article VIII: Nonprofit Status and Dissolution

Grace Life Church shall be carried on without purpose of gain for its members, and any profits or other accretions to the organization shall be used solely to promote its purposes. Upon dissolution and after the payment of all debts and liabilities, all remaining assets will be given to a qualified donee described in subsection 149.1(1) of the Income Tax Act.

Article IX: Amendments

This Constitution may be amended provided the proposed amendment shall have been presented in writing at a regular congregational meeting and then circulated to the membership. Amendments to this Constitution and Bylaws shall be two-thirds vote of members of Grace Life Church who are qualified to vote and are present in the congregational meeting with a quorum to discuss and vote for this matter. Providing the amendment passes the first vote, a second vote will be held 30 days after. Should it pass a second reading the amendment will be accepted.

GRACE LIFE CHURCH OF BEAUSEJOUR BYLAWS

Bylaw 1: Church Government

Section A: Organizational Guidelines

1. The Church is an autonomous body and is governed by its members under the leadership of the Board of Elders.
2. The organization of the Church shall consist of the Board of Elders which includes the Senior Pastor. The Board of Elders is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Church, including oversight of all ministries and committees. The Deacons, who under the leadership of the Board of Elders, lead the Church in service to the Membership.
3. In order to comply with the laws of Canada and the Province of Manitoba, the Board of Elders are responsible to ensure that all required officers are in place.
4. The Board of Elders may deem the establishment of ministries, committees or paid positions (including, but not limited to, additional pastoral staff, office staff, etc.) to be necessary. It is the responsibility of the Board of Elders to ensure that each ministry, committee or paid position has a job description that clearly defines their role in fulfilling the stated mission of the Church.

Section B: Board of Elders

1. The affairs of the Church shall be governed by a Board of Elders, which includes the Senior Pastor.
2. All Elders, including any pastors on the Board of Elders, are accountable to God, the Word of God, and each other.
3. Qualifications for service on the Board of Elders are as follows. Men who:
 - a. Meet the qualifications set forth for elders in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4 and for overseers in 1 Timothy 3:1-17;
 - b. Fully embrace the Church's doctrinal beliefs and are able to defend them;
 - c. Have been regular, resident members in Grace Life Church for at least one year prior to taking office.
4. The Board of Elders will oversee all the teaching ministries of the church.
5. Elder nomination: It is the responsibility of all members to identify potential candidates for the position of Elder. Elder nomination forms shall be made available for use at any time. These forms are to be completed, signed and returned to the Board of Elders.
6. It is the role of the existing Elders to disciple, train and mentor qualified individuals that are identified by the nomination process. The names of those involved shall be made public once the training program begins (1 Timothy; Titus). Any comments or concerns regarding a potential Elder should be brought forward to the existing Board of Elders during this period of training and examination. The existing Board of Elders will make determinations about the suitability of the Elders in training.
7. Upon the recommendation of the Elders, candidates are to be elected by not less than 2/3 membership vote at a regularly scheduled meeting upon completion of the training process.

8. An Elder may be removed from the Board by the remaining Elders if that Elder is subject to Corrective Discipleship as outlined in Bylaw 6, or fails to uphold the qualifications of an Elder as outlined in Bylaw 1.B.3.
9. An Elder shall not vote in a situation where he is in conflict of interest.
10. The Board of Elders shall select from within itself to fill positions, such as Chairman. The Senior Pastor shall not serve as Chairman.
11. The Board of Elders shall meet when required, preferably twice a month. The chairman may, at any time, summon a meeting of the Board, or he shall, upon the written request of any two Elders, summon a meeting of the Board, provided that the date and time of such meeting is communicated to all the Elders by the chairman or secretary.
12. It is the goal that all decisions should be unanimous. If unanimity is not reached, the minority shall submit to the majority.
13. It is the responsibility of the Board of Elders to prepare the agenda for all congregational meetings and make it available to members at least one week before such a meeting. The Board of Elders will appoint a chairman for meetings of the Church.
14. The Board of Elders is responsible for overseeing Corrective Discipleship as outlined in Bylaw 6.
15. In the absence of a pastor, the Board of Elders shall ensure that the pastoral responsibilities are fulfilled. In case of pastoral vacancy, it is the responsibility of the Board of Elders to oversee the filling of that vacancy.
16. The Board of Elders is responsible for ensuring that all applicants for membership are examined and make appropriate recommendations to the Membership. The Board of Elders shall give appropriate time for people in the congregation to respond before making a decision.
17. The board of elders has the responsibility of ensuring that the Articles of Incorporation and the present bylaws are respected in all aspects of the life of the Church.

Section C: Senior Pastor

1. Qualifications: The pastor must be a man who meets the qualifications for elders as set forth in scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7; 2:12; Titus 1:6-9).
2. Call: The candidate shall undergo examination of his doctrinal position by the Board of Elders. Upon recommendation of the Board of Elders, the pastoral candidate shall be presented to the Membership for ballot vote. The candidate must receive no less than a 2/3's majority vote.
3. Terms of Employment: Terms of employment (i.e. salary, sabbatical, benefits, etc.) shall be negotiated and documented by the Board of Elders.
4. Term of Office: The term of office shall be indefinite. It is to be clearly communicated to all candidates that generally the church looks for a long-term ministry commitment on the part of its pastors.
5. Evaluations: Scheduled evaluations of the pastor's ministry are to be conducted by the Board of Elders for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of the pastor's ministry. Open discussions regarding all areas of the pastoral ministry shall be had throughout the year in an effort for ongoing improvements.
6. Duties: As a spiritual leader of the congregation, his primary responsibilities are those of the ministry of the Word, leadership, mentoring and intercessory prayer (Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 6:4). It is the responsibility of the Board of Elders to

provide a detailed job description which enables the pastor to give priority to these responsibilities.

7. Termination: In case of moral failure, doctrinal deviation or unethical practice, the Board of Elders has the authority to recommend that the membership remove the staff member immediately, with not less than a 2/3 vote at a regularly scheduled meeting. Severance shall be granted in accordance with the laws of Manitoba.

Section D: Deacons

1. The physical needs of the Church shall be attended to by the Deacons.
2. All Deacons are accountable to God, the Word of God, and the Board of Elders.
3. Qualifications for service as a Deacon are as follows. Men who:
 - a. Meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
 - b. Fully embrace the doctrinal beliefs set forth by the Church and are able to defend them.
 - c. Have been regular, resident members in Grace Life Church for at least one year prior to taking office.
4. There is no minimum or maximum number of Deacons, but is determined according to present need by the Board of Elders.
5. It is the responsibility of all members to identify potential candidates for the position of Deacon. Deacon nomination forms shall be made available for use at any time. These forms are to be completed, signed and returned to the Board of Elders.
6. The Board of Elders is responsible for ensuring that all qualified nominated individuals are disciplined, trained and mentored. The names of those involved shall be made public once the training program begins. Any comments or concerns regarding a potential Deacon should be brought forward to the Board of Elders during this period of training and examination.
7. Upon completion of the training process and upon recommendation of the Board of Elders, the deacon candidate shall be presented to the Membership for ballot vote. The candidate must receive no less than a 2/3's majority vote.
8. Deacons may be removed from their office by the Board of Elders if that Deacon is subject to Corrective Discipleship as outlined in Bylaw 6, or fails to uphold the qualifications of a Deacon as outlined in Bylaw 1.D.3.

Bylaw 2: Membership

Section A: Entry into Membership

1. All candidates for Membership must:
 - a. Have been interviewed by a member of the Board of Elders or a Pastor who has accepted their confession of faith.
 - b. Be in agreement and acceptance of the doctrinal positions of the Church.
 - c. Agree to submit to the discipleship and discipline of the Church body in all aspects of life.
 - d. Be baptized by Grace Life Church or have been previously baptized upon profession of faith in Christ by a church of like faith. Baptism will ordinarily not be granted apart from membership.
2. Upon recommendation of the Board of Elders, all qualifying candidates will be accepted into the Membership with not less than a 50% vote of eligible members at a regularly scheduled member meeting.

3. If a candidate is under the age of 18, they have all the privileges and responsibilities of Membership, but do not have a vote at Membership Meetings.

Section B: Privileges of Membership

Members in good standing with the Church have the following privileges and responsibilities:

1. Discipleship: all Members have the privilege and responsibility of being disciplined and have the opportunity to disciple others within the congregation.
2. Service: all Members have the privilege and responsibility of serving in positions in the Church according to the qualifications laid down for these positions.
3. Financial Support: all Members have the privilege and responsibility of donating financially to the Church through tithes and offerings.
4. Meetings: all Members 18 years of age or older have the privilege of participating in discussions and votes at Membership Meetings.

Section C: Inactivity

1. Members who have been inactive in the congregation for six months or more will be ineligible to vote at Membership Meetings.
2. Inactivity is defined as non-attendance, or willful withdrawal from Discipleship, Service or Financial Support as described above.
3. Inactivity may result in Corrective Discipleship.

Section D: Termination of Membership

A person shall cease to be a member of the Church by:

1. Transfer: Members may request a letter of recommendation to another church from the Board of Elders if they wish to transfer membership.
2. Withdrawal: Members may request the termination of their membership in writing to the Board of Elders and may be released subject to the recommendation of the Board of Elders.
3. Dismissal: Would take place if the procedures for Corrective Discipleship have failed to bring that person to repentance. Refer to Bylaw 6.
4. Release: An inactive Member will be released from Membership by reason of transfer, withdrawal or dismissal upon the recommendation of the Board of Elders with not less than a 50% vote of eligible members at a regularly scheduled member meeting.
5. Death.

Bylaw 4: Meetings

1. There shall be a minimum of one Membership Meeting per year to accept the budget. Other meetings can be called by the Board of Elders as deemed necessary.
2. Written notice of a meeting's time, place and purpose must be given to the Membership two weeks in advance.
3. Quorum for these meetings is made up of those in attendance.
4. Emergency Meetings may be called by the Board of Elders in extraordinary circumstances. All voting Members must be contacted by the Board of Elders by phone or email with a minimum of 24 hours' notice. If required, proof of contact by the Board of Elders will be given. Quorum is made up of those in attendance.

Bylaw 5: Financial Policies

Fiscal Year:

1. The fiscal year of the Church shall commence on January 1 and end on December 31.
2. Bookkeeping: Records consistent with the laws of the province of Manitoba and with normal accounting practice will be kept.
3. Audits: The financial records of the church will be internally reviewed annually. The Board of Elders may from time to time appoint an outside auditor for such period as deemed necessary.
4. Ethics in Financial Matters: All financial matters, including the handling of offerings, the transaction of business, and the respect of government regulations, will be carried out so as to be above reproach in the eyes of men and God and with the highest respect for the law of our land. The Church will adhere to the principles set forth by the Canadian Council of Christian Charities. All offerings will be counted by at least two (2) people, not including the treasurer.
5. Budget: The Church operates on a general budget system and all offerings, unless otherwise specified, flow into the general treasury. The budget must be accepted by the Membership at an annual Membership Meeting. Special authorization must be granted by the Board of Elders any time expenditures on a particular line of the budget exceeds forecast amounts. Anything deemed significant by the Board of Elders will be brought to the Congregation for approval. Church sponsored projects or funds that are not in the regular budget must be approved by the Board of Elders.
6. Borrowing: No borrowing may be contracted either for general operating expenses or for special projects without the express consent of the Membership expressed by a vote at a general meeting.
7. Honoraria: The Board of Elders will be responsible for setting the rate paid to visiting ministers.

Bylaw 6: Corrective Discipleship

1. Definition: Members of this Church, and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this Church, who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates scripture, shall be subject to Corrective Discipleship, which may include dismissal. The desired end of Corrective Discipleship in all of its forms is to encourage and enable that person to bring their lifestyle back into conformity with God's Word.
2. Goals:
 - a. The repentance and restoration of the errant believer; restoration to a lifestyle in conformity to the Bible and restoration to a loving relationship with other believers (Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:3,4; Galatians 6:1; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; 2 Timothy 2:25; Hebrews 12:10,11).
 - b. Purify, edify, unify, and bring about spiritual growth in the Church (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Titus 3:8-11).
3. Situations which call for corrective discipleship:

Corrective discipleship will be initiated in situations including, but not limited to, the following:

 - a. Teaching doctrinal deviations (Galatians 1:8,9; 1 Timothy 1:3,20; Titus 1:11, 3:10; 2 John 9- 11; Revelation 2:14-16).
 - b. Immorality (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Revelation 2:14-16).

- c. Creators of division (Romans 16:17; Titus 3:9,10; Matthew 18:15-21; Luke 17:3,4; Philippians 4:2; Proverbs 6:16-19).
 - d. Unbiblical public representation of Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:6-14; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 1:10-13; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; James 5:1-6).
 - e. Rebellion against Church Leadership (1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5). The Church Leadership is not exempt from Corrective Discipleship, as outlined in 1 Timothy 5:19-20.
 - f. Willfully neglecting the Church through lack of regular participation (Hebrews 10:23-25).
4. Procedure:
Corrective Discipleship is the responsibility of all Christians, and begins with encouragement, exhortation and rebuke on an individual level. From that point, it progresses, as outlined in Matthew 18:15-17, through the Board of Elders to the Membership, which ultimately may lead to the dismissal of the unrepentant person/people from Membership, as seen in Bylaw 2.C.

Bylaw 7: Quorum and Decisions

1. The quorum for all duly announced Church meetings consists of those members in attendance at the meeting.

Bylaw 8: Amendments

1. These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the Members present at a given Membership Meeting where a motion to amend has been presented.
2. Minor amendments of the Bylaws may be initiated by the Board of Elders
3. Major amendments of the Bylaws are to be made by a committee that shall consist of (at least) two representatives from the Board of Elders and three representatives from the Membership.
4. Amendments must be presented to and approved by the Board of Elders prior to being presented to the Membership. Members must be given notice of any proposed changes to the Bylaws at least two weeks prior to the meeting at which the vote is to take place.



CHURCH COVENANT

As we trust we have been brought by divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the influence of His Spirit to give ourselves up to Him, so we do most solemnly covenant with each other, that God enabling us, we will endeavor to do the following: (John 1:11-12; Ephesians 2:1, 8-10; Romans 12:1-2)

We will walk together in brotherly love (John 13:34-35).

We will exercise a Christian care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully warn, rebuke, and admonish one another as the case shall require (Hebrews 3:12-14; Galatians 6:1-2; 1 Corinthians 5).

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor omit the great duty of prayer both for ourselves and for others (Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; James 5:16; Ephesians 6:18).

We will participate in each other's joys, and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows (Galatians 6:2; James 2:14-17; Romans 12:15-16).

We will earnestly endeavor to bring up children under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Ephesians 6:1-4).

We will seek divine aid to enable us to walk watchfully in the world, denying ungodliness and every worldly lust (Ephesians 5:15-21; 1 Peter 2:11-12; 1 John 2:15-17).

We will strive together for the support of a faithful evangelical ministry among us (Philippians 1:27; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

We will endeavor by example and effort to win souls to Christ (Acts 1:8; Matthew 5:12-16; Matthew 28:19-20).

We will seek to live to the glory of Him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light (Colossians 1:11-14; Galatians 1:1-5).



COVENANT MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENT

I, _____, hereby testify, for the glory of God and for the edification of his church, that:

- I affirm the Statement of Faith of Grace Life Church;
- I have read and am agreeing to abide by the Constitution and Bylaws of Grace Life Church;
- I am committing to love God and Grace Life Church in accordance with biblical teaching as summarized in the Church Covenant;
- I understand that this commitment is subject to the affirmation by the members of Grace Life Church and continues until my membership is released from Grace Life Church.

Member signature

Elder signature

Signed Date

Date of membership affirmation