



South Suburban

12600 Johnny Cake Ridge Rd
Apple Valley, MN 55124

MEMBERSHIP CLASS

MAKING & MATURING DISCIPLES OF JESUS

A TRANSFORMED PEOPLE GLORIFYING GOD THROUGH:

GOSPEL CENTERED WORSHIP

GOSPEL SHAPED COMMUNITY

GOSPEL DRIVEN MISSION

LEADING TO GOSPEL ROOTED GROWTH

HELPING PEOPLE TAKE 1 STEP CLOSER TO CHRIST

Process for Membership

The process to become a member is as follows:

- Attend the 'Membership Class'
- Read the [church constitution & bylaws](#) and the covenant for membership (pages 9-10), if you agree to abide by these please sign the covenant and bring it to the meeting at the next step.
- Fill out an online [Membership Form](#), and then be interviewed by 2 Elders to share your testimony
- The Elders will follow-up with any additional questions, then you will be presented to the congregation for affirmation into membership at which point you will be welcomed in as a covenant member of South Suburban!

Please **do not take this commitment lightly!** This is a great opportunity for you to ask specific questions about us, to pray about whether or not this is the right place for you to plant yourself to serve and grow and ultimately discern if God is leading you to become a part of our family!

The class (and thus this packet) contains the following sections:

Welcome!	Page 1
The Gospel	Page 2
Why Membership?	Page 3
What We Believe – EFCA	Page 4
Some Distinctives	Page 7
How We Live	Page 8
How We Minister	Page 9
Membership Covenant	Page 10-11

Recommended Resources:

- [Church Elders](#) by Jeramie Rinne
- [Church Membership](#) by Jonathan Leeman
- [Evangelical Convictions](#) by the EFCA
- [Finding the Right Hills to Die On](#) by Gavin Ortlund
- [The Local Church](#) by Edward W. Klink
- [The Reason for Church](#) by Brad Edwards
- [Sticky Teams](#) by Larry Osborne
- [The Trellis and the Vine](#) by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne
- [When Helping Hurts](#) by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert
- [Worship Matters](#) by Bob Kauflin
- [What is the Gospel?](#) By Greg Gilbert

Welcome!

We're going to spend some time today digging in to some very important issues. In fact, the first thing we'll be talking about is the single most important issue in every person's life. A.W. Tozer wrote in *Knowledge of the Holy*: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."

We are passionate about bringing the gospel to bear in **every** area of our lives. Another way of expressing this is: our theology must be made visible in our doxology. All theology has as its end goal acceptable worship of God ([Heb. 12:28-29](#)). Tim Keller says it this way: "The gospel is not just the ABCs but the A to Z of Christianity. The gospel is not the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom but the way we make all progress in the kingdom." John Calvin similarly quipped "Without the gospel, everything is useless and vain." Therefore, the gospel serves as the centering point around which everything else flows out.

We also believe that the gospel compels us to emphasize the local church as the visible representation of God's kingdom on earth. We together implore others as God's ambassadors of reconciliation ([2 Cor. 5:20](#)), shine as lights in the darkness ([Phil. 2:15](#)), and pursue unity through love ([Eph. 4:1-3](#), [1 Cor. 13](#)).

During this class, we'll explain how we talk about the gospel, why the gospel drives us to church membership, how the gospel shapes what we believe, and finally how we live in light of this gospel.

The Gospel

We get the word “gospel” from the translation of the Greek word *euangelion*, which literally means “good news.” People would spread gospel messages when significant events happened (winning a war, a new child was born to the emperor, etc.). So when we talk about the gospel, at its most basic form we’re talking about good news. This tells us a couple things about it!

First, we see that this news is GOOD. Something has happened that is the best thing that could ever have happened for us. This goodness will eventually win the day and completely defeat all the bad, evil and sinful things that go on around us.

Second, we see that this is NEWS. News is meant to be spread far and wide! Those of us whose lives have been transformed by the gospel now have the obligation to share that good news with everyone we can!

We talk about the gospel using 4 words:

God:

Man:

Christ:

Response:

Why Membership?

Becoming a member of a local church is one of the most important things you can do in your walk with Christ. Membership is not part of your salvation, but it is vital for your sanctification as being committed to a local church is the best way to live out your Christian life. Becoming a member of a church is like marriage. Many people try to enjoy all the benefits of marriage by living together, but there's a unique relationship that gives you freedom to grow when you've taken that step to covenant together through thick and thin. But we also see membership throughout the New Testament.

[1 Cor. 12:27](#) – church is a body, we are all members

[Acts 1:15](#) – list of all the disciples

[Acts 2:42-47](#) – how the disciples lived together, kept track of new believers

[Acts 4:32-37](#) – know who had needs, took care of them

[Acts 6:1-2](#) – first church membership meeting!

[Acts 8:1-3](#) – Saul got a hold of the membership list

[1 Cor. 5:3-5](#), [12](#) – judge those IN the church, send unrepentant sinners out

[Heb. 13:7](#), [17](#) – delineates who the leaders will give an account for

Membership is the means by which we are identified as believers. It allows us to demonstrate all the aspects of the way the church is identified throughout the New Testament ([body](#), [temple](#), [vine](#), etc.), and provides us the means of being ambassadors, living out biblical submission, identifying who represents Christ, and provides support for us as we seek to live inter-dependent lives.

“When all the Bible's commands and expectations are compiled regarding a church's role toward a Christian and a Christian's role toward a church, it looks like what healthy local churches do when they implement the practice, of membership.” – Edward W. Klink The Local Church

What We Believe - [EFCA](#)

God

1. We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

The Bible

2. We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

The Human Condition

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

Jesus Christ

4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.

The Work of Christ

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

The Holy Spirit

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

The Church

7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the

Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.

Christian Living

8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.

Christ's Return

9. We believe in the personal, bodily and glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.

Response and Eternal Destiny

10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace.
Amen.

Some Distinctives

Convinced Complementarians

We believe that God created both male and female in his image, and both genders are equal in dignity, value, and worth. While both genders are equal in the sight of God, we believe that God has given different and distinct roles to men and women based on passages like [1 Tim. 2:12](#) and [1 Tim. 3:1-7](#). Therefore, we only have male elders, encourage both men and women to be deacons, and encourage everyone to use their gifts in the church.

Believers Baptism, Infant Dedication

While the EFCA does not take an official stance on baptism, a majority of churches practice believers' baptism by immersion. While we recognize and will affirm for membership someone who was baptized as an infant and is walking with the Lord today, we do not practice infant baptism, and instead practice infant dedication. What we do ask, is that you are baptized following Jesus' command to us in [Matthew 28:19](#).

Continuationist

We believe that the Holy Spirit is still active today and continues to uniquely manifest himself for specific aims. While the miraculous gifts are not the normal Christian experience, we trust that God is still working and can use whatever means he deems necessary to bring about his glory. We test everything to standard of Scripture, even miraculous gifts.

Congregationally Governed

We are Christ ruled, elder led, deacon served, and congregationally governed. This means the ultimate earthly source of authority lies in the congregation, but it is not, as many in the United States think, a democracy. The elders are tasked by the congregation to lead, which means the congregation submits themselves to the elders unless the elders are living in unrepentant sin or teaching truths contrary to Scripture.

How We Live

We Pursue the “One Anothers” of the New Testament

[John 13:34-35](#), [15:12](#), [17](#); [Romans 12:10](#), [16](#), [14:13](#), [15:5](#), [7](#), [14](#), [16:16](#); [1 Cor. 11:33](#), [12:25](#), [16:20](#); [2 Cor. 13:11-12](#); [Gal. 5:13](#), [15](#), [26](#), [6:2](#); [Eph. 4:2](#), [32](#), [5:19](#), [21](#); [Col. 3:9](#), [13](#), [16](#); [1 Thess. 3:12](#), [4:9](#), [18](#), [5:11](#), [15](#); [2 Thess. 1:3](#); [Titus 3:3](#); [Heb. 3:13](#), [10:24-25](#); [James 4:11](#), [5:9](#), [16](#); [1 Peter 1:22](#), [4:8-10](#), [5:5](#); [1 John 1:7](#), [3:11](#), [23](#), [4:7](#), [4:11-12](#); [2 John 1:5](#).

With Love

[1 Corinthians 13](#); [John 13:31-35](#), [14:15-31](#), [17:20-26](#); [1 John 4:7-21](#)

With Godly Leadership

[Ezekiel 34](#); [Matthew 20:25-28](#); [John 13:1-20](#), [1 Timothy 3:1-13](#); [Titus 1:5-9](#), [Titus 2](#); [Hebrews 13:7](#), [17](#); [1 Peter 5:1-3](#)

Worshipping Through All of Life

[Psalm 34](#), [96](#), [Rom. 12:1](#), [1 Cor. 10:31](#); [Eph. 5:15-21](#); [Col. 3:12-17](#), [Heb. 12:28-29](#); [Rev. 5:9-14](#)

We Keep the Gospel as Primary

[Acts 14:7](#); [Rom. 1:16](#), [16:25](#); [1 Cor. 1:17](#), [9:16](#), [15:1](#); [Gal. 1:8](#), [11](#); [Eph. 1:13](#); [1 Thess. 1:5](#)

In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things, Jesus Christ

[Rom. 14-15:7](#); [1 Cor. 2:2](#), [15](#); [Gal. 5](#); [Col. 1:15-20](#); [Heb. 12:1-2](#)

Our Core Values:

WE

WORSHIP

WELCOME

WITNESS

WORD

How We Minister

Centrifugal Ministry vs. Centripetal Ministry

Does the church exist for itself, or are we ambassadors who are looking beyond ourselves to reach others with the gospel message?

Equipping the saints for the work of the ministry

Who does the ministry, and why do we have a paid staff? What is the purpose of the paid staff?

Everyone gets their say, not everyone gets their way

What does it mean to be congregational? Who has the “power” and how do we trust the leadership when we’ve seen so many examples of abusive leadership, especially in the church?

Faithful, fruitful, and intentional

How do we measure our ministries effectiveness, and why do we have the ministries we have?

Growth in LIFE and DOCTRINE

[1 Timothy 4:16](#) reminds us to grow in both knowledge and application. We will encourage growth in both areas through life groups and equipping classes.

One Step Closer

What does it mean to be mature in Christ? How do we pursue maturity for ourselves and others?

Theological Triage

What is important, what is not important, and how do I know if someone is teaching something that contradicts Scripture?

Membership Covenant

A covenant is a promise between two parties, but it's also more than that. The most common example we see of a covenant is in marriage. In a covenant, the obligation is not contingent on the faithfulness of the other but is instead contingent on the faithfulness of God ([2 Tim. 2:13](#)). We realize that we will regularly sin against each other, but will do our best to love, honor, and cherish one another.

As members of South Suburban, we covenant to:

Pray Fervently – we will pray for the good of the church ([Rom. 12:12](#), [Eph. 6:18](#)), for our leadership to be faithful ([1 Tim. 2:2](#)), for our body to grow in health and Christ-likeness ([2 Cor. 3:18](#)), and for our church to demonstrate the gospel in word and deed to the watching world ([Col. 3:17](#)).

Attend Regularly – we will make the corporate gatherings a vital part of our lives ([Heb. 10:25](#)) and will do our best to be regularly involved in other gatherings whether they be: small groups, classes, membership meetings, or other events ([Acts 2:42-47](#)). We also commit to inform the Elders in writing if the Lord calls us to another church or moves us to a new location. In that event, we will find a new Bible believing and preaching church and transfer our membership.

Give Generously – we recognize we are blessed to be a blessing ([1 Peter 3:9](#)), so we will give generously through our time, talents, and treasures ([Matt. 25:14-30](#), [1 Cor. 9:14](#)) recognizing that everything we have is a gift from God for us to steward as his ambassadors.

Serve Faithfully – God has equipped all of us uniquely ([1 Cor. 12](#)), so we will do our best to steward our gifts for the good of the body and the glory of God so that when others look at us, they will see our good deeds and give glory to our Father in heaven ([1 Peter 2:12](#)).

Communicate Honorably – communication is vital to the life of the body, but not all communication is honoring. We will seek to outdo one another in showing honor in our communication ([Rom. 12:10](#)), as well as keeping the body informed of needs ([James 5:14](#); [Acts 4:34](#)), whether they be physical or spiritual, keeping them informed of our current address, and inform them of ways in which we are growing ([Gal. 6:6](#)).

Another aspect of communication is being willing to follow the church discipline process laid out in [Matthew 18:15-17](#). Therefore, we covenant to both confess our sin when confronted and be willing to share with others when we are sinned against, therefore doing our best to live at peace with everyone ([Rom. 12:18](#)).

Submit Joyfully – we will submit ourselves ultimately to the Scriptures as our final arbiter on all issues ([2 Tim. 3:14-17](#)), to the Holy Spirit as teacher

([John 14:26](#)), helper ([John 16:7-8](#)), and guide in truth ([John 16:13](#)), to the leadership of the church as those who are keeping watch over our souls ([Heb. 13:17](#)), and to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ ([Eph. 5:21](#)). We also recognize that as members of South Suburban, we are responsible for affirming: the employment of the Senior Pastor, the buying and selling of property, the annual church budget, our Elders, and new members. Finally, we understand that by signing this covenant we acknowledge that we have read, understand, and agree with the [SSEFC Constitution & Bylaws](#), as well as supporting the [EFCA Statement of Faith](#).

As Elders of South Suburban, we covenant to:

Be devoted to the ministry of prayer and God's Word – we will pray for all our members as we're made aware of needs as part of our personal prayer life and as part of our monthly shepherd meetings ([Acts 6:4](#)). We will also ensure that all ministries of South Suburban are faithful in the proclamation of God's Word by refuting false teaching and modeling true teaching ([1 Thess. 5:21](#), [1 Tim. 3:2](#)).

Shepherd the flock of God that is among us – we will prayerfully seek God's will for our church ([John 14:16-18](#); [Phil. 1:9-11](#)) and steward the resources given to the best of our abilities ([Matt. 25:21](#), [29](#)).

Equip the members of the church for the work of the ministry – we will do the best we can to train and equip others to use their God-given gifts for the good of the body ([1 Cor. 12](#); [Eph. 4:12](#); [James 1:22](#)).

Lovingly exercise church discipline when necessary – when we observe unrepentant sin we will lovingly confront to ensure fidelity to holiness ([1 Peter 1:15](#)) following the pattern Jesus gave us in [Matt. 18:15-20](#).

Set an example to the body – we will encourage others to imitate us as we imitate Christ ([1 Cor. 11:1](#)), follow Christ to the best of our abilities ([Matt. 16:24](#)), and shepherd the flock of God that is among us ([1 Peter 5:2](#)), to the glory of God alone ([Isa. 42:8](#)).