



Mercy Village Church

Membership Guide

What We Believe, How We Live, and the Covenant We Share

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For additional membership videos
and other membership resources visit:

www.mercyvillage.church/membership

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>> SECTION ONE <<

Discover Mercy Village

>> OUR STORY (Short Version)

Mercy Village Church was planted in 2020 with a simple but bold vision: to be a Jesus-centered, gospel-preaching, neighbor-loving church in Barboursville, West Virginia. We began meeting in a small space across from the Barboursville Post Office during our core-team building phase (November 2020 – October 2021), praying and preparing for the work ahead. In October 2021, we turned our attention to a new space on Route 60—spending the fall prepping it for public worship. After two months of core-team gatherings there, we opened our doors to the public on the first Sunday of January 2022.

For the next few years, we grew steadily in community, worship, and mission. Then in March of 2025, God opened an unexpected door: an opportunity to bring new life to the former Davis Creek Elementary School building. What began as an invitation turned into a leap of faith, and after much prayer and preparation, we held our first official Sunday gathering there on May 18, 2025. We now see this space not just as a church building, but as a base for gospel presence in our community—a place to gather, serve, worship, and be sent. And while our locations have changed, our heart has remained the same: to be a people shaped by the mercy of God, sent out to love our neighbors and tell the story of Jesus.

>> MISSION / VISION / CORE VALUES

Mission

*We Exist to
Experience and Embody
Redemption and Renewal
in Christ Alone.*

Vision

We are saved by Jesus (identity)
to walk with Jesus (intimacy)
together in worship (community)
towards our neighbor (intentionality)
and to the ends of the earth (intentionality)
throughout generations (legacy)
for all our days. (legacy)

Core values

WE ARE LOVING

WE ARE LOVED BY GOD AND we will Love God Fully & Love People Selflessly

Luke 10:27 "...he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.'"

WE ARE ABIDING

WE ARE INVITED BY JESUS AND we will Abide with Him Communally

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke... learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls..."

WE ARE GOING

WE ARE EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY GHOST AND we will Go Outward Boldly

Matthew 28:18-20 "... And Jesus came and said to them...Go therefore and make disciples... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

>> WHY THESE THINGS MATTER TO YOU

A Word About Church Structure

At Mercy Village, we like to sum up our structure this way:

We are congregation-owned, deacon-served, and elder-directed.

Each part of that phrase reflects our understanding of the New Testament church:

Congregation (specifically members): We believe the church is a *kingdom of priests*—every member called to participate, not just observe.

*"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."
—1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)*

Deacons: Deacons are servant-leaders, known for their humility, wisdom, and “boots-on-the-ground” leadership. While not elders, they are deeply influential in the health of the church through practical service and spiritual maturity.

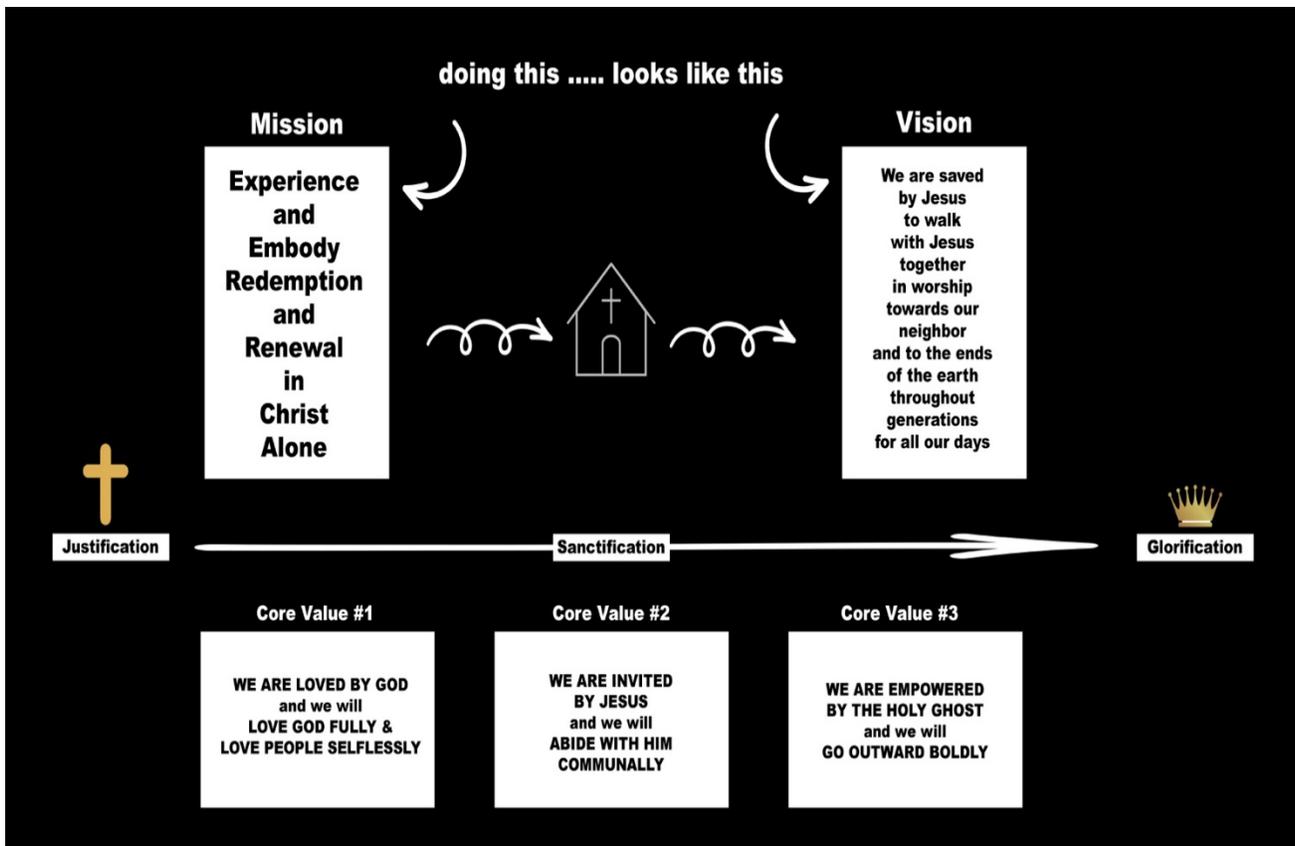
“To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons...”
 —Philippians 1:1 (ESV)

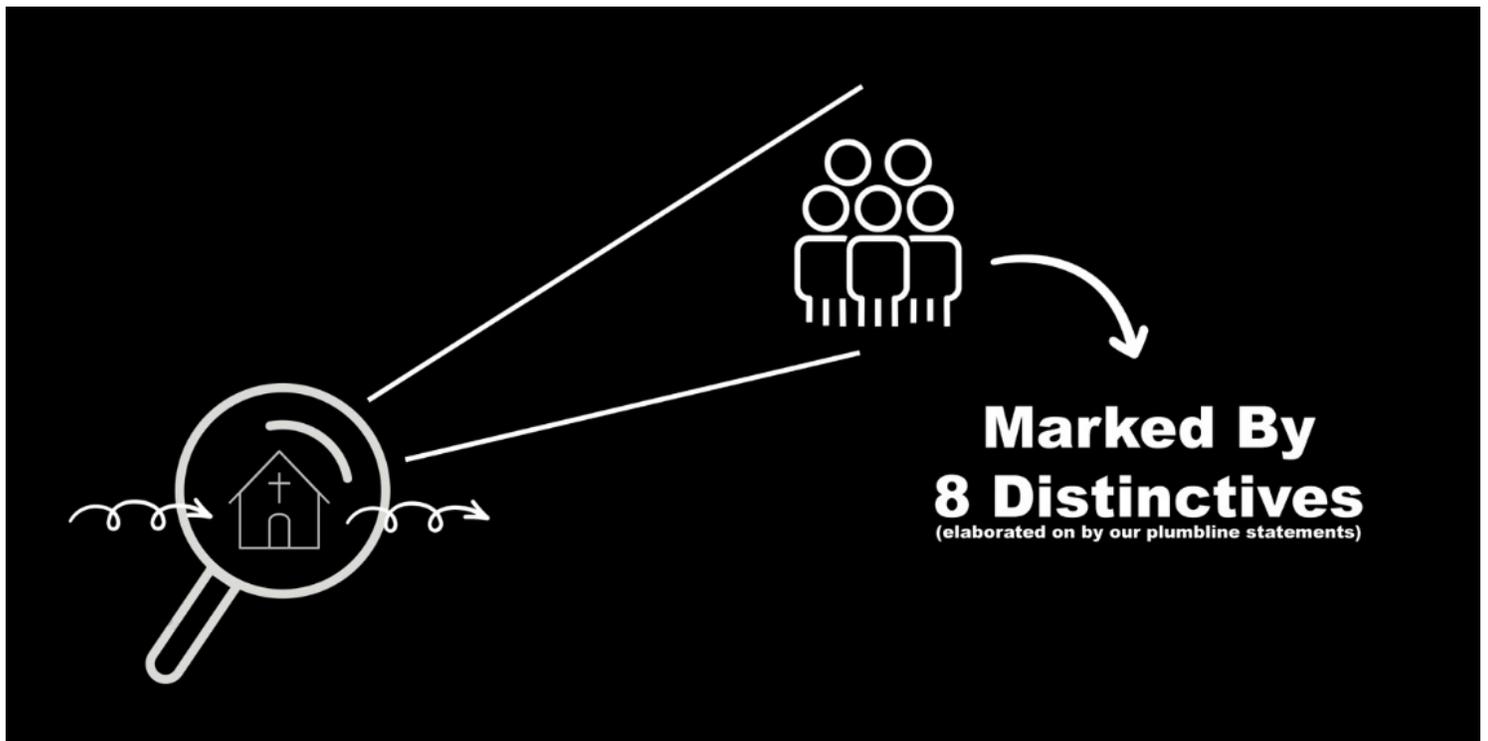
Elders: Elders bear the ultimate responsibility for the teaching, direction, and shepherding of the local church. They don’t lead alone—but in constant collaboration with one another, with deacons, and with other servant-hearted leaders throughout the body.

“They had appointed elders for them in every church... with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”
 —Acts 14:21–23 (ESV)

As a church member, you don’t just receive care and teaching—you also help guard the direction of the church. That’s why it’s important to know and embrace our mission, vision, core values, and key distinctives.

At Mercy Village, members help hold leaders accountable to stay aligned with these truths. Your voice matters. Your prayers matter. Your presence matters. Knowing who we are and what we’re committed to helps ensure we stay on course together.





>> **KEY DISTINCTIVES**

1- WALKING WITH JESUS

We will walk with Jesus primarily by being chained to The Word of God and constant in prayer to The God of The Word. This might sound very basic, but it is also the most essential. Anything that will detract or distract from these two essential disciplines will be dismissed as unnecessary to the mission.

2- RISKY FAITH

Wherever God leads us in the pursuit of walking with Jesus, we will follow. No matter the risk and no matter the cost. Might we be marked by following God wherever, whenever, and however He leads us. Every day until the last day.

3- SELFLESS MINISTRY

We desire to be a people who practice selfless ministry as a lifestyle. When we feel like it and when we don't. When others are watching and when they're not. When it costs us nothing and when it costs us everything. This will influence the way we develop leaders and volunteers and how we measure their success. Selflessness, humility, and sacrifice will matter more than talents, charisma, or expertise. We will generously, joyfully, humbly & sacrificially steward our gifts & resources for the good of one another & kingdom advance.

4- WALKING WITH ONE ANOTHER

Christianity is lived out in community. so we will value it highly. We'll gather corporately on Sundays and for other special days and events. Here we will worship Jesus in the majority alongside our sisters and brothers in Christ. Throughout the week, we will gather in smaller groups from house-to-house and place-to-place for friendship, prayer, and study. And in the smallest groups, even one-on-one, we will walk with one-another for accountability, and discipleship.

5 - WELCOMING OTHERS

We will be marked by sweet & generous welcoming of both sinners & saints in our gatherings & in our homes. We want welcoming others to be part of our DNA. So we will do so corporately and in groups. We'll exemplify and instill as leaders the value of opening our doors to the rich and poor alike. To famous and forgotten, the successful and the marginalized, the cleaned up and cast off, and anyone and everyone God calls us to. It is our confident prayer that this will spill over into the entire body of MVC. As we are welcoming all kinds of people into our homes and into our lives.

6 - LIVE LOCAL

To put it simply: Wherever God leads us, we will fully commit our lives in those places--on mission with Jesus--as long as God keeps us there. This means we will missionally engage our communities. First, through investing our personal lives locally by valuing relationships, leveraging our talents, & capitalizing on opportunities. Second, as a church, we will reach out corporately to our local area with creativity & intentionality. We'll do this with the goal of making Jesus known in our neighborhoods, leagues, businesses, events, schools, & wherever else we live, work, and play.

7 - GO OUTWARD

We are going outward for the sake of The Kingdom. We will support financially and celebrate corporately partnerships that are outside of our community, outside of our comfort zone, and to the ends of the earth. We'll share stories regularly, raise awareness continually, and offer prayer intentionally to this end as well. We'll go corporately as a church and we'll mobilize individuals personally to invest our very lives near and far as we move outward towards the last, the least, and the lost.

8 - INTENTIONAL MULTIPLICATION

We are deeply committed to intentional multiplication. We desire to multiply servants, leaders, and churches. To that end, we will value sacrifice over influence, development over excellence, and sending over growing. Practically speaking, this means that our volunteers will be mobilized to equip the volunteers that serve beside them. Our "best" leaders will frequently sit by cheering while up-and-coming leaders take "the stage," and our church will embrace with joy wide swaths of people being called out to plant churches near and far.

>> OUR PLACE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Primary Importance: The Church (capital C)

All true believers from all generations throughout all the world regardless of denomination, affiliation, etc. The is all who have, are, and ever will be in Christ.

Secondary Importance: Protestant

Our theology is rooted in the major tenets of the Protestant Reformation: that salvation comes to us only in God's Word (sola scriptura) by faith alone (sola fide) and grace alone (sola gratia) through Christ alone (solus Christus) and for God's glory alone (soli Deo gloria).

Tertiary Importance: Credo-Baptistic

We see personal conversion as a necessity prior to administering baptism; our practice of believer's baptism is by immersion.

All that to say: we are joyfully aligned with the global Church, historically rooted in Protestant theology, and locally practicing believer's baptism as a visible sign of gospel transformation.

Note: We joyfully extend membership to anyone who has received Protestant baptism, whether by believer's baptism (credo) or infant baptism (paedo)—so long as the gospel was central and the meaning understood.

>> ALIGNMENTS

Harbor Network (long-term vision): Church Health / Church Planting:

Harbor Network offers safety and support to launch, lead, and multiply thriving churches.

Send Network (temporary): Church Planting Mobilization:

A family of churches planting churches everywhere for everyone.

Huntington Community Church (HCC): Sending Church (friends/allies)



NOTE: Our connection with the Send Network puts us in cooperation with a section of the Southern Baptist Convention (we believe in this section of the SBC). This connection has baggage (like any denominational connection) but also has blessings and opportunities. **If you have any questions or concerns, we welcome them!**

>> **CONNECTION OPPORTUNITIES**

1. Serve on a Ministry Team

Use your unique gifts to help build the Kingdom. Here are some of the areas where you can serve:

- **Hospitality Team** – Setup, coffee/café prep, greeting, making guests feel at home
- **Worship Music Team** – Singers & musicians helping lead our church in worship
- **Young Kids Ministry** – Care and teaching for babies through kindergarten
- **Elementary Ministry** – Gospel-centered teaching for 1st–5th grade
- **Youth Group** – Discipleship and connection for middle school and high school aged young people.
- **Sound Team** – Mixing audio for live worship
- **Media Team** – Running slides and video during gatherings
- **Cleaning Team** – Building upkeep, usually once a month
- **Other Opportunities** – Admin, design, events, communications—just let us know!

Most teams serve one Sunday per month. If you're interested or want more info, let us know and we'll help you find your fit. Visit: <https://mercyvillage.church/serve>

2. Plug Into Community

- The Forge for Men
- Safe Space for Women
- Monthly Prayer Gatherings
- Monthly Family Meals
- Community Groups
- Book Studies
- Discipleship Tracks
- Etc.

3. Engage in Outreach & Mission

- Greater Barboursville Community Outreach
- Seasonal Events
- Blessing Boxes
- Community Outreach
- Random Acts of Kindness
- Etc.

>> **INVESTING IN THE MISSION (TIME/TALENTS/TREASURE)**

As followers of Jesus, we believe that everything we have is a gift from God—including our time, our abilities, and our resources. At Mercy Village Church, we speak of *investing* these gifts as a way of participating in the life and mission of the church.

This investment is not about pressure or comparison, but about **faithful participation**. Each person and family is invited to prayerfully discern how God is calling them to steward their time, talents, and treasures in this season of life. As we offer what we have—imperfectly and willingly—we trust God to use it for His purposes and our good.

These commitments take many forms: showing up regularly, serving where we are gifted, giving generously, and sharing in the work God is doing among us. Together, they help sustain the shared life of the church and support its mission in the world.

For a fuller explanation of these commitments within covenant membership, see **Section 4**.

>> **NEXT STEPS FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Interested in Membership?

Next Steps:

1. Attend this event
2. Watch video teachings
3. Read & review covenant
4. Meet with a pastor
5. Sign covenant & be received into membership

>> SECTION TWO <<

Why Membership Matters at Mercy Village

Membership as Biblical Partnership

From the beginning, God has not saved His people as isolated individuals, but as a people who belong to one another. Scripture consistently describes the church using relational images: a body with many members (1 Corinthians 12), a family with shared identity and responsibility (Ephesians 2:19), and a flock cared for by shepherds (1 Peter 5:2). These images point to a shared life marked by presence, responsibility, and mutual care.

Membership, then, is not an added layer of commitment beyond Christianity—it is one of the ordinary ways discipleship takes shape. To follow Jesus is to be joined to His people. The New Testament assumes this kind of belonging: believers are known, accountable, cared for, and sent together. Faith is personal, but it is never private.

At Mercy Village Church, membership names and affirms this biblical partnership. It reflects a shared commitment to walk together in faith, to love one another patiently, and to participate together in the life and mission of the church. This shared life is not casual or abstract—it is an embodied commitment that shapes how we relate to one another and how we follow Jesus together.

Covenant, Not Consumerism

In a culture shaped by choice, preference, and constant evaluation, it is easy to approach the church as a provider of religious goods and services. When that happens, commitment becomes conditional, relationships become transactional, and belonging lasts only as long as expectations are met.

Membership offers a different vision. Rather than a consumer agreement, it reflects a covenantal way of life—one marked by faithfulness, shared responsibility, and endurance. Covenant membership calls us out of asking only *what we receive* and into asking *how we are called to love, serve, and remain rooted with others over time*.

This does not mean ignoring difference, difficulty, or change. It means choosing to stay present and engaged even when things are imperfect—trusting that God forms His people not through constant optimization, but through patient, shared life. In this way, membership becomes a means of grace, shaping us away from individualism and toward mature, Christlike love.

Membership and the Local Church

While every Christian belongs to the universal church—the global body of Christ across time and place—Scripture consistently calls believers to live out that belonging within a specific, local community. The commands to love one another, bear one another’s burdens, submit to spiritual leadership, and care for the weak all assume proximity, presence, and shared life.

Membership gives concrete expression to this local belonging. It answers the simple but important question: *Who is this church responsible to shepherd, and who has committed to walk within this community?* By naming that relationship, membership creates clarity that serves both the church and its people.

Rather than limiting freedom, this kind of clarity creates space for deeper care, trust, and accountability. It allows leaders to shepherd wisely and members to know where they are rooted. In a transient and fragmented world, covenant membership affirms that discipleship is lived not in abstraction, but in real places, with real people, over time.

What Membership Does

Building on this shared understanding of covenant belonging, membership offers several practical gifts to the life of the church and its people.

Membership provides clarity—about shared beliefs, expectations, and responsibility. It fosters care, making it possible for leaders and members to walk closely with one another in seasons of joy and difficulty. It encourages accountability, not as control, but as loving support aimed at growth in Christ. And it strengthens mission, as a committed people are better equipped to serve faithfully together.

These gifts do not make the church perfect, but they do make it more honest, resilient, and rooted. Membership does not replace grace; it helps create the kind of community in which grace can be received, practiced, and shared.

These commitments take clearer shape in the covenant life of the church, which we explore more fully in Section 4.

>> SECTION THREE <<

Beliefs, Doctrine, and Practices

“Here’s some good news: we don’t have to choose between theological precision and white-hot passion. God wants us to reject both dead orthodoxy as well as passionate ignorance.”

-Adam Ramsey

Christian faith is not sustained by sincerity alone, but by truth—truth received, trusted, and lived. What we believe shapes how we worship, how we love, and how we live together as the people of God. For that reason, Mercy Village Church is committed to a faith that is both **theologically rooted** and **deeply formative**—grounded in Scripture and expressed through shared practices that shape us over time.

A Shared Confession of Faith

The church has always been a confessing community. From its earliest days, Christians have gathered around shared beliefs about who God is, what He has done in Christ, and how He calls His people to live. These shared convictions are not meant to restrict faith, but to **anchor** it—guarding the church from confusion, drift, and distortion while uniting believers around the truth of the gospel.

As Ray Ortlund has written, *“What energizes us for truly Christian living is not good intentions, but true beliefs.”* In the same spirit, J. I. Packer reminds us that *“The purpose of theology is doxology—we study in order to praise.”* Right belief fuels right worship, and right worship shapes faithful living.

At Mercy Village Church, we joyfully affirm historic, orthodox Christian doctrine as revealed in Scripture and confessed throughout the life of the church. We believe that truth and love are not opposed, but inseparably joined in Christ. Truth without love is not truth, and love without truth is not love. God, save us from both dead orthodoxy and passionate ignorance.

For the sake of clarity and shared understanding, a full, point-by-point doctrinal statement is included in **Appendix A**.

Holding Conviction with Humility, Charity, and Care

Christian unity is not built on agreement about everything, but on shared allegiance to Jesus Christ and submission to the authority of Scripture. From the earliest days of the church, believers have held firm convictions while also navigating differences of understanding, emphasis, and practice within the household of faith.

Historically, the church has often summarized this wisdom with a simple phrase: **unity in essentials, charity in non-essentials, and love in all things.**

While not a substitute for careful theological discernment, this summary captures a deeply biblical posture—one that seeks to guard the heart of the gospel while refusing unnecessary division among God’s people.

At Mercy Village Church, we hold clear and meaningful convictions about the core doctrines of the Christian faith—truths that define the gospel, shape our worship, and guide our life together. At the same time, we recognize that faithful Christians may disagree on secondary matters. In such cases, we seek to walk with humility, patience, and mutual respect, trusting that God forms His people not through uniformity, but through shared life shaped by grace.

We believe that **truth and love are not diametrically opposed, but inseparably joined in Christ.**

Truth without love is not truth, and love without truth is not love. God, save us from both harsh dogmatism that wounds the body and careless indifference that erodes faith. The calling of the church is not to choose between conviction and compassion, but to practice both faithfully.

This posture shapes how we teach, how we disagree, and how we pursue faithfulness together. We are committed to speaking honestly, listening carefully, and submitting ourselves to Scripture—not as isolated interpreters, but as members of a church shaped by the wisdom of the historic Christian faith and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this way, we seek to remain rooted in truth while growing in love, for the good of Christ’s church and the glory of God.

Sacraments and the Forming Life of Worship

God forms His people not only through what we believe, but through what we practice together. Throughout Scripture and church history, Christians have gathered around **Word and Sacrament**, trusting that God meets His people through ordinary means filled with extraordinary grace.

At Mercy Village Church, we recognize **baptism and the Lord’s Supper** as holy gifts—sacraments through which God proclaims the gospel, strengthens faith, and marks us as His people. Baptism publicly declares union with Christ and incorporation into His church. Communion nourishes believers through remembrance, participation, and hope as we proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.

These sacramental practices are woven into a broader **gospel-shaped order of worship**. Our liturgy follows a deliberate rhythm—gathering, confession, assurance, Word, Table, and sending—designed not for routine, but for formation. Week after week, this shared pattern rehearses the story of redemption and renewal, shaping what we love, what we trust, and how we live.

Because these practices matter deeply, fuller explanations of our understanding of **baptism, the Lord's Supper, and our order of worship** are included in **Appendices C and D**. What is named here is meant to orient and invite; what is included there provides greater detail and guidance.

>> SECTION FOUR <<

Membership Commitments and the Covenant Life of the Church

The Meaning of Membership Commitments

As we've already seen, membership at Mercy Village is rooted in **covenant, not contract**, and in **formation, not transaction**. It is a response to grace, not a prerequisite for it. From that foundation, membership commitments naturally follow.

Commitments are simply the way covenant takes shape over time. They help translate shared belief and shared belonging into a shared way of life. Rather than being a checklist to complete or a standard to perform, these commitments give **clarity** to what faithfulness looks like within a particular community of people walking together with Jesus.

Membership commitments are not about earning God's favor or proving spiritual maturity. They are about **intentional participation**—choosing, again and again, to order our lives toward Christ and toward one another in concrete, embodied ways. In this sense, commitments are not restrictive, but **formative**. They shape our loves, our habits, and our priorities over time.

Because the church is a body, commitments are mutual. What we commit to affects not only our own spiritual lives, but the health and witness of the whole community. These shared commitments create space for trust, care, stability, and mission to flourish.

The commitments described in the following sections form the **heart of the membership covenant** at Mercy Village Church—the shared promises we joyfully make to one another as we formally enter into membership. That covenant will be presented later in this manual, but the commitments themselves are introduced here so that they can be understood clearly, prayerfully, and without pressure.

Commitments We Make as Members

Membership commitments describe the shared faithfulness we pursue together as a church family. They are not minimum requirements to stay in good standing, nor are they marks of spiritual achievement. Rather, they name the ordinary rhythms through which God forms His people over time. These commitments are practiced imperfectly and received with grace. Seasons change. Capacity fluctuates. What matters is not flawless consistency, but a **faithful orientation of life toward Christ and His people**.

A Commitment to Walk with Jesus

Members of Mercy Village commit to a growing life of discipleship centered on Jesus Christ. This includes a desire to live under the authority of Scripture, to cultivate habits of prayer and repentance, and to walk in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

We recognize that growth looks different in different seasons. Membership does not assume spiritual maturity, but a willingness to be shaped—to keep turning toward Christ, to receive encouragement and correction, and to walk honestly with others as God does His work in us.

A Commitment to Gather in Worship

Members commit to prioritize the regular gathering of the church as a central rhythm of their lives. God uses Word and Table, prayer and song, confession and assurance to form His people—and we believe this shared time together matters deeply.

Gathering is not merely attendance at a service, but participation in a formative practice. While illness, travel, work, and other responsibilities may at times interrupt consistency, membership reflects a clear intention to root one's life in the worshiping community whenever possible.

A Commitment to Live in Community

Members commit to pursue life together marked by love, patience, humility, and forgiveness. Christian community requires presence and vulnerability—it means bearing burdens, celebrating joys, and walking with one another through seasons of suffering and growth.

This commitment does not require instant closeness with everyone, but it does assume a posture of openness, reconciliation, and shared responsibility for one another's spiritual good.

A Commitment to Serve with Time and Talents

Members commit to offer their **time and talents** for the building up of the church and the good of others. God has entrusted each person with different gifts, capacities, seasons, and responsibilities, and He calls His people to steward those gifts faithfully and wisely.

At Mercy Village, service is not measured by comparison or enforced by pressure. We trust the Holy Spirit to guide each member—and each family—as they prayerfully discern how God is calling them to invest their time and abilities in this season of life. This discernment is personal and relational, not transactional.

Serving is not about filling slots or meeting expectations. It is about participating in the life and mission of the body with freedom, joy, and responsibility—trusting that God uses a diversity of gifts and callings to strengthen His church.

A Commitment to Give Generously with Our Treasures

Members commit to practice generosity as an act of worship, trust, and gratitude. Giving is one of the ways we steward the **treasures** God has entrusted to us and participate together in the work God is doing through the local church.

Generosity at Mercy Village is not defined by a percentage, a benchmark, or a comparison to others. Nor is it monitored or scrutinized by church leaders. Giving is ultimately a matter between each person and the Lord, guided by Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

We trust our members to regularly and prayerfully assess how God is calling them to steward their resources—individually and within their families—and to give freely, cheerfully, and faithfully in response to His grace. In this way, generosity becomes not a burden to carry, but a joy to practice.

These commitments—to steward our **time, talents, and treasures**—are not meant to burden or divide, but to unite and form. They give shape to our shared life and help us walk together with clarity, humility, and hope, trusting that God uses ordinary faithfulness to accomplish extraordinary things.

Commitments the Church Makes to Its Members

Membership is a mutual covenant. Just as members make commitments to walk together in faithfulness, the church also makes commitments to those who entrust themselves to its care. At Mercy Village Church, we take these commitments seriously, recognizing that leadership is a responsibility before God and a trust given by His people.

A Commitment to Faithful Teaching and Worship

The church commits to proclaiming the Word of God faithfully and clearly. We are devoted to teaching Scripture in a way that is rooted in historic Christian belief, centered on Christ, and attentive to the forming work of the Holy Spirit.

Through gospel-shaped worship, preaching, prayer, and the sacraments, the church commits to creating space where God's people are nourished, challenged, comforted, and formed over time.

A Commitment to Pastoral Care and Prayer

The church commits to caring for its members with love, patience, and humility. This includes praying regularly for the congregation, walking with people through seasons of joy and suffering, and offering spiritual guidance, encouragement, and counsel when needed.

Pastoral care is not reserved for moments of crisis alone. It is an ongoing posture of presence and attentiveness, seeking to shepherd people faithfully rather than manage them efficiently.

A Commitment to Loving Leadership and Oversight

The church commits to exercising leadership marked by integrity, accountability, and transparency. Those entrusted with leadership seek to lead as servants—protecting the unity of the church, guarding its doctrine, and making decisions prayerfully and responsibly.

Leadership at Mercy Village is not about control or coercion. It is about guiding, equipping, and caring for the body in a way that reflects the heart of Christ, the Good Shepherd.

A Commitment to Care, Restoration, and Grace

The church commits to pursuing the spiritual good of its members with gentleness and truth. When struggles, sin, or conflict arise, leadership seeks to respond with patience, clarity, and compassion—always aiming toward restoration rather than punishment.

Accountability, when needed, is understood as an expression of love and care, not exclusion or shame. The church commits to walking with people through difficult seasons, trusting God’s grace to do the work only He can accomplish.

Together, the commitments described in the previous sections—both the commitments members make to the shared life of the church and the commitments the church makes to its members—express the **heart of the membership covenant** at Mercy Village Church. These promises are mutual, relational, and rooted in the gospel, shaping how we walk together in faithfulness and care.

While Sections 4.2 and 4.3 provide a summary of these shared commitments, the full membership covenant is included later in this manual and can be found in detail in the appendix. There, these commitments are presented clearly and completely, so they may be entered into prayerfully, joyfully, and without surprise.

Membership, Care, and Accountability

Because membership is a covenant, it includes not only encouragement and support, but also **care and accountability**. These are not separate from love; they are expressions of it. Scripture consistently presents accountability within the church as a gift meant to protect, restore, and strengthen God’s people.

At Mercy Village Church, accountability is not about surveillance, control, or punishment. It is about **walking together in truth and grace**, trusting that God uses loving relationships to shape His people over time. When we stumble, struggle, or drift, we believe the appropriate response is not distance or shame, but patient presence, honest conversation, and prayerful care.

Membership simply clarifies who has invited the church into this kind of relational responsibility. It allows pastors and leaders to shepherd with clarity and members to receive care with trust. In this way, accountability is not something done *to* people, but something practiced *with* one another.

At times, love requires difficult conversations. When those moments arise, the church seeks to respond with humility, gentleness, and hope—always aiming toward repentance, healing, and restoration. Even correction, when necessary, is understood as an act of care rooted in God’s desire for life and freedom.

This section is not intended to explain the specific processes or steps involved in church discipline or restoration. Those details are addressed later in this manual. Here, we simply affirm that accountability belongs within the covenant of membership and is practiced as part of the church’s calling to love one another well.

>> SECTION FIVE <<

Leadership, Oversight, and Structure

The church is not an unstructured gathering of individuals, nor is it a corporate hierarchy designed to centralize power. It is a living body called into covenant life together, and therefore it requires wise, biblical structure in order to flourish.

Leadership and organization exist not to preserve authority, but to promote health. When rightly ordered, structure serves love, protects unity, and equips the saints for the work of ministry. At Mercy Village Church, we believe leadership is a gift from Christ to His church — not for control, but for care.

Why Leadership and Structure Matter

Throughout Scripture, God provides leadership for His people as an expression of His care. The New Testament shows elders appointed to shepherd and oversee local congregations (Acts 14:23; 20:28), and deacons appointed to serve practical needs within the body (Acts 6:1–7). These roles were not created for efficiency, but for faithfulness.

A helpful image is that of a garden. A healthy garden has intentional structure — rows, boundaries, and careful tending — not to restrict growth, but to encourage it. In the same way, the church is ordered so that every member might flourish, be protected, and be equipped for ministry.

Structure, when shaped by Scripture and humility, does not suppress participation. It clarifies responsibility, protects unity, and sustains long-term health in a covenant community.

Elders: Shepherds and Spiritual Oversight

At Mercy Village Church, elders are called to serve as shepherds of God’s people. This calling is rooted in Scripture and shaped by the example of Jesus Himself, the Chief Shepherd. Elders are entrusted with spiritual oversight not as a position of status, but as a vocation of care, prayer, and responsibility before God.

Biblical Foundation for the Role of Elder

The role of elder is not a modern invention, but a biblical office given for the good of the church. Throughout the New Testament, elders are recognized as those entrusted with spiritual oversight, teaching, prayer, and care for God’s people. Scripture speaks of elders shepherding the flock of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1–4), guarding sound doctrine (Titus 1:5–9), and leading with integrity and maturity (1 Timothy 3:1–7). This pattern reflects God’s consistent care for His people through faithful, humble leaders who serve under Christ’s authority and for the flourishing of the whole church.

Before elders are shepherds, they are first sheep. They follow Jesus alongside the rest of the church, living under His authority and depending daily on His grace. This shared posture matters deeply. It means elders are not above the congregation, but within it—approachable, accountable, and continually being formed by the same gospel they proclaim.

The primary work of elders is spiritual in nature. They are called to guard and teach sound doctrine, to pray for and care for the people of God, and to guide the church with wisdom, humility, and faithfulness. Their leadership is meant to be steady rather than reactive, patient rather than hurried, and anchored in Scripture rather than shaped by pressure, preference, or cultural trends.

At Mercy Village, we believe elders must be rooted in the Word of God and the God of the Word. Scripture sets the agenda for the life of the church, and elders are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that the church remains centered on Christ and aligned with His truth. This anchoring protects the church from drift and helps it remain faithful across seasons of change.

Effective shepherding flows from presence with Jesus before productivity for Jesus. Elders are not called to manufacture outcomes or drive growth through anxious striving. Instead, they seek to abide with Christ, trusting that fruitfulness flows from faithfulness. From this place of presence, elders become a calm and stabilizing influence within the church.

Prayer is central to the calling of elders. They lead not merely through decisions and direction, but through intercession—bringing the needs of the church before God and depending on Him to do what only He can do. In this way, elders continually confess that Jesus alone builds His church.

The posture of elders matters as much as their responsibilities. Scripture calls leaders to reflect the gentle and lowly heart of Christ, exercising authority with humility, correcting with compassion, and leading with patience. Elders are called to reach for the towel, not the throne—to serve rather than dominate and to lay down their lives rather than lord authority over others.

This shepherding posture includes vulnerability and honesty. Elders do not lead from behind walls of self-protection, but with open hearts—willing to listen, to repent, to bear burdens, and to walk with people through suffering and joy alike. Their authority is expressed through sacrifice and love, not control or coercion.

In all of this, elders aim to protect the unity and spiritual health of the church. Through their teaching, prayer, presence, and example, they serve so that every member of the body might be equipped, nourished, and encouraged to flourish in Christ.

Deacons: Service, Care, and Support

At MVC, deacons are servants entrusted with care, support, and practical ministry—not governors of the church. Their role is vital to our health but is intentionally distinct from the role of elders.

Scripture presents deacons not as a ruling board or parallel authority, but as faithful servants who help preserve the unity, care, and forward movement of the church. In a region where the word deacon is often used to describe decision-makers, power brokers, or a voting body, we want to be clear and biblical about what deacons are—and what they are not.

Deacons at MVC do not function as elders, nor do they form a board that directs the church. Rather, they serve under the spiritual oversight of the elders, carrying responsibility for tangible needs, mercy ministries, logistics, and practical care so that the elders can remain devoted to prayer, the ministry of the Word, and shepherding the flock (Acts 6:1–7; 1 Timothy 3:8–13).

Servants Who Strengthen the Body

The New Testament word translated deacon simply means servant. This is not a lesser calling—it is a Christ-shaped one. Jesus Himself said that He came “not to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45). In that sense, deacons model a visible, embodied form of gospel humility and love.

At MVC, deacons are often entrusted with:

- Practical needs that arise within the congregation
- Benevolence and care for members in seasons of hardship
- Logistical and operational support that serves the gathered church
- Coordinating teams of volunteers for specific ministries of service

Deacons lead by serving. Their influence is not positional or directive, but relational and functional—cultivated through trust, character, and faithfulness.

Shock Absorbers for the Sake of Unity

One helpful way to understand the biblical role of deacons is to see them as “shock absorbers” in the life of the church—a phrase that captures what happened in Acts 6, where servants were appointed to address tension that threatened the unity of the body. Their work did more than solve a logistical problem; it protected the peace and witness of the church.

Deacons often operate at the intersection of need and strain. They help absorb pressure so that small issues do not become deep divisions, responding with wisdom and grace—always aiming to build unity rather than exert control.

Character Before Competence

Because deacons serve close to people’s needs and vulnerabilities, Scripture emphasizes character over skill. While administrative ability or practical gifting can be helpful, the Bible prioritizes maturity, integrity, self-control, and faithfulness (1 Timothy 3:8–13).

At MVC, deacons are recognized not because they are influential, successful, or long-tenured, but because they are already serving, already trusted, and already displaying Christlike character among the people of God.

Serving Under Elder Oversight

Elders are called to lead, teach, and shepherd the church. Deacons are called to support that leadership through service—not to compete with it or replicate it. This distinction protects both offices and promotes health within the church. In practice:

- Elders set spiritual direction and provide oversight
- Deacons facilitate ministry and care within that direction
- The congregation is freed to serve together with clarity and joy

This partnership allows MVC to remain both well-shepherded and well-served, without confusion about authority or responsibility.

A Joyful and Honorable Calling

Deacon service is not a stepping-stone to elder leadership, nor is it a consolation role. It is a worthy calling in its own right—essential to the church’s life and witness. Those who serve well as deacons are a gift to the body and a visible reminder that greatness in Christ’s kingdom is measured by love-filled service.

At MVC, we give thanks for deacons who quietly, faithfully, and joyfully serve—strengthening the church, caring for the vulnerable, and helping us walk together in unity for the glory of Christ.

Deacons at MVC – Table

Deacons Are	Deacons Are NOT
Servants who care for practical needs within the church	A governing or voting board
Faithful men and women who lead through humility and love	A parallel authority to the elders
Supporters of the elders, helping carry the work of ministry	Decision-makers over doctrine or spiritual direction
Protectors of unity, often addressing needs before they become divisions	A stepping-stone to elder leadership
A visible expression of Christlike service in the life of the church	A position of power, status, or control

Staff, Ministry Leaders, and Advisory Teams

In addition to elders and deacons, Mercy Village Church is supported by staff members, ministry leaders, and, at times, advisory teams or subcommittees. These roles serve the church by strengthening its mission and supporting the spiritual care of its people.

Staff members carry specific responsibilities related to the daily life, administration, and ministry of the church. Whether focused on pastoral care, operations, communication, or ministry coordination, staff steward time, energy, and expertise so that the body can flourish. While staff roles may shift across seasons and needs, all staff serve under the spiritual oversight of the elders.

Ministry leaders are volunteers who help carry forward focused areas of church life. They oversee teams, coordinate efforts, and cultivate environments where others can serve and grow. Their leadership is practical and relational, aimed at equipping the saints for the work of ministry rather than concentrating responsibility in a few individuals.

At times, the elders may appoint advisory teams or subcommittees to bring wisdom and insight to specific areas of church life — such as financial stewardship, facilities planning, or other defined needs. These teams do not carry governing or spiritual authority. Their role is consultative rather than directive: offering expertise, asking thoughtful questions, and helping the elders see clearly as they prayerfully discern decisions.

Because the needs of a church change over time, the presence and composition of staff roles, ministry teams, and advisory groups may also change. This flexibility allows Mercy Village to respond faithfully to new seasons while remaining anchored in its core convictions and leadership structure.

In all of this, our aim is clarity without rigidity. These roles are not layers of authority, but expressions of shared responsibility and faithful stewardship—so that the church may remain well cared for, well led, and free to focus on what matters most.

Authority, Accountability, and Trust

Authority within the church is always derived. It does not originate in leaders themselves, but is entrusted by Jesus Christ for the good of His people. For this reason, authority at Mercy Village Church is understood not as power to be exercised, but as responsibility to be stewarded with humility, wisdom, and care.

Scripture presents leadership as accountable—first to God, and then to the people being served. Those entrusted with leadership are not above correction, transparency, or evaluation. Rather, they are called to lead in a way that reflects the character of Christ and cultivates trust through faithfulness and integrity.

At Mercy Village, elders bear primary responsibility for spiritual oversight, doctrine, and direction. They seek to exercise that responsibility prayerfully, collaboratively, and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Decisions are made with care, seeking the good of the whole church rather than personal preference or convenience.

Accountability is not only something leaders exercise; it is something they receive. Elders are accountable to one another, to Scripture, and ultimately to Christ, the Chief Shepherd. This shared accountability guards against isolation, misuse of authority, and unexamined decision-making.

Trust grows where leadership is clear, consistent, and transparent. While not every decision can involve every person, leadership is exercised with humility and a desire to communicate openly and listen attentively. Members are invited into this relationship of trust—not as passive recipients, but as partners in the life and mission of the church. Trust does not mean uncritical agreement or blind loyalty; it is built over time through honesty, faithfulness, and shared commitment to Christ.

In all of this, our confidence rests not in human leadership, but in Jesus Himself. He is the true Head of the church, the source of all authority, and the One who faithfully shepherds His people. All leadership at Mercy Village exists under His lordship and for His glory.

Unity, Decision-Making, and the Role of Members

The life of the church is not sustained by leadership alone, but by the faithful participation of the whole body. At Mercy Village Church, we believe unity is both a gift from God and a responsibility we share together. Leadership, structure, and decision-making exist to protect that unity and help the church move forward with clarity and peace.

While elders are entrusted with spiritual oversight and final responsibility for leadership and direction, the role of members is essential. Members are not spectators, but participants—praying, serving, giving, encouraging, and bearing responsibility for the health and witness of the church. The church flourishes when every part of the body is engaged and valued.

Decision-making at Mercy Village reflects this shared life. While not every decision is made by congregational vote, there are significant matters in which members participate through affirmation and approval. These include, among other things:

- Approval of the annual budget
- Receiving elders and deacons into their roles
- Taking on substantial financial obligations or debt
- Major decisions that shape the long-term direction and stewardship of the church

In this way, congregational participation is not control over day-to-day leadership, but a meaningful expression of shared responsibility and trust. Members do not ordain leaders or manage ministry directly, but they affirm those whom God has raised up and share in stewarding the church's resources and future.

Unity does not require uniformity, nor does trust require agreement on every matter. Unity is nurtured through shared submission to Christ, humility toward one another, and a willingness to place the good of the whole above personal preference. In this way, the church learns to walk together even amid differences.

Members are encouraged to engage leadership with honesty and respect—to ask questions, express concerns, and offer insight in ways that build up rather than divide. Likewise, leadership commits to receiving feedback with humility and care, trusting that God often speaks through the collective wisdom of His people.

Ultimately, our hope is not that decisions are always easy or universally preferred, but that they are made prayerfully, communicated clearly, and received with trust. As we submit ourselves to Christ and to one another, we believe He leads His church faithfully—forming us into a people marked by peace, maturity, and love.

>> SECTION SIX <<

Care, Discipline, and Restoration

A Culture of Care and Pastoral Shepherding

At MVC, care is not a program or department. It is a culture—a shared way of life shaped by the heart of the Good Shepherd and expressed through the ordinary faithfulness of God’s people walking together over time.

Scripture portrays God as a shepherd who knows His people, walks with them, protects them, and gently leads them toward life. In the same way, pastoral care at MVC is not primarily about fixing problems, but about being present, listening well, praying faithfully, and continually pointing one another to Christ. Care begins long before correction is ever needed.

Elders and pastors carry a particular calling to shepherd the flock with humility and prayerfulness. Yet care is never centralized or professionalized. The whole church participates—bearing burdens, offering encouragement, speaking truth in love, and walking together through seasons of joy and sorrow.

We believe meaningful care is relational rather than transactional. People are not projects, and growth in Christ rarely follows a straight line. For this reason, shepherding resists hurried solutions and embraces attentiveness, discernment, and prayer. Faithfulness matters more than efficiency. Presence matters more than performance.

Because we love one another, this culture of care does not avoid hard conversations. Genuine care sometimes includes encouragement toward repentance and growth. Even then, truth is offered as an invitation, not a weapon—spoken with humility and a desire for restoration.

Everything that follows in this section flows from this foundation. Church discipline, when necessary, is not a departure from care but an extension of it. The aim is never punishment or shame, but healing, repentance, and renewed joy in Christ.

Before speaking of discipline, we affirm this clearly: MVC longs to be a place where people are known, loved, prayed for, and gently formed over time by the grace of God.

Loving Correction and Church Discipline

Correction within the church is not an interruption of love, but an expression of it. At MVC, we believe that when believers walk together in covenant life, we share responsibility for one another’s spiritual good. Because sin harms individuals and wounds the body, loving correction is part of faithful discipleship.

Jesus outlines a gracious and deliberate process for addressing sin in Matthew 18:15–20. The pattern begins privately and relationally—one person going to another with humility and care. The goal is always restoration. Most concerns, when handled early and gently, are resolved at this stage through honest conversation, repentance, and forgiveness.

If a matter cannot be resolved privately, Scripture provides further steps that widen involvement carefully and prayerfully. Even then, the purpose remains the same: clarity, repentance, reconciliation, and the protection of unity within the church.

At MVC, discipline is never rushed and never reactionary. It is approached slowly, prayerfully, and with careful discernment. Leaders seek to understand circumstances fully, to listen well, and to respond in ways that reflect both truth and grace. Public action is rare and reserved only for serious, unrepentant patterns that harm the church or deny the gospel.

In rare and serious cases, when someone persistently refuses correction and continues in unrepentant patterns that harm the church or deny the gospel, further steps may be taken in line with Matthew 18. Such steps are never taken lightly. They are carried out with patience, clarity, and genuine love.

It is important to say clearly: church discipline is not about control, punishment, or humiliation. It is about restoration. It exists to call a brother or sister back to life in Christ and to guard the spiritual health of the body.

When practiced biblically, discipline strengthens rather than weakens the church. It reminds us that holiness matters, that grace is real, and that our covenant life together is not casual but sacred.

Repentance, Restoration, and Hope

At MVC, the ultimate aim of discipline is never separation, but restoration. Every step of correction is taken with prayerful hope that repentance will lead to healing, reconciliation, and renewed joy in Christ.

When someone responds to correction with humility and repentance, the church responds with grace and welcome. Forgiveness is not reluctant; it is joyful. The goal is not to hold past failures over someone's head, but to walk forward together in freedom and renewed faithfulness.

Even in situations that require more serious steps—such as temporary removal from leadership responsibilities or, in rare cases, suspension of membership—the door toward repentance and restoration remains open. Discipline is never meant to declare someone beyond hope, but to clarify the seriousness of sin and the beauty of returning to Christ.

The church reflects the heart of the Father when it longs not to exclude, but to restore. We remember that every one of us depends daily on mercy. For this reason, restoration is not treated as an exception to grace, but as an expression of it.

When repentance is evident, restoration is pursued thoughtfully and wisely. Sometimes healing requires time, counsel, and accountability. Yet even then, the posture of the church remains hopeful. We believe the gospel is powerful enough to transform hearts, mend relationships, and renew lives.

In all things, our confidence rests not in the perfection of our processes, but in the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ. He is the One who restores wanderers, heals the brokenhearted, and builds His church in truth and love.

When Help Is Needed Beyond the Church

The church is called to care deeply for one another, but it is not called to care alone. While pastors and elders at MVC seek to walk faithfully with people through a wide range of spiritual and personal challenges, there are times when care beyond the church is both wise and necessary.

At MVC, we believe seeking outside help—such as licensed counselors, medical professionals, or other trusted specialists—is not a failure of faith, but often an expression of wisdom and humility. God works through many means to bring healing, clarity, and growth, and we gladly affirm the value of professional care when situations exceed the scope of pastoral shepherding.

Pastoral care is relational and spiritual by nature. It includes prayer, Scripture, encouragement, accountability, and presence. However, pastors are not therapists, physicians, or legal professionals. Recognizing these limits is part of faithful shepherding. Referring someone to appropriate outside care is not an abdication of responsibility, but a continuation of love.

In situations involving trauma, abuse, addiction, mental health concerns, or other complex challenges, specialized care may be essential. In such cases, the church seeks to walk alongside individuals with support and prayer while encouraging them to pursue the help they need. No one is expected to navigate these realities alone.

When appropriate, pastors and elders may help connect individuals or families with trusted professionals and resources. These referrals are offered with discretion, respect, and care, honoring confidentiality and personal dignity.

Throughout this process, the church remains present. Outside care does not replace the love and support of the church, nor does it remove someone from community life. Rather, it complements pastoral care, allowing individuals to receive holistic support for body, mind, and soul.

At MVC, we desire to be a church that values truth, compassion, and wisdom—one that walks faithfully with people while recognizing when additional help is a gift from God for their good.

>> SECTION SEVEN <<

The Membership Covenant

Why a Membership Covenant

Throughout this manual, we have described the church not as an organization we attend, but as a **people we belong to**. Scripture speaks of the church as a body, a household, and a family—joined together by Christ and called to walk together in faith, love, and mission. A membership covenant exists to give **clear, shared expression** to that belonging.

At Mercy Village Church, we use the language of *covenant* intentionally. A covenant is different from a contract. Contracts are transactional and minimal, designed to protect individual interests. Covenants are relational and mutual, designed to protect shared life. A membership covenant is not about enforcing perfection, but about naming commitments that help relationships flourish.

Clarity serves love. When expectations are unspoken, confusion and disappointment often follow. A covenant brings those expectations into the light—not to burden consciences, but to provide a shared understanding of how we will walk together as a church family. In this way, the covenant functions as a form of pastoral care, helping protect trust, unity, and peace within the body.

The membership covenant also reflects the biblical pattern of mutual responsibility. Scripture consistently portrays believers as committed to one another—to gather regularly, to care for one another, to submit to spiritual leadership, and to participate together in the life of the church. A covenant gives shape to these commitments in a way that is both honest and hopeful.

Importantly, a membership covenant does not create belonging; it **expresses** it. It does not save, form, or mature us on its own. Rather, it serves as a tangible way of saying, “This is the people God has joined me to, and this is how we intend to walk together in faith.”

For these reasons, the covenant is offered not as a demand, but as an **invitation**—an invitation to clarity, shared responsibility, and joyful commitment to life together in Christ.

What the Covenant Represents

The membership covenant at Mercy Village Church is not a new set of expectations introduced at the end of the process. Rather, it is a **summary and affirmation** of the shared life that has already been described throughout this manual.

Everything named in the covenant has been unfolded gradually—in our understanding of the church, our beliefs and practices, our commitments to one another, and our shared posture of care, accountability, and trust. The covenant simply brings those commitments together in a clear and tangible way.

The covenant represents **mutual promises**. Members are committing themselves to walk faithfully with this church—participating in worship, pursuing growth in Christ, serving with their gifts, giving generously, and living with integrity and love. At the same time, the church is committing itself to shepherd, teach, care for, and walk faithfully with its members under the authority of Christ.

Importantly, the covenant is not meant to function as a checklist or a measure of spiritual performance. It does not assume perfection, nor does it deny weakness or struggle. Instead, it reflects a shared desire to pursue faithfulness together—relying on grace, guided by Scripture, and led by the Holy Spirit.

The covenant also represents **clarity**. By naming our commitments openly, we seek to reduce confusion and protect unity. When challenges arise—as they inevitably do in any shared life—the covenant serves as a reference point, reminding us of the promises we have made and the posture we have agreed to hold toward one another.

Finally, the covenant represents **joyful belonging**. It is a way of saying, “These are my people, and this is my church.” Not because Mercy Village is perfect, but because Christ has joined us together and calls us to walk in faith, hope, and love as one body.

In signing the membership covenant, members are not pledging loyalty to an institution, but responding to God’s invitation to live faithfully within a particular local church—receiving care, offering care, and sharing in the life God is forming among us.

The Membership Covenant: Our Shared Promises

A Word Before You Read

What follows is the **full, verbatim text** of the Mercy Village Church Membership Covenant.

This covenant is not introducing anything new or unexpected. Rather, it brings together—in one place—the shared commitments that have already been described throughout this manual: what it means to belong to this church, how we care for one another, and how we seek to follow Jesus together with clarity, trust, and love.

We encourage you to read this covenant **slowly and prayerfully**. It is not meant to be skimmed, rushed through, or signed impulsively. Instead, it is offered as an invitation to reflect on the commitments we make to one another as a church family under Christ’s lordship.

When anyone enters into a relationship with God by grace from and faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, they are entering into two covenants. The first is to journey with God for the rest of their lives and love Him fully. The second is to journey with His other children in the community of the local church. Whether you realized it or not, you entered into a covenant with Jesus and simultaneously with the rest of the universal church (all truly converted Christians in the world). To reflect our union with Christ and all

Christians, we are called to make a concrete commitment to a group of Christians in our city, with whom we live our faith out together missionally and in covenant with one another. Your covenant membership in a church is an official recognition of this, and the purposes of the Mercy Village Membership Covenant are:

1. To join the Spirit in forming an authentic community that reflects the relationship between the Father, Son, and Spirit.
2. To clarify the ongoing blessings and responsibilities of each member.
3. To encourage consistency, accountability, and loving unity within the church family.
4. To accomplish God's call for the Mercy Village Church family.

This covenant does not imply that you will never fall short of the goals, but that the desire of your heart is to fulfill each of the responsibilities stated to the best of your ability. We trust that your commitment will be a personal blessing to your own journey in Christ, as well as a blessing to those around you.

WITH BIBLICAL CONVICTION AND THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE CHURCH LEADERSHIP AT MERCY VILLAGE CHURCH COMMITS TO:

1. We covenant ourselves to lovingly care for you and seek your growth in Christ (Hebrews 13:17; I Thessalonians 5:12).
2. We covenant to provide teaching and counsel from the Scriptures (Galatians 6:6; I Timothy 5:17–18).
3. We covenant that this teaching will span the whole counsel of God's Word (Acts 20:27–28).
4. We covenant to help you in times of need (Acts 2:42–47, 4:32–35; James 2:14–17).
5. We covenant that your elders and deacons will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (I Timothy 3:1–13; 5:17–22; Titus 1:5–9; I Peter 5:1–4).
6. We covenant to pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14).
7. We covenant to be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28–31).
8. We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary and only with patience, clarity, intentionality, and genuine love. (Matthew 18:15–20; I Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1).
9. We covenant to help you become equipped to serve Christ (Ephesians 4:11–13).
10. We covenant to seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1–5).
11. We covenant to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church members (I Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; I Timothy 4:12).
12. We covenant to be good stewards and managers of the resources of this church (Acts 11:29-30; II Thessalonians 3:10-12).
13. We covenant, by God's grace, to exemplify the mission statement, vision statement, core-values, key distinctives, and DNA statements of Mercy Village Church.
14. We covenant to abide by the by-laws of Mercy Village Church as we lead, guide, and participate in the body-life of Mercy Village Church.
15. We covenant to lead alongside the body of Christ at Mercy Village Church as servants and slaves to one another. Not lording our authority over the church for personal gain or glory (1 Peter 5:2; Matthew 10:25-28).
16. We covenant to uphold the doctrinal statement of Mercy Village Church.
17. We covenant to act according to the Leadership Core-Values and Elder Core-Values as they apply to each of us specifically.

WITH BIBLICAL CONVICTION AND THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ALL COVENANT MEMBERS AT MERCY VILLAGE CHURCH COMMIT TO:

1. Verbally affirm their faith in the work of Christ alone for salvation in their life.
2. Commit to publicly announce/celebrate this work of salvation through believers baptism OR verbally affirm past participation in the sacrament of baptism conducted in a protestant church.
3. Consistently pursue a lifestyle of abiding in Christ through Scripture, prayer, and the engagement of other Christian practices.
4. Follow the example of Christ in personal holiness in all of life and pursue accountability from one another.
5. Remember Christ's work by regularly taking communion corporately at Mercy Village Church.
6. Actively participate in biblical community that provides accountability with other believers and aligns with the vision and mission of Mercy Village Church.
7. Consistently pray for one another and our church leaders.
8. Engage with the body through regular attendance and service at corporate gatherings.
9. Build one another up in the faith through God's word, intentional encouragement, and the exercise of spiritual gifts in serving the body of Christ.
10. Grow in biblical generosity, by giving cheerfully, consistently, and sacrificially, prioritizing Mercy Village Church's general offering for supporting Kingdom work.
11. Proactively declare and demonstrate the gospel to non-Christians.
12. Support and pray for people sent out by Mercy Village Church to mission locally, nationally, and globally.
13. Pursuing training opportunities through classes, conferences, seminars as appropriate.
14. Prioritize participation in Covenant Member gatherings (member meetings).
15. Speak truth to leaders and members as led by The Holy Spirit, but to refrain from doing this in a manner outside of the Biblical expectations of speaking the truth in love while refusing to subvert the order of Matthew 18:15-20 when confronting sin. All this for the sake of maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ.
16. Teach nothing contrary to Mercy Village Church's Doctrinal Statement, Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Core-Values, Key-Distinctives, and DNA Statements of Mercy Village Church.
17. Submit to the care and direction of the elders of Mercy Village Church, knowing they are charged by God with the responsibility of leading, feeding, and protecting our covenant members.

A Word After You Read

This covenant is not a test of spiritual maturity, nor a declaration of perfection. It is a **faith-filled commitment**—a way of saying, *“By God’s grace, this is how I desire to walk with this people.”*

Signing the membership covenant is a meaningful step, but it is not meant to be a pressured one. We invite you to take time to pray, ask questions, and discern alongside the Holy Spirit whether God is calling you into covenant membership at Mercy Village Church.

If questions arise, or if you would like to talk with a pastor or elder about any part of the covenant, we welcome that conversation. Our hope is not merely that this covenant would be signed, but that it would be **lived**—with humility, grace, and joy—as we follow Jesus together.

Entering the Covenant Together

Entering into covenant membership at Mercy Village Church is meant to be a **joyful and prayerful step**, not a rushed or pressured decision. The covenant exists to serve the life of the church, and we want each person who enters it to do so with clarity, freedom, and trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit.

For those who sense God's invitation into covenant membership, the next steps are simple and relational. This typically includes completing the Discover Mercy Village class, reviewing this manual carefully, and having space to ask questions or talk with a pastor or elder. Membership is not about checking boxes, but about discerning where God is calling you to plant yourself and walk faithfully with others.

We encourage you to approach this decision prayerfully. Take time to listen to the Spirit, reflect on the commitments described here, and consider how God may be inviting you to live out your faith within this particular church family. If there are areas of uncertainty, we welcome honest conversation. Questions are not obstacles to membership; they are often part of faithful discernment.

When someone enters into covenant membership, it is a moment of celebration. The church receives new members with gratitude and joy, recognizing that God is continuing to form His people and knit them together in love. Membership is not the end of a journey, but the beginning of a shared life—marked by worship, service, growth, care, and mission.

Whether you are ready to take this step now or still in a season of discernment, our hope remains the same: that Mercy Village Church would be a place where you are known, loved, and encouraged to follow Jesus with your whole life.

If and when you enter this covenant, we look forward to walking with you—by God's grace—as we experience and embody redemption and renewal in Christ alone, together.

Faithful Transitions and Covenant Integrity

Covenant membership at MVC is meaningful because it is mutual. Just as members commit themselves to the church, the church commits itself to its members. For this reason, entering and concluding membership are both handled with clarity, care, and integrity.

There are seasons when members relocate, sense a call to serve in another local church, or find that God is leading them into a different context. When this occurs, our desire is always to bless, pray for, and support faithful transitions. Whenever possible, membership transfers are handled relationally and transparently, with communication between churches that promotes unity within the broader body of Christ.

At the same time, covenant membership is not intended to be set aside casually or quietly abandoned. If a member chooses to withdraw during significant pastoral care or disciplinary

conversations, the elders may communicate with the leadership of the receiving church out of a desire for honesty and shared shepherding. This is not done to control, but to preserve integrity and protect the unity of Christ's church.

In rare situations where someone distances themselves from fellowship while refusing counsel or accountability, the elders may determine that formal removal from membership is necessary. Even then, such decisions are made prayerfully and with sorrow, not severity. The aim remains repentance, restoration, and spiritual good.

In every circumstance, our hope is that those who pass through MVC—whether for a season or for a lifetime—would leave strengthened in faith, rooted in truth, and confident in the grace of Jesus Christ.

>> APPENDICES <<

Appendix A — Doctrinal Statement of Mercy Village Church

GOD / TRINITY: There is one God who exist eternally as one God and three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each is fully, equally, and eternally God, but yet one God. Each person has precisely the same nature and attributes and is worthy of precisely the same worship, honor, and praise. This mystery, too great to fathom, is at the heart of the Great Commission and a non-surrenderable truth. (Relevant Scriptures: Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5–6; Gen. 1:26; Matt. 28:19; John 1:1–3; John 14:16–17; John 17:5; Acts 5:3–4; 2 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 1:8)

REVELATION / WORD & WORD: The Bible is God's Word divinely given through human authors by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is completely true, sufficient, and authoritative for matters of life and faith. These 66 books are without error in their original writings. And Jesus: God's Word Made Flesh, is the perfect revelation of who God is. He is the “image of the invisible God” and “exact imprint of his nature”. Through Jesus and His Word, God has revealed Himself to mankind. (Relevant Scriptures: 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:20–21; Ps. 19:7–11; Ps. 119:160; John 17:17; Matt. 5:17–18; John 1:1, 14; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:1–3; John 14:9)

HUMANITY / GOD'S IMAGE: God created humanity—male and female—in His own image and every human was created by God to bear His image. And as such, every single human being is sacred. Humanity is the crowning work of God's creation and each and every person is therefore worthy of love, dignity, and respect regardless of matters like age, race, gender, or class. (Relevant Scriptures: Gen. 1:26–27; Gen. 2:7; Ps. 8:4–6; Gen. 9:6; Acts 17:26; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:10–11; James 3:9)

SIN / HUMAN CONDITION: At the fall, through Satan's temptation, humanity transgressed against God and the image of God in people was distorted but not lost. From that point forward, all human beings are born with a sin nature and into an environment inclined toward sin. And disobey God willfully through sin; thus inheriting physical and spiritual death and the need for redemption. (Relevant Scriptures: Gen. 3:1–7; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:10–12; Rom. 3:23; Rom. 5:12; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1–5; Gen. 9:6; James 3:9)

JESUS / LORD AND CHRIST: There is one God who exist eternally as one God and three distinct persons: God Jesus is both fully God and fully human. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the Cross as a substitute for mankind, was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will one day return. (Relevant Scriptures: Isa. 7:14; Isa. 53:4–6; Matt. 1:18–23; John 1:1, 14; Mark 10:45; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:3–4; Phil. 2:6–8; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3, 8; Heb. 2:14–17; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22, 24; Acts 1:9–11; 1 Thess. 4:16–17)

SALVATION / JESUS ALONE: Salvation comes only through Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man. No other religion, belief, or person can reconcile God and man. He alone can provide

forgiveness and eternal salvation. (Relevant Scriptures: John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5–6; 2 Cor. 5:18–21; Col. 1:19–22; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 7:25; Heb. 9:15; 1 John 5:11–12; John 3:16–18)

SALVATION / FAITH ALONE: Salvation comes only through a faith relationship with Jesus Christ, the Savior, as a person repents of sin and receives Christ’s forgiveness and eternal life. Salvation is instantaneous and accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. This salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of Christ’s life, death and resurrection, not on the basis of human works. All the redeemed are secured in Christ forever. (Relevant Scriptures: Mark 1:15; John 3:5–8; John 10:27–29; Acts 16:30–31; Rom. 3:24–28; Rom. 4:25; Rom. 8:30, 38–39; Rom. 10:9–10; 1 Cor. 15:1–4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:8–9; Phil. 1:6; Titus 3:4–7; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23)

THE CHURCH / CHRIST'S BODY: The Holy Spirit places those who put their faith in Jesus into a united spiritual body of which Christ is head. The Church exists to worship and glorify God and minister in the power of the Spirit, as an extension of the ministry of Jesus. They're called to make disciples through worship, prayer, teaching, ordinances, fellowship, gifts and talents, and proclaiming of the gospel locally and throughout the world. (Relevant Scriptures: Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:42–47; Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 12:12–13; 1 Cor. 12:4–7; Eph. 1:22–23; Eph. 2:18–22; Eph. 4:4–6, 11–16; Col. 1:18; Heb. 12:28; 1 Pet. 2:9)

JESUS WILL RETURN: God will bring the world to its appropriate end in His own time and in His own way. At that time, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth. Christ will judge both the saved and unsaved. Those who have trusted Christ will receive a glorified body and dwell forever with the Lord. Those who have not trusted in Christ will spend eternity in hell, the place of everlasting punishment. (Relevant Scriptures: Matt. 24:30, 36; Matt. 25:31–46; John 5:28–29; Acts 1:9–11; Acts 17:31; 1 Cor. 15:42–44, 51–53; 2 Cor. 5:10; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Thess. 4:16–17; 2 Thess. 1:8–9; 2 Pet. 3:9–10; Rev. 1:7; Rev. 14:11; Rev. 20:11–15; Rev. 21:1–4)

NOTE: Our members affirm the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed. And our pastors fully affirm the Harbor Network Theological Distinctives, the Harbor Network core-values, and the Gospel Coalition Confessional Statement. [Read more at: www.mercyvillage.church/beliefs](http://www.mercyvillage.church/beliefs)

For more doctrinal clarity, see the New City Catechism.

Appendix B — Links for Baptism and Communion Information

Baptism: At MVC, baptism is the joyful and public declaration of union with Christ in His death and resurrection. It is a visible sign of invisible grace — not the means of salvation, but a Spirit-empowered act of obedience that proclaims what God has already done in the heart through faith. We practice believer’s baptism by immersion, meaning we baptize those who personally confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Immersion best reflects the biblical imagery of burial and resurrection and visibly portrays new life in Christ. Baptism is both a privilege and a responsibility, marking a believer’s identification with Christ and His Church. Because of its importance, baptism is required for membership at MVC, though we joyfully affirm prior Protestant baptisms that reflect gospel belief and meaningful faith.

To learn more about baptism or to complete the form to participate in an upcoming baptism service, please visit: <https://mercyvillage.church/baptism>

Communion (The Lord’s Supper): At MVC, Communion is a sacred and grace-filled ordinance given by Christ to His Church. In the bread and cup, we remember His body given and His blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. The Table does not save, but it nourishes and strengthens faith as we “taste and see” the goodness of the Lord. Each week, after hearing the Word proclaimed, we come to the Table to receive again the promises of the gospel — remembering Christ’s sacrifice, celebrating our unity as one body, and anticipating His return. Communion is for baptized believers who are trusting in Christ and walking in repentance. In this way, the Table becomes a weekly rehearsal of redemption and renewal, shaping us as a people formed by grace and sent into the world with hope.

Appendix C — Detailed Information on Giving to Mercy Village

At Mercy Village Church, generosity is not a fundraising strategy — it is a response to mercy.

Everything we have belongs to the Lord. He is the Creator and Owner of all things, and we are recipients of His varied grace. We did not create our salvation, our abilities, our opportunities, or even our very breath. All this is from God. Because we have received so much in Christ, we learn to live open-handed — stewarding what He has entrusted to us for His glory.

Financial giving is one expression of that stewardship. Alongside our time and our talents, our treasures are entrusted to us as gifts from God. Stewardship of our treasures does not begin with guilt or pressure. It begins with grace. Because Christ became poor so that we might become rich in Him, we give not to earn favor but to respond to mercy.

Christian giving at Mercy Village is never coerced or manipulated. It flows from hearts transformed by the gospel. We do not fund spectacle. We sustain ministry, care for people, and participate in the mission of Jesus. Our desire is not merely gifts received, but fruit that multiplies as the gospel advances — in our church, in our community, and beyond.

When you give to Mercy Village Church, you are supporting:

- The faithful preaching and teaching of God’s Word
- The discipleship of children, youth, and adults
- The care of church members and benevolence needs
- The stewardship of our facility and gathering space
- Local and global gospel mission

We encourage members to give:

- **Regularly** — as a rhythm of worship
- **Proportionally** — in keeping with how God has provided
- **Sacrificially** — trusting the Lord with open hands
- **Cheerfully** — not under compulsion, but with joy

Stewardship is shaped by humility, unity, and love. Giving is not about recognition or ego. It is worship. It is participation. It is hopeful obedience sustained by prayer and joy.

Ways to Give

Online Giving: Secure online giving is available at: <https://mercyvillage.church/give>

In Person: Offering boxes are available during Sunday gatherings. And we frequently pass giving baskets before the sermon.

Recurring Giving: Many members choose to set up recurring gifts as a practical way to practice consistency and intentionality.

Financial Integrity and Accountability

Mercy Village Church operates with a church-approved annual budget. Elders and designated financial leaders work together to ensure transparency, accountability, and faithful stewardship. Members participate in affirming the annual budget and major financial decisions, reflecting our shared responsibility for the church’s resources.

If you have questions about giving, budgeting, or financial stewardship, we welcome conversation. Clarity builds trust, and generosity flourishes in the light.

Ultimately, we give because God first gave to us. Having been reconciled to Him through Christ, we now live open-handed — stewarding our time, talents, and treasures so that the goodness of God might echo throughout the world, one relationship at a time.

Appendix D — Our Order of Worship (Liturgy)

Each Sunday at Mercy Village Church, our gathering follows a gospel-shaped rhythm. Our order of worship is not a random collection of elements, but an intentional movement designed to form us as disciples of Jesus by rehearsing the story of redemption and renewal in Christ alone.

The word *liturgy* comes from a Greek term meaning “the work of the people.” Worship is not something performed for us, but something we participate in together. Throughout church history, Christians have gathered in patterned ways—not to restrict worship, but to be shaped by it. We believe that what we repeatedly practice forms what we love, what we believe, and how we live.

In a world constantly shaping our hearts in other directions, our Sunday liturgy acts as a kind of spiritual recalibration. Week after week, it bends the needle of our hearts back toward God. Through Scripture, prayer, song, confession, preaching, and the Table, the gospel is proclaimed to us—not only in words, but in embodied participation.

Our gathering moves through a deliberate flow:

- We name our shared identity and calling as God’s people.
- We honestly confess our sin and lament the brokenness of the world.
- We receive assurance of pardon in Christ.
- We lift our voices in praise and thanksgiving.
- We pray for illumination and listen to the reading and proclamation of God’s Word.
- We respond in generosity, prayer, and surrender.
- We come to the Table, where we taste and see the grace of Christ in communion.
- We are blessed and sent into the world to live as witnesses of redemption and renewal.

Every movement flows into the next. Confession prepares us for grace. Grace prepares us for gratitude. The Word prepares us for the Table. The Table prepares us to be sent.

Our order of worship is not about rigid form or religious performance. It is about faithful formation. These rhythms shape us over time—training us to tell the truth about ourselves, receive mercy deeply, dwell in gratitude, and live as a sent people.

For a detailed explanation of each movement in our Sunday liturgy, including theological background and practical description, please visit:

<https://mercyvillage.church/liturgy>

Appendix E — Leadership Core Values and Shepherding Commitments

Leadership at MVC is not defined first by strategy, personality, or gifting. It is defined by theology and posture. These core values describe the kind of leaders we are becoming together — rooted in Scripture, shaped by Christ, and committed to shepherding His people faithfully.

Some of these commitments apply to all leaders at MVC. Others apply specifically to elders. Together, they reflect our shared desire to lead in a way that feels like Jesus.

LEADERSHIP CORE VALUES

1. We Have Nothing to Prove: The gospel has already been proven in Christ. Our identity is secure in Him. Therefore, we do not lead out of insecurity, image management, or the need to impress. All we are in Christ is more than enough.

2. We Have Nothing to Lose: “To live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Because our lives are hidden with Christ, we do not cling to preferences, influence, position, or power. We do not fight to preserve our status. We are free to lose for the sake of Christ.

3. We Reject Worldly Definitions of Success: Our measures of success are easily distorted by ego, comparison, and cultural pressure. Therefore, we joyfully submit to the kingdom’s definition of fruitfulness — faithfulness, obedience, love, and endurance — even when it looks unimpressive by worldly standards.

4. We Are Bondservants of Jesus, Not Competitors: We celebrate any ministry done in the name of Jesus — whether in another denomination, another local church, another MVC team, or even in someone whose personality challenges us. We are not building our platform; we are serving Christ’s mission.

5. We Are Equal in Value (Regardless of Role): The doctrine of the image of God transcends every level of leadership. Titles do not determine worth. Experience does not determine dignity. The only irreplaceable members of this team are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

6. We Are Humble Servants: In the kingdom, sacrifice grows with seniority. As authority increases, so does the call to humility, service, and hidden faithfulness.

ELDER CORE VALUES

Elders at MVC operate as a plurality, not a hierarchy.

Equal Vote: Whenever a vote is required, each elder possesses a fully equal vote.

Equal Voice: We intentionally draw out quieter voices and encourage stronger listeners among the more vocal. No elder is sidelined; no elder dominates.

Equal Honor: We seek to distribute public and private honor, ownership, opportunity, and celebration evenly across the team.

Equal Ownership: All elders carry equal organizational responsibility. While classifications (lay, part-time, full-time) may affect time commitments, they do not affect spiritual responsibility.

Equal Trust: Elder-level conversations include all elders unless a subcommittee has been unanimously approved. Transparency within the team guards unity and trust.

Note: We intentionally do not use the term “first among equals.” This decision is not a critique of others who do, but a reflection of our desire to guard functional equality within our eldership.

SHEPHERDING COMMITMENTS

The following commitments describe how our theology becomes lived experience. They reflect how elders at MVC should be growing and becoming — steady, humble, prayerful, relational, & sacrificial.

IDENTITY — WHO WE ARE

1. We Are Shepherds and We Are Sheep: We shepherd God’s flock as under-shepherds of Christ (1 Pet. 5:2–4). Before we lead, we follow. We remain approachable, accountable, and correctable because we ourselves are sheep under the care of the Chief Shepherd. When leaders forget they are sheep, they become harsh, self-protective, or self-sufficient. When we remember, the church is safe and steady.

2. We Stand on the Word of God and the God of the Word: Scripture is sufficient and authoritative (2 Tim. 3:16–17), and Jesus is the Living Word (John 1:1–14). We refuse to be shaped primarily by cultural pressure, donor influence, political noise, or personal preference. Our ministry is tethered to the Word of God in the way of Jesus. This anchoring keeps leadership steady in anxious times.

3. We Value Presence With Jesus Over Productivity: Like Mary, we choose the one thing necessary (Luke 10:38–42). We refuse to measure our worth by output. Stability flows from abiding, not accomplishing. From presence comes non-anxious leadership.

4. We Live and Lead Through Prayer: Jesus builds His church (Matt. 16:18), and prayer is one of His primary means (Acts 6:4). Prayer is not a backup plan but a lifeline — contemplative, continuous, and confident. We would rather move slowly in prayer than quickly in presumption.

POSTURE — HOW WE CARRY OURSELVES

5. We Align Our Posture With the Heart of Jesus: Jesus describes Himself as gentle and lowly in heart (Matt. 11:29). Therefore, we exercise authority with gentleness, correct with compassion, and lead with humility. Authority should feel like protection, not pressure.

6. We Reach for the Towel, Not the Throne: Jesus washed His disciples' feet (John 13). Greatness in His kingdom is servanthood. We embrace tasks that seem beneath us and treat sacrifice as privilege. Delegation equips others — it never elevates us above them.

7. We Lay Our Lives Down, We Don't Lord Over: The rulers of this world dominate; Jesus gave His life (Matt. 20:25–28). Our authority is expressed through sacrifice, not control. We reject manipulation, defensiveness, and image-protection. We are shepherds who bleed first, not rulers who demand first.

8. We Lead With Vulnerable Hearts: True shepherds share not only the gospel but their very lives (1 Thess. 2:8). We model confession, honesty, and dependence on grace. Vulnerability is not weakness; it is strength under Christ's sufficiency.

9. We Choose Unity Over Turf: We make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3). We rejoice when the mission advances — even if it is not “our” idea or “our” lane. Collaboration is more important than credit.

PRACTICE — HOW THIS SHOWS UP AMONG THE PEOPLE

10. We Lead Through Presence With the People: Elders shepherd the flock among them (1 Pet. 5:2). Leadership happens relationally — through proximity, hospitality, and trust. We are not distant managers; we are present shepherds.

11. We Speak Truth as a Loving Invitation: Jesus came full of grace and truth (John 1:14). We refuse to weaponize truth. Correction is extended as invitation, not control. Truth should feel like freedom, not fear.

12. We Bleed First to Protect the Flock: The Good Shepherd lays down His life (John 10:11). We absorb the cost of confronting false doctrine, resisting harm, and guarding unity — even when it wounds us. It is honorable to be the first to bleed for Christ's bride.

Appendix F — Care, Discipline, and Restoration

At MVC, church discipline is not primarily about punishment. It is about love. It is about protection. And ultimately, it is about restoration.

Because we believe the church is a covenant community, we take both holiness and care seriously. Scripture calls us to pursue one another when we wander, to restore those caught in sin gently, and to guard the unity and witness of the body (Matthew 18:15–20; Galatians 6:1; Hebrews 12:11).

This appendix offers a fuller explanation of how that care unfolds in practice.

1. The Goal Is Always Restoration: The aim of discipline is never humiliation, retaliation, or control. The aim is repentance, healing, and restored fellowship with Christ and His church. When a brother or sister begins walking in unrepentant sin — especially sin that harms others, distorts the gospel, or damages the unity of the church — love requires action. To ignore destructive patterns is not grace; it is neglect. Biblical discipline is an expression of covenant love. It says:

- Your soul matters / Your witness matters / The unity of Christ’s church matters.

Whenever repentance occurs, forgiveness is immediate and restoration is the desired outcome (2 Corinthians 2:6–8).

2. The Pattern We Follow: MVC follows the pattern Jesus gives in Matthew 18:15–17:

- **Step 1 — Private Conversation:** If someone sins against you or is walking in serious sin, the first step is personal, private conversation. The goal is clarity, repentance, and reconciliation — not escalation.
- **Step 2 — Involving Others:** If repentance does not occur, one or two spiritually mature believers may be invited into the conversation. This adds wisdom, accountability, and care.
- **Step 3 — Elder Involvement:** If someone persists in clear, unrepentant sin, elders become involved. Their role is to shepherd patiently, listen carefully, and call the person back to Christ.
- **Step 4 — Congregational Awareness (If Necessary):** In rare and serious cases — particularly when sin is public, harmful, or persistently unrepentant — the matter may be brought before the church for prayer and loving pursuit. Even at this stage, the tone is not condemnation but pleading. The church prays and calls the person back to Christ.

3. What Discipline Is — and What It Is Not

Discipline Is:

- A loving response to serious, ongoing, unrepentant sin
- A means of spiritual protection
- A pathway toward restoration
- An act of obedience to Christ

Discipline Is Not:

- A reaction to personality differences
- A response to minor disagreements
- A tool for leadership control
- A punishment for struggling believers

Struggle is not rebellion. Weakness is not disqualification. MVC seeks to walk patiently with those battling sin, doubt, or immaturity. Discipline addresses hardened, unrepentant patterns that resist correction.

4. Confidentiality and Wisdom: Throughout any discipline process: Conversations are handled with discretion, information is shared only as necessary, and the dignity of the individual is guarded carefully. Elders are committed to humility and self-examination in these matters. We are shepherds and sheep. We approach discipline soberly, prayerfully, and with awareness of our own need for grace.

5. When Membership Is Affected: If a person continues in unrepentant sin and refuses correction, formal removal from membership may occur. This is not a declaration of final judgment. It is a sober acknowledgment that the individual is no longer walking in covenant alignment with MVC. Even then, the door remains open. We continue to pray. We continue to hope. We remain ready to restore upon repentance.

6. Restoration Is a Joyful Celebration: When repentance occurs, restoration should be visible and joyful. The church does not shame returning sinners; we celebrate grace. The gospel tells the story of a Father who runs toward prodigals. That is the spirit we seek to embody. Correction is painful. Repentance is humbling. But restoration is beautiful.

7. Our Confidence: Ultimately, discipline is not about institutional purity — it is about reflecting the heart of Christ. Jesus disciplines those He loves (Revelation 3:19). He restores Peter after denial. He welcomes back the wandering. At MVC, we believe discipline, rightly practiced, is an act of hope — because we believe Jesus changes hearts.

Appendix G — Governance and Bylaws of Mercy Village Church

While this membership manual explains the life, structure, and commitments of our church in accessible language, MVC also maintains a formal set of governing documents known as our church bylaws.

These bylaws provide the legal and structural framework for the life of the church. They outline how certain decisions are made, how leadership functions, and how the church operates as an incorporated nonprofit organization.

The purpose of these bylaws is not to replace the relational life of the church, but to provide clarity, accountability, and legal protection so that the church can function responsibly and faithfully.

While this manual focuses on the spiritual and relational aspects of membership, the bylaws provide additional detail on matters such as:

- The legal structure and nonprofit status of MVC
- The roles and responsibilities of elders and deacons
- Processes for receiving and removing members
- Congregational affirmation and voting matters
- Financial oversight and stewardship practices
- Leadership transitions and governance procedures

In many cases, the principles described throughout this manual are reflected more formally in the bylaws. For example, the leadership structure described in Section 5, the congregational participation described in Section 6, and the covenant commitments described in Section 7 all correspond with provisions in the church bylaws.

Because bylaws are legal documents, they occasionally include language or procedural detail that would be unnecessarily technical within this manual. For that reason, they are maintained as a separate document.

Members of MVC are always welcome to review the church bylaws. A current copy may be requested from the elders or accessed online.

To view the full Governance and Bylaws of MVC, visit: www.mercyvillage.church/membership

(If the bylaws are updated in the future, the most current version will always be available at this location.)

Appendix H — Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Do I have to become a member to attend MVC?** No. You are welcome to attend, participate, and explore at your own pace. Membership is not required for attendance. Covenant membership is for those who sense God calling them to plant themselves here in shared commitment and accountability.
- 2. What is the difference between attending and covenant membership?** Attending allows you to participate in the life of the church. Covenant membership is a mutual commitment — you committing to walk faithfully with this church family, and the church committing to shepherd and care for you. Membership clarifies belonging, responsibility, and shared direction.
- 3. Is membership biblical?** While the New Testament does not describe modern membership classes or signed covenants, it clearly describes defined, accountable local church communities (Acts 2:41–47; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Corinthians 5:12–13). Covenant membership is our way of living out that biblical clarity in our context.
- 4. What if I struggle with doubt or ongoing sin?** Membership does not require perfection. It assumes growth. The covenant is not a statement that you have arrived — it is a declaration that you desire to follow Christ sincerely and walk in repentance when you fail. Struggle is not disqualification. Unrepentance is the concern.
- 5. What if I disagree with something at MVC?** Unity does not require agreement on every issue. We distinguish between essential doctrines and secondary matters. If you have concerns or questions, we welcome conversation. Honest, humble dialogue strengthens the church. Persistent public opposition to core doctrine or divisive behavior, however, would not align with covenant membership.
- 6. Do I have to give a certain percentage of my income?** No. MVC does not mandate a percentage or monitor individual giving. We call members to grow in joyful, sacrificial generosity under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Giving is between you, your household, and the Lord.
- 7. How are elders chosen?** Elders are identified over time through observable character, doctrinal alignment, shepherding fruit, and affirmation by existing elders. The congregation then participates by formally receiving them into service.
- 8. What happens if I need to leave MVC?** Leaving well matters. We encourage members to speak with an elder when discerning a transition. Our desire is always blessing, clarity, and unity — whether God calls you to remain or to be planted elsewhere.
- 9. Is signing the covenant legally binding?** No. The covenant is a spiritual and relational commitment, not a legal contract. It expresses shared intent before God and one another.
- 10. Can I remain a member if I move away?** Membership assumes meaningful participation in the life of the body. If relocation makes regular involvement impossible, we encourage transferring membership to a faithful local church where you can be known and shepherded well.

12. What if I am still discerning whether MVC is where God is calling me? Take your time. Pray. Ask questions. Talk with leaders. Membership should be entered into freely and joyfully, not under pressure.

Quick Note If your question is not addressed here, we invite you to reach out. We would much rather have honest conversations than quiet confusion.

Appendix I — The Membership Covenant (For Review and Signature)

(membership covenant begins on next page)



MERCY VILLAGE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

The spouse of Christ cannot be adulterous; she is uncorrupted and pure. She knows one home; she guards with chaste modesty the sanctity of one couch. She keeps us for God. She appoints the sons whom she has born for the kingdom. Whoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulteress, is separated from the promises of the Church; nor can he who forsakes the Church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ. He is a stranger; he is profane; he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother.

Saint Cyprian – Bishop of Carthage (Lived 210-258)

When anyone enters into a relationship with God by grace through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, they enter into two covenants. The first is to journey with God for the rest of their lives and love Him fully. The second is to journey with His other children in the community of the local church.

Whether you realized it or not, when you trusted Christ you entered into covenant with Jesus and, simultaneously, with the rest of the universal church—all truly converted Christians throughout the world. To reflect our union with Christ and with all Christians, we are called to make a concrete commitment to a group of Christians in our city with whom we live out our faith together missionally and in covenant with one another.

Your covenant membership in a church is an official recognition of this reality, and the purposes of the Mercy Village Membership Covenant are:

1. To join the Spirit in forming an authentic community that reflects the relationship between the Father, Son, and Spirit.
2. To clarify the ongoing blessings and responsibilities of each member.
3. To encourage consistency, accountability, and loving unity within the church family.
4. To accomplish God's call for the Mercy Village Church family.

This covenant does not imply that you will never fall short of the goals, but that the desire of your heart is to fulfill each of the responsibilities stated to the best of your ability. We trust that your commitment will be a personal blessing to your own journey in Christ, as well as a blessing to those around you.

WITH BIBLICAL CONVICTION AND THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE CHURCH LEADERSHIP AT MERCY

VILLAGE CHURCH COMMITS TO:

1. We covenant to lovingly care for you and seek your growth in Christ (Hebrews 13:17; I Thessalonians 5:12).
2. We covenant to provide teaching and counsel from the Scriptures (Galatians 6:6; I Timothy 5:17–18).
3. We covenant that this teaching will span the whole counsel of God’s Word (Acts 20:27–28).
4. We covenant to help you in times of need (Acts 2:42–47, 4:32–35; James 2:14–17).
5. We covenant that your elders and deacons will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (I Timothy 3:1–13; 5:17–22; Titus 1:5–9; I Peter 5:1–4).
6. We covenant to pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14).
7. We covenant to be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28–31).
8. We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary—and only with patience, clarity, intentionality, and genuine love (Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1).
9. We covenant to help you become equipped to serve Christ (Ephesians 4:11–13).
10. We covenant to seek God’s will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1–5).
11. We covenant to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church members (I Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; I Timothy 4:12).
12. We covenant to be good stewards and managers of the resources of this church (Acts 11:29-30; II Thessalonians 3:10-12).
13. We covenant, by God’s grace, to exemplify the mission statement, vision statement, core-values, key distinctives, and DNA statements of Mercy Village Church.
14. We covenant to abide by the by-laws of Mercy Village Church as we lead, guide, and participate in the body-life of Mercy Village Church.
15. We covenant to lead alongside the body of Christ at Mercy Village Church as servants to one another—not lording our authority over the church for personal gain or glory (1 Peter 5:2–3; Matthew 10:25–28).
16. We covenant to uphold the doctrinal statement of Mercy Village Church.
17. We covenant to act according to the Leadership Core-Values and Elder Core-Values as they apply to each of us specifically.

WITH BIBLICAL CONVICTION AND THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ALL COVENANT MEMBERS AT MERCY

VILLAGE CHURCH COMMIT TO:

1. Verbally affirm their faith in the work of Christ alone for salvation in their life.
2. Publicly celebrate this work of salvation through believer’s baptism, or affirm past participation in baptism conducted in a Protestant church.
3. Consistently pursue a lifestyle of abiding in Christ as a through Scripture, prayer, and the engagement of other Christian practices.
4. Follow the example of Christ in personal holiness in all of life and pursue accountability from one another.
5. Remember Christ’s work by regularly taking communion corporately at Mercy Village Church.
6. Actively participate in biblical community that provides accountability with other believers and aligns with the vision and mission of Mercy Village Church.
7. Consistently pray for one another and our church leaders.
8. Engage with the body through regular attendance and service at corporate gatherings.

9. Build one another up in the faith through God’s word, intentional encouragement, and the exercise of spiritual gifts in serving the body of Christ.
10. Grow in biblical generosity by giving cheerfully, consistently, and sacrificially, prioritizing Mercy Village Church’s general offering for supporting Kingdom work.
11. Proactively declare and demonstrate the gospel to non-Christians.
12. Support and pray for people sent out by Mercy Village Church to mission locally, nationally, and globally.
13. Pursue training opportunities through classes, conferences, seminars as appropriate.
14. Prioritize participation in Covenant Member gatherings (member meetings).
15. Speak truth to leaders and members as led by The Holy Spirit, but to refrain from doing this in a manner outside of the Biblical expectations of speaking the truth in love while honoring the process of Matthew 18:15–20 when confronting sin. All this for the sake of maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ.
16. Teach nothing contrary to Mercy Village Church’s Doctrinal Statement, Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Core-Values, Key-Distinctives, and DNA Statements of Mercy Village Church.
17. Submit to the care and direction of the elders of Mercy Village Church, knowing they are charged by God with the responsibility of leading, feeding, and protecting our covenant members.

God enabling me, I will strive to consider my commitment to this Membership Covenant on a yearly basis. I understand that it is an evaluative tool, as well as an affirmation of my continuing conviction and purpose. My responsibility will be to notify Mercy Village leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Mercy Village Church.

Print Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of Elder _____