

Membership Covenant

The Grace Fellowship Church Membership Covenant is birthed out of our love for the church body and its individual members whom we hope will experience the fullness of joy which is found in the presence of the Lord. The primary purpose of this covenant is to serve as a teaching document with three functions:

- To clarify the biblical obligations and expectations for both the elders of Grace Fellowship Church and the individual members of the Grace Fellowship Church body.
- To establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for the Grace Fellowship Church body.
- To serve as a tool for reflection and growth toward holiness.

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

Sections of the Membership Covenant

The Grace Fellowship Church (GFC) Membership Covenant is comprised of the following sections

- What is the Church?
- What is a Covenant?
- Grace Fellowship Church Statement of Faith
- Obligations of Grace Fellowship elders to the Grace Fellowship body
- Obligations of the Grace Fellowship members to the Grace Fellowship body

What is the Church?

The church exists for the display of the glory of God because all things exist for His glory. Those of us who trust in and follow Jesus are caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. We have graciously been invited into God's redemptive purposes in the world.

Since the beginning, God has been creating and calling forth His people for the display of His glory in a grand narrative of redemption and reconciliation. Though creation now suffers the curse of Genesis 3, the gospel is the means by which the world is being made right. The gospel also carries with it the promise of ultimate renewal, a restoration even more glorious than Eden, and thus believers eagerly anticipate the return of Christ. The Church universal (i.e., all believers, everywhere) is the means by which God is fulfilling His purposes in the world (*2 Corinthians 5:17-20*). The Church universal is being used to write God's beautiful and dramatic story of redemption and reconciliation. In light of this reality, the opportunity to join a local church body (i.e., a particular group of believers in a particular locale) is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in community. It is also a sacred call to be involved in the redemptive work of our sovereign God to push back the darkness of a fallen world through the power of the Holy Spirit with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (*Ephesians 2:19*), the bride of Christ (*Revelation 21:2, 9*) and the body of Christ (*1 Corinthians 12:12-31*). *1 Corinthians 12* speaks of many members within the same body. Just as a human body relies upon mutual dependence of individual members for proper functioning, so the body of Christ requires sacrificial and responsible service by its individual members. As the Scriptures say, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (*1 Corinthians 12:21*).

Likewise, a member of the church cannot say to another member that he or she is unnecessary. We all have gifts that differ according to the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit (*Romans 12:3-8*). Contrary to the beliefs of our culture, we need each other.

Membership at Grace Fellowship is participation in a family, a microcosm of the universal household of God. All members are united to Christ and thus to each other. Unity within the church is expressed in love for God and a love for others, both those within the family and those who are not. Because of the identification of Christ with His church, Christians are expected to display His gospel in a manner which is worthy of Him (*Ephesians 4:1*).

What is a Covenant?

A covenant is generally defined as “a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action.” Within the Scriptures, we find a number of examples of covenants, some between God and man (*Genesis 6, 9, 15; Ezekiel 20; Hosea. 2; Jeremiah 31; Matthew 26*), while others are solely between men (*1 Samuel 18; 2 Samuel 5*). In some covenants, one party binds his or herself to fulfill the obligations of both sides of the agreement. In others, the parties are reciprocally bound to adhere to the obligations. While God’s covenant with the Church universal is an example of the former, the local church covenant represents the latter. If at any time one of the parties of this church covenant continues in a state of unfaithfulness to its provisions, the other is released from certain obligations.

The covenant of Grace Fellowship Church contains many conditions that are merely general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, whether members of Grace Fellowship Church or elsewhere, are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. Such requirements are universal obligations for the Christ-follower regardless of any failure on the part of the local church to live up to her covenant obligations.

If at any time an individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness, then the member is freed from his or her membership obligations and encouraged to seek membership elsewhere given the church’s disobedience. In addition, certain circumstances may provide sufficient and righteous grounds to transfer membership elsewhere.

While focusing primarily in language on the responsibilities between the individual parties, the corporate church body, her elders and her individual members, the covenant is first and foremost an acknowledgment of general Christian obligations and an agreement to enter into those duties for God’s glory and the good of the body and bride of His Son.

Grace Fellowship Church Statement of Faith

Grace Fellowship Church is a church under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are committed to contending for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (*Jude 1:3*). In unity with the historic Christian church, we believe and confess the Apostles’, Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds as accurate representations of Scripture’s teaching.

The basic doctrines within the Grace Fellowship Church Statement of Faith represent what we believe to be core elements of biblical teaching. We expect all members of Grace Fellowship Church to affirm these doctrines.

The theological distinctives within Grace Fellowship Church Statement of Faith reflect what distinguishes Grace Fellowship Church from other churches who would affirm the basic doctrines. These distinctives indelibly shape the way that Grace Fellowship Church is led and the direction the church is headed. We do not expect all members to embrace all aspects of these distinctives, but members should expect that the distinctives will be maintained in all ministry environments at Grace Fellowship Church, and members may not teach contrary to them.

Obligations of Elders to Grace Fellowship Body

As shepherds and overseers of a local church, elders are entrusted with protecting, leading, equipping and caring for the corporate church body and her individual members. The following is a rather extensive overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures.

The elders covenant...

- to appoint elders and deacons (including staff members who serve in these offices) according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures
(*1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4*).
- to prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following of the Spirit
(*Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4*).
- to care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth and love
(*Matthew. 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4*).
- to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture
(*Acts 20:27-28; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:1*).
- to equip the members of the church for the work of ministry (*Ephesians. 4:11-16*).
- to be on guard against false teachers and teachings
(*Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1*).
- to lovingly exercise discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined and the health of the church as a whole
(*Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20*).
- to set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below
(*Philemon 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:3*).

Obligations of the Members to GFC Body

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as “living by the Spirit” (Romans 8). The requirements of this membership covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible yet non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces.

I covenant...

- To submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues
(*Psalms 119; 2 Timothy. 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21*).
- To pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of spiritual disciplines
(*Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22*).
- To follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church:
 - By being baptized after my conversion.
 - By regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through communion.
- To regularly participate in the life of Grace Fellowship Church by attending weekly services, engaging in gospel-centered community and serving those within and outside of this church
(*Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14*).

- To steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful and voluntary
(*Matthew. 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11*).
- By God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (*1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:1-3*). Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit to refrain from such activities that the Scriptures would deem foolish (*Rom. 14:14-23*).
- To take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another (*1 Corinthians 8:1-13*).
- To submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:
 - Following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another—the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
 - Receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers
(*Psalms 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11*).
- To do the following when I sin:
 - Confess my sin to God and to fellow believers.
 - Repent and seek help to put my sin to death
(*Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10*).
- To submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church (*Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5*).
- To do the following should I leave the church for righteous reasons:
 - To notify the appropriate staff member.
 - To seek another church with which I can carry out my biblical responsibilities as a believer.

Sign

Date