

GRACE LIFE
CHURCH





TITUS 2:11-15

“For the **grace of God** has appeared, **bringing** salvation for all people, **training** us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to **live** self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are **zealous for good works**. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

The Grace Life Church Membership Covenant is birthed out of our love for the church body and its individual members whom we hope will experience the fullness of joy which is found in the presence of the Lord. 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 Grace Life Church and the individual members of Grace Life Church.
- To establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for Grace Life Church.
- To serve as a tool for reflection and growth toward holiness.

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

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The church is an embassy that represents the kingdom of God on this earth.

An embassy is an institution that represents one nation inside another nation. It declares its home nation's interests to the host nation. And it protects the citizens of the home nation living in the host nation. The embassy does not make us a citizen, but it officially affirms it. In this case, the church represents the heavenly kingdom of God while we are here on earth. Like an embassy, the church must approve those who are a part of the Kingdom.

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.

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 Christ. 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 group of believers in a particular locale) is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in 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.

WHAT IS A CHURCH MEMBER?

A church member is someone who is formally recognized as a Christian and a part of Christ's universal body.

There are two qualifications for being a church member in the New Testament: Salvation and Baptism. There is freedom to pursue ways to determine if someone has been redeemed. Each individual requesting to be a member of Grace Life will have to submit their story of salvation in Jesus. At Grace Life Church, we believe that baptism is a symbol of what Jesus has done for us and that it is a baptism by water immersion *after* a person has placed their faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. If you have been saved but have not been baptized or have been baptized but not immersed, see an elder.

Jonathan Leeman writes:

Church membership is a formal relationship between a Church and a Christian characterized by the church's affirmation and oversight of a Christian's discipleship and the Christian's submission to living out his or her discipleship in the care of the church.

Membership is not about privilege or prestige. It is not some elevated level of access with secret insider benefits. It is not a legal document or means of control. Membership recognizes and responds to the call of discipleship in the context of gospel-centered community. It is an affirmation and agreement to contribute to the good of the body rather than consume from it. It is a formalization of that which already implicitly exists. It is an obligation to sacrificially seek the good of others in the body of Christ by taking the general call toward service and incarnating it within a particular people.

Members are called to submit to the leadership that God has placed in the church (Hebrews 13:7). The Position of elder is to oversee all things within the church. For a member to have decision in overseeing would be on the contrary of what the Bible teaches. Member input is very valuable and is highly encouraged, but the decision is determined by God's leading in the hearts of the Elders.

Currently, voting at Grace Life Church is overseen by the elders through taking people through the membership process, and then by the church through approving members. Voting allows the member to voice any concerns in regard to the man being considered for the position of Elder. If members deem that the man is unqualified or does not fit in the role of Elder, they may vote no. The man will be approved to be an Elder if the church produces a 2/3 majority. The church will only vote for Elders after the current Elders have deemed the man to be a fit for the church, qualified, and passionate about God's glory and gospel advancement at Grace Life Church.

Future revisions of member roles will be made available when needed.

GRACE LIFE CHURCH QUALIFICATIONS

Each individual desiring to become a member at GLC must complete the following:

Intro to Grace Life – Attending a brief meeting after our gatherings on any first Sunday.

I Am A Church Member – This short little book is available for free at the Next Steps table. You can grab a copy and begin reading on your own time.

My Story- This is simply writing down your story of how Jesus saved you.

Questionnaire – The questionnaire will help us know more about you and your desire to become a member at Grace Life.

Sign the Membership Covenant – Signing of the covenant signifies that you are on the same page with the mission of Grace Life Church and that you are committed to our mission to make Jesus-centered disciples for God's Glory.

We believe that these qualifications will help us accomplish the overall purpose of the church – to equip and train believers for the advancement of the Gospel.

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 covenant of Grace Life Church contains many conditions that are merely general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, whether members of Grace Life Church or elsewhere, are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. Such requirements are universal obligations for the Christ follower 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 acknowledgment 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.

WHY COVENANT?

When the Bible speaks of formal relationships inside the local church, it uses the concept of a covenant. Some covenants are between people (1 Sam. 18:3, 20:16; 2 Sam. 5:3), while others are between God and man (Gen. 6:18, 9:16, 15:18; Luke 22:20; Heb. 8:6-7). With some covenants, one party binds him or herself to fulfill the obligations of both sides. In others, the parties are reciprocally bound to adhere to the obligations. Though types of covenants vary, the concept saturates the biblical text. Therefore, it seems appropriate to apply the idea of a covenant to membership in a local church.

Covenants also include some type of visible representation. All cultures have symbols to signify comprehension and consent. At times those agreements include cutting animals in two and walking between the pieces (Gen. 15), placing a hand under a thigh (2 Sam. 24), removing and exchanging a sandal (Ruth 4) or instituting and enjoying a ceremonial dinner (Matt. 26:17-29). While the symbol may change, the abiding call to covenant is clear.

Christians commit themselves to each other in the context of the local church in countless ways. At Grace Life, the current process for membership involves attending a short meeting, reading a book, and completing a questionnaire. Far from mere formality, these expressions are important representations of the formal commitment that members make.

CONCLUSION

God calls His people into covenant, not only to Himself but also to each other. He calls us to a life of sacrifice, generosity, service and radical commitment to the good of the body. This happy obligation is most readily pursued within the context of a particular body—a local church. In light of this reality, membership is not merely a responsibility but a blessed opportunity to covenant with a particular people to live out the gospel together.

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Elders to Grace Life 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 elder and deacons (including staff members who serve in these offices) according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-3; 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 Scriptures and following the Holy 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; James 5:14)
- to provide teaching and counsel from the whole Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; 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; 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)
- to adhere to the member's portion of the covenant, understanding that I am not above them, but exercising the spiritual gift God has graciously given me.

Members of Grace Life 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 this 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; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)
- to pursue Jesus through engaging the Word, prayer, fellowship with other believers, and practicing spiritual discipline (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27)
- to follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances given to his church. I have been baptized after my conversion and I will regularly celebrate and remember the work of Jesus through communion.
- To regularly participate in the life of Grace Life Church by attending weekly services, a LifeGroup, and service inside and outside of the church. (Acts 2:42-47)
- To steward the sources God has given me including time, talents/skills, spiritual gifts, and finances and to do so cheerfully and voluntarily. (Matthew 25:14-20; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 4:10-11)
- To walk in holiness in all aspects of life through God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit working inside of me. Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death while demonstrating and focusing on love and good deeds through the Spirit. Below are a few examples:
 - I will practice complete chastity unless married. If married, I will abstain from any form of sinful sexual behavior, fully aware that sex was created by God for the confines of marriage between one man and one woman for life. (1 Corinthians 6:15-20; Ephesians 5:3)
 - I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip, and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (Romans 1:28-32; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18)
- To refrain from activities that the Bible would deem foolish (Romans 14:14-23)
- To take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially being aware of situations that may be a stumbling block to others. (1 Corinthians 8:1-13)
- To submit to the discipline of God through the Holy Spirit by following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another (the hope of such discipline is to bring repentance and restoration) and receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11)
- To confess my sin to God and fellow believers and to repent and seek help to put my sin to death (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16)
- To submit to the elders of Grace Life Church and to fight for unity and peace within the church (Ephesians 4:1-3; 1 Peter 5:5)

Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior and having been baptized by immersion after my salvation, and being in agreement with Grace Life Church's covenant, strategy, doctrine, and structure, I am led by the Holy Spirit to unite as a member of Grace Life Church family. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members of Grace Life Church.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

(If Applicable)

Spouse's Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Elder's Name _____

Elder's Signature _____

Date _____

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