



Grace Church Membership Covenant "Called Out Ones"

The Greek word for “church” in the New Testament is “*ekklesia*,” which means “called out ones.” On a practical level, the church is an assembly, a gathering of God’s people who have come together to worship, pray, sit under the teaching of God’s Word, share in the Holy Spirit’s power, exercise their gifts, and seek him together. At Grace Church, we emphasize the following areas, in both teaching and practice, as pillars of a Christian life that honors God and reflects his glory to the world as his “called out ones.”

Prayer | Prayer is the foundation of everything we do at Grace Church. Jesus’ life and ministry flowed from an ever-deepening relationship with God the Father. Prayer is where we come face to face with God’s work in our own hearts. It’s where we confess our sin, discern God’s leading, and seek his guidance and blessing as we point people to Christ.

Holiness | We believe lives of true devotion to Christ are characterized by holiness. As Christ’s followers, we must no longer be conformed to the passions of our former ignorance but be holy in all our conduct (1 Peter 1:14-18). Because we worship and serve a holy God, we believe a life of effective ministry flows from a foundation of purity and holiness that is reflected in our ongoing choices to obey Christ.

Forgiveness | Jesus taught about the church twice in the Gospel of Matthew, making it clear that (1) He would build the church (Matthew 16:18) and (2) those within the church would sin against each other (Matthew 18:15-20). Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 18 gives us a process for dealing with sin in a way that promotes and prioritizes the unity of the church. As Jesus’ followers, we are called to forgive one another and make every effort to pursue and maintain unity with each other.

Thanksgiving | Philippians 4:4-8 says, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God.” Oftentimes, the anxiety we experience is rooted in the things we lack, whereas gratitude focuses our attention on the ways we’ve been blessed. When we live from a place of gratitude, the Scriptures teach us that peace of God guards our hearts and minds in Christ.

Love | Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). As his disciples, we are called to love one another in ways that are selfless and sacrificial. When we do, we are simply following Christ’s example.

Outreach | In 1 Corinthians 2:4, Paul says his message and his preaching “were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.” We want the same to be true of our gatherings and the ongoing ministry at Grace Church. We believe God has called us to reach out and share Christ with others. We also believe the Holy Spirit’s power for evangelism is closely related to each of the areas above and accompanies ministry that is deeply rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus.

Generosity | Our love for Christ is expressed in our generosity toward God and others. In 1 Corinthians 4:7, Paul asks, “What do you have that you did not receive?” When we recognize God’s many blessings and faithful provision on our lives, our natural response is to give in a way that is faithful and sacrificial. Please see “What Membership Looks Like” on pg. 8 for more on the importance of financial giving.

One Body, Many Members

After Jesus died and rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples over a period of 40 days (Acts 1:3). Jesus appeared to his disciples in a physical, resurrected body they could touch and see (Luke 24:36-43). He ascended into heaven with this *same* body and Scripture is clear that one day Jesus will come again (Acts 1:11). Like the disciples, one day we will see him as he is and be given resurrection bodies like his (2 Cor. 5:1-5). Until Christ returns, the church is Christ's physical, tangible "body" on earth (1 Cor. 12:27, Ephesians 1:22-23).

We are the Body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul uses the imagery of a body to describe the interdependent relationship between all of the members of a local church. Here we are introduced to the Biblical concept of "membership" within the church. Just as the human body is made up of many individual parts that rely on each other to function properly, the Body of Christ requires the consistent contribution and engagement of each of its individual members.

Paul emphasizes the following two points, both of which are essential to our understanding of what it means to be a functional "member" of a local church:

We need the Body of Christ. As Jesus' followers, we have been called to love and serve those around us, putting their needs before our own. In a world so often defined by individual pursuits, we must reject the lie that we don't need other people in our lives. As Scripture says, "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 Corinthians 12:21). As members of Christ's Body, we need each other.

The Body of Christ needs us. As Jesus' followers, we must not look at the similarities of others, especially those at similar stages of life or with similar gifts, and believe the lie that we're somehow unnecessary to the life and health of the Body. As the Scriptures say, "If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body" (1 Cor. 12:15-16). In this same context, Paul goes on to say that God "arranged the members in the Body, *each one of them*, as he chose" (1 Cor. 12:18). Every member has an essential role to play.