



CONNECTING WITH OTHERS TO GROW TOGETHER IN JESUS

# WHO IS THE CHURCH?

In the Bible, the word “church” is the Greek word “ekklésia,” which means “called out from.” The word is used throughout the Old and New Testament in reference to assemblies and congregations – people who have been called out from the world and into a covenant relationship with God. In the Old Testament, we see a shadow of the church, which is then fully revealed in the New Testament on the day of Pentecost. The “people of God” would no longer be a term reserved only for the Jewish people but would also extend to non-Jewish people. The church, then, consists of people who believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, and whom God has called out to be His own people (see [Romans 10:9-13](#); [Ephesians 3:8-11](#); [1 Peter 2:9-10](#)).

In the New Testament, two churches are referenced to: the local church and the universal church. Local churches collectively form the universal church. The local church is a gathering of people in a specific town or neighborhood, who gather because of a common belief and for a common purpose. Local churches vary in belief, practices, structures, membership, and purpose. The membership of the universal church, on the other hand, consists of all of those who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and who hold to the basic tenets of the faith. The basic purpose of the universal church is to fulfill the Great Commission, which every local church is to obey in their given location. The metaphors for the universal church are to be realized, accomplished, and enjoyed within each local church. Some metaphors used for the church are:

- The church is a **BODY**

- “Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it,” [1 Corinthians 12:27](#)
- “God appointed Christ as head over everything for the church, which is His body,” [Ephesians 1:22-23](#)

As a body, we are dependent upon each other, and yet function in different roles and giftings (see [Romans 12:4-6](#)).

- The church is a **FAMILY**

- “So, then, you are ... fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household,” [Ephesians 2:19](#)
- “... the household of God, which is the church of the living God,” [1 Timothy 3:15](#)

As a family, we share a core identity and relational connection that is established in Christ (see [Galatians 3:26-28](#)).

- The church is a **TEMPLE**

- “Don’t you yourselves know that you are God’s temple and that the Spirit of God lives in you,” [1 Corinthians 3:16](#)
- “For we are the temple of the living God,” [2 Corinthians 6:16](#)

As a temple, God identifies Himself with us by personally dwelling in us by the Holy Spirit (see [Ephesians 2:22](#)).

- The church is an **EMBASSY OF GOD’S KINGDOM**

- “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making His appeal through us,” [2 Corinthians 5:20](#)

**“A CHURCH IS NOT THE KINGDOM OF GOD; IT’S AN OUTPOST OR EMBASSY OF THAT KINGDOM ... A CHRISTIAN’S CITIZENSHIP, PAUL TELLS US, IS IN HEAVEN ... CHURCH’S REPRESENT CHRIST’S RULE NOW. THEY AFFIRM AND PROTECT HIS CITIZENS NOW. THEY PROCLAIM HIS LAWS AND WAY OF LIFE NOW. THEY BOW BEFORE HIM AS KING NOW AND CALL ALL PEOPLES TO DO THE SAME,”** Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership*

## *MEMBERS OF A LOCAL CHURCH*

A Christian who does not belong to a church family is a contradiction. While it is important that a Christian spends time with brothers and sisters from other churches, it is even more important that a Christian belongs to a specific church family, where they can grow in Christ through discipleship and fellowship on a regular basis. The New Testament gives 58 commandments one cannot keep apart from being committed to a local church family. When the gospels and letters were written by the New Testament authors, all but four were addressed to local churches, made up of members who belonged to those churches. Even the people who had letters addressed to them were members of a local church. Therefore, it could be said, Christians were expected to join the church in the place where they lived.

When a person enters relationship with Christ through salvation, they also enter His Church and into His Mission, meaning that our salvation does not happen in isolation nor without purpose. We're saved to be in relationship and on mission, together. This becomes reality when we join a local church, and we invest ourselves into the vision and mission the Lord calls that church to engage. We are members of Christ. We are members of a local church. We are members of His mission – locally and globally.

## *BAPTISM AND COMMUNION*

Traditionally, protestant churches have observed two important celebrations:

- **BAPTISM** – publicly celebrates one's entrance into God's family. In baptism, we publicly identify with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection, as Paul says in **Romans 6:3-4**, "Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life."
  - Baptism does not save a person; rather, it testifies to the salvation already received. The New Testament knows nothing of an unbaptized Christian, nor does the New Testament state that children were baptized outside of being born-again. Therefore, as a church, we only baptize those who have called upon Jesus for salvation and forgiveness for their sins, and who are able to confess Him to be their Savior and Lord.
    - Those who were baptized prior to their conversion, should be baptized again as a testimony to their personal faith and relationship in Jesus.
  - Since the word "baptize" means "to dip," as a church, and as a denomination, we believe immersion to be the clearest depiction of what symbolizes one's identification with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. At Grace Missionary Church, we practice baptism by immersion; however, if a person cannot be immersed for specific reasons, another mode of baptism can be done.
- **COMMUNION** – celebrates one's reconciliation with God and with one another, through the work of Jesus. This also is a time to remember our participation with Jesus in His death and resurrection. Again, as Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 10:16-17**, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, since all of us share the one bread."
  - This celebration is for those who profess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. There is a command to examine one's heart before taking communion (**1 Corinthians 11:27-29**), so as not to partake in an unworthy manner. When it comes to kids taking communion, parents are encouraged to explain what is going on to their child, and to decide if their child should or should not take communion.
  - At Grace Missionary Church, we celebrate communion monthly.

# WHO IS THE MISSIONARY CHURCH?

The Missionary Church was the name selected following the merger of the Missionary Church Association and the United Missionary Church in 1969, which was possible because both denominations were committed to preaching the Bible and to evangelizing the world.

The United Missionary Church, known until 1947 as The Mennonite Brethren in Christ, was formed at a meeting near Dayton, OH, in 1883. However, it began in the 1850's when Mennonite ministers were being dismissed from their churches for having prayer meetings, holding revival services, and giving public testimonies. The denomination was organized largely through the leadership of Daniel Brenneman and Solomon Eby.

The Missionary Church Association was founded in 1898 when men of similar convictions and passions gathered in Berne, IN, to discuss forming a new church built around God's word, the deeper life, the work of missions and the return of Christ. A key figure in the MCA's beginnings is Joseph Ramseyer, who was dismissed from his former denomination for being baptized by immersion as a born-again believer. Ramseyer traveled throughout the U.S. preaching on the deeper life and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King (the same message as the C&MA, of which Ramseyer and other founders had been deeply influenced and shaped by).

## *PURPOSE STATEMENT*

The Missionary Church, in obedience to Jesus Christ her Lord, is committed to being holy people of God in the world and to building His church by worldwide evangelism, discipleship and multiplication of growing churches, all to the glory of God.

## *ORGANIZATION*

Since its inception, the Missionary Church has grown to almost 2 million people scattered throughout over 25 countries, with over 500 churches in the United States. The US churches are grouped into Regions, Districts and Mission Districts. Each organized Region/District has a Director/Superintendent, and other officers, who care for the congregations within its borders. Mission districts are geographic areas where church planting ministries have been started but have not developed to the point of being self-governing.

Local churches are free to set their own by-laws in areas such as type of church board, church ministries, and church policies. A local church board works with its Region/District when searching for a Senior Pastor. The length of a pastoral term is decided by the local church – neither the region or denomination appoint or move a pastor. Matters such as pastoral licenses, church property and leadership development are handled by the Region/District. Matters such as world missions, Articles of Faith and Practice, and the overall development of churches in the denomination are handled by the National Office. Every other year, pastors and delegates from each church gather for the Shift National Conference.

## *EAST CENTRAL REGION*

The East Central Region encompasses the States of Ohio and West Virginia, with 32 churches in the region and 70 ministers.

In **Matthew 28:18-20**, Jesus gives this commission: **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.”** Jesus commands each of His followers to **“make disciples,”** one who submits themselves to Jesus and His way of living. Our region is committed to seeing this task fulfilled as we cultivate disciple making relationships, disciple multiplication movements, and churches committed to the work of multiplying disciples.

The Region wants to be a conduit for pastors and churches across the region to relate with one another for kingdom purpose, sharing common resources and vision to encourage spiritual growth and evangelistic fervor, and ultimately helping reproduce disciples, leaders, and churches throughout the Region.

God calls us to embrace certain truths that define us as a believing community and then embody those truths in how we live. We must speak, then, of what we believe (Articles of Faith) and how we should live (Articles of Practice). As the Missionary Church, we affirm the core truths of the Gospel, and we enact those truths as a family of churches in Christian community committed to loving God fully, to loving our neighbors truly, and carrying out the Great Commission for God's glory and the world's salvation.

### THE TRIUNE GOD

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three divine persons, equal in power and glory — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is the creator and sustainer of all things. His divine qualities, including love, holiness, justice, righteousness, faithfulness, infinite knowledge and power, self-existence, and omnipresence, all harmonize perfectly in the unity of His being.

### THE FATHER

We believe in God the Father, begotten of none, the eternal Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Since God is the creator, all things and all people are from Him and exist for Him. As the author of salvation, He adopts into His family all who are born again by faith. He gloriously upholds and providentially rules over all things, to accomplish the redemption of His people and the restoration of all creation.

### THE SON

We believe in Jesus Christ, the eternally begotten Son of the Father. He is the fully divine, living Word of God who also became fully human, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. His sinless human life, humble obedience to His Father's will, sacrificial death and bodily resurrection made sufficient provision for the salvation of all people. In His ascension, He returned to His Father, where He reigns as Lord, Advocate, Great High Priest, and Coming Judge.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune God, proceeding from and sent by the Father and the Son. He is the personal expression of God's power, instrumental in all His works. He is the author and illuminator of sacred Scripture. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He is the agent of the new birth, the one by whom we are baptized into the Body of Christ. As the Spirit of Holiness, He indwells every believer and His Church, purifying and empowering His people for holy living. He guides them into truth, comforts and encourages them, and enables them to fulfill the Great Commission. He produces His fruit in the lives of believers and gives them spiritual gifts for the good of the Church.

### THE BIBLE

We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the written Word of God, verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, true, reliable, and without error in all it addresses. We believe the Bible has been safeguarded by the Holy Spirit and transmitted to the present day without any doctrinal corruption. The Bible forever remains the unchanging and final authority for faith and living.

### HUMANITY

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, as co-equal bearers of the image of God. Gender is divinely designed, part of the goodness of creation. Human sexuality is a gift, intended to be expressed exclusively in a monogamous, lifelong marital union between one man and one woman. The Bible also affirms the sacredness of the single state and that some may have the gift of lifetime celibacy.

We believe in the historicity of the first man, Adam, who along with his wife, Eve, was uniquely created by a direct act of God as recorded in Genesis and not by a process of evolution. Made in His image, they are His crowning achievement. Adam and Eve were created without sin for perfect fellowship with God and were commanded to be fruitful and exercise benevolent dominion over the earth. Humankind was created for love of God and neighbor. That love was intended to find expression in every individual and every human institution.

Through the misuse of their wills, however, our original parents succumbed to Satan's temptation, disobeyed God's command and thus brought sin into the world and became subject to physical and spiritual death. They became corrupt in their nature and have passed on that nature to all their descendants. As a result, all human beings, while still bearing God's image, are polluted in every aspect of their being. They are estranged from God by their sin and thus deserve God's wrath.

We believe that God desires all human beings to be restored to a right relationship with Him. Redemption, the gracious design by which God intends to rescue humanity from the disastrous consequences of sin, has its origin in the love of God and is brought to fruition by His infinite wisdom and might.

## **SALVATION AND THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE**

We believe that Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our salvation. He voluntarily offered Himself as our representative and substitute and suffered and died on the cross in our place, taking upon Himself God's righteous wrath. We believe in His bodily resurrection on the third day, which powerfully declared Him to be the Son of God. By His death and resurrection, Jesus once for all conquered sin, death, hell, and the devil.

We believe that Christ is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Salvation is a divine gift given to any who repent and believe. Repentance and faith are the divinely enabled human responses to the grace of God. By the power of the Holy Spirit, a sinner must turn away from sin and embrace God, thus appropriating the benefits of Christ's life, death, resurrection. All who truly believe and receive Christ are fully justified, reconciled to God, born of His Spirit, adopted as His children, and united with Jesus in His death and resurrection. They will one day see Him in His glory and be glorified themselves, as God brings His redemptive work to completion.

We believe that God intends to transform redeemed people by conforming them to the image of His Son through the infilling and sanctifying work of His Holy Spirit. Though this work begins with God's gracious initiative and can only be accomplished by His life-giving power, believers must cooperate and fully yield themselves to the Lordship of Christ. Believers are called to decisively surrender their wills, be renewed in their minds, and have their hearts purified as they continuously offer themselves as living sacrifices to God.

We believe that a living faith must express itself in a life of loving obedience to God and in loving service to others. Genuine faith will inevitably produce good works, which are born out of gratitude for salvation and ultimately done for God's glory. Christians are called to live by the power of the Holy Spirit as citizens of the kingdom, serving as God's agents of transformation for society, culture, and the created world.

## **THE CHURCH**

We believe that the invisible and universal Church is a spiritual body comprised of all believers, both living and dead, over which Christ Himself is Head and Lord.

We believe that the local church is to be a loving community of Christ's followers who gather for worship, prayer, instruction in the Word, mutual encouragement and discipline. As the temple of the Holy Spirit, the Church is to display His holiness, bear His fruit, and be adorned by His gracious gifts. As a people called out of darkness, the Church will embody the pervasive, life-transforming power of God by equipping the saints for the work of ministry, bearing witness to the truth and exerting influence in every realm of the broader culture. The Church is called by Jesus to proclaim the gospel, locally, cross culturally and internationally, and to make disciples of everyone everywhere in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted by the Lord Jesus Himself, not as a means of salvation, but as outward signs of the salvation we have by faith. They are the divinely mandated means by which believers publicly affirm their faith in Christ. Water baptism symbolizes the spiritual union that every believer has with Jesus in His death, burial, resurrection. Therefore, we believe that the biblical pattern is baptism upon profession of faith in Christ, and furthermore, that it should be administered by immersion whenever possible.

The Lord's Supper serves as not only a vivid memorial of Jesus' bodily sacrifice and shed blood, but also as a proclamation of His death until He returns. It symbolizes the believer's union with Christ and the spiritual unity shared by every believer. It provides a powerful inducement to self-examination, should be celebrated joyfully and regularly, and is open to all who are followers of Christ.

## **THE LAST THINGS**

We believe that the final years of human history will be characterized by worldwide persecution and divine judgment. We believe that the return of Jesus will be personal, bodily, visible, and glorious. His second coming, the blessed hope for which we must be constantly prepared, is a source of encouragement and comfort, a motive for holy living, and an inspiration for ministry and mission.

We believe that when Jesus returns, He will subdue His enemies and establish His kingdom on earth and will reign in perfect righteousness. For those in Christ, death is gain, because to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

At the resurrection, we believe that every person will face one of two eternal destinies. We believe that no condemnation awaits those who are in Christ, because their sins were forgiven at the cross. They will have their lives and works judged only for reward, and will enjoy an eternal, embodied life in the presence of God and His angels, forever. Those who are not in Christ will be raised to appear before God for a final, irrevocable judgment. They will be consigned to a place of eternal, conscious punishment, separated from God in hell, with Satan and his angels.

We believe in the coming restoration of all things, where God, in accordance with His power and promises, will one day bring His purposes for all of creation to their glorious fulfillment. Here, God's handiwork, though disfigured by sin and subject to decay, will be fully restored in a new heaven and new earth. We believe that all of God's redemptive purposes will come to fruition, and death will be swallowed up in victory.

Having declared what we believe, in our Articles of Practice we declare how we should accordingly live. God calls us not only to affirm our core beliefs as the Missionary Church but also to embody those truths in Christian community. As Christians, we have been called to “**guard the good deposit**” (2 Tim. 1:14), that body of truth God has entrusted to our care (1 Tim. 6:20; Jude 3). Yet God has also called us to “**the obedience that comes from faith**” (Rom. 1:5).

Such obedience becomes possible only because God supernaturally produces in us a new manner of life, one governed by His Word and empowered by His Spirit. The Christian life is not a burdensome pursuit of legalistic righteousness (Matt. 5:20). Instead, it's an abundant life in which, led by God's Spirit, we delight in becoming increasingly conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). When reconciled to God in Christ, we are made a “**new creation**” (2 Cor. 5:17). As we yield our lives to the sovereignty of His Son, God makes every facet of our experience, whether individual or corporate, public or private, an instrument for the exhibition of His glory. Having received the Holy Spirit, we are commanded to walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16) and to be continually filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Then our lives will demonstrate, in increasing measure, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), the unmistakable evidence of His indwelling presence.

Being a follower of Christ is more than a matter of belief; it is also a way of life. “**Whoever claims to live in Him must live as Jesus lived**” (1 John 2:6). God intends for us to reflect His character as “**imitators of God**” (Eph. 5:1). He commands us to “**be holy, because I am holy**” (1 Pet. 1:16), and He graciously empowers us to embrace a way of living that displays the image of His Son.

### EXERCISING PERSONAL FAITH

God calls us to exercise personal faith. While the Christian life is lived in community (1 Cor. 12:13), we are called to embrace that life personally. Responding to the gracious invitation of the gospel individually, we turn from sin and embrace God, thus receiving the benefits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. We receive salvation as we personally repent and believe in Jesus, receiving eternal life and escaping eternal condemnation (Mark 1:15; John 3:16-18; Rev. 3:20). Without such faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).

Believers cannot grow to spiritual maturity without cultivating a relationship with God. We affirm the need for Christians to nurture their faith through Bible reading (Ps. 1), prayer (Col. 4:2), weekly gatherings with other believers (Heb. 10:25), serving in ministry (1 Pet. 4:10-11), sharing their faith (Phil. 6), and other spiritual disciplines. We do not, however, consider such disciplines ends in themselves but rather means by which to “**grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**” (2 Pet. 3:18).

### CULTIVATING HOLINESS

God calls us to a life of holiness. While God himself is ultimately the one who makes us holy (Ps. 51:10; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:12), the Bible commands us: “**Make every effort ... to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord**” (Heb. 12:14). Having been united with Christ by faith, we are called to follow Jesus, imitating Him in our conduct (1 Cor. 11:1) and in the attitude of our minds (Eph. 4:23).

To be holy means to die to sin (1 Pet. 2:24). We believe as Christians we have already died with Christ. We have been liberated from sin's dominion and freed to offer ourselves wholly to God (Rom. 6:1-14). Nevertheless, we must continue to put to death sinful attitudes and behaviors, putting off the old self and its corrupt way of life (Eph. 4:22-23). God calls us to flee immorality (1 Cor. 6:18), to resist the devil (James 4:7), and to disdain the enticements of the world (1 John 2:15-16). Holiness also means being set apart for God and His glory. By faith, we have been raised in Christ to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). We are to put on the new self, keep in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25), and surrender ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13). We are to offer ourselves as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2), making every effort to develop godly conduct and character (2 Pet. 1:3-7), endeavoring to love God wholly and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:35-40). In brief, a life of holiness is a life of love.

While sanctification demands our willing surrender (Phil. 2:12; Col. 1:29), it remains, from first to last, the gracious work of God. The will and the power to be transformed comes from Him, “**For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose**” (Phil. 2:13). We work, but we do so in the power He provides.

To fulfill our high calling, we must resist being conformed to unbiblical values and behaviors (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:17). Instead, our lives should be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) and increasing godliness. An authentic Christian life will bear faithful witness to Christ, exhibiting His characteristics of integrity, purity, generosity, and justice.

Since it contradicts the biblical principles of simplicity, transparency, and honesty (2 Cor. 4:2; 2 Cor. 5:11), Christians must not hold membership in secret, oath-bound societies. Nor should believers form any partnerships that cause them to compromise their Christian principles (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).

Since we are the temple of the Holy Spirit and bought at great price, God calls us to glorify Him with our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19b-20). To willfully dishonor our bodies with sexual immorality is irreverent and inconsistent with our standing as servants of God and is therefore forbidden. God has called us to flee impurity, to exercise self-control, and to refrain from taking advantage of another.

We must, likewise, avoid the abuse of any substance, whether legal or illegal, that damages health, results in intoxication, or impairs sound judgment. God requires self-control in all things (Prov. 23:20-21; Prov. 25:28; 2 Pet. 1:5-6). While the Scriptures clearly forbid drunkenness (Prov. 20:21; Prov. 31:4-7; Eph. 5:18; Rom. 13:13; 1 Pet. 4:3), they do not categorically require total abstinence from alcohol (1 Tim. 5:23). While we affirm the principle of Christian liberty in this matter, we also recognize that the loving exercise of personal freedom cannot supersede the biblical imperative to, “**Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister**” (Rom. 14:13). We recognize believers have varying convictions about the wisdom of abstinence and moderation. These convictions merit mutual respect and prayerful consideration.

## LIVING IN COMMUNITY

God calls us to live in community. While every believer enters the Christian life through the exercise of personal faith, God’s Spirit makes them part of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-14). The Bible envisions the life of faith not only as an individualistic endeavor but also as a corporate pursuit. God calls us to a shared life. We share a rich life of fellowship in which we devote ourselves, not to the pursuit of self-interest, but to the well-being of others: love one another (John 13:34), serve one another (Gal. 5:3), forgive one another (Eph. 4:32), encourage one another (Heb. 3:13), pray for one another (James 5:16), submit to one another (Eph. 5:21), and build one another up (1 Thess. 5:11).

The Scriptures instruct us to enter into commitments mindfully (Lev. 5:4; Prov. 19:2), to honor our word (Matt. 5:37), to be honest and direct in our dealings (Eph. 4:25; Matt. 5:37), to be merciful toward others (Mic. 6:8), to listen carefully (Prov. 18:13), and to admit when we are wrong (Matt. 7:5). Furthermore, we are encouraged to overlook personal offenses (Prov. 19:11). We are also admonished to confront each other privately before bringing in other witnesses (Matt. 18:16-20), to be forgiving, and to make restitution for damage done to another (Exod. 21:33-44). When Christians have disputes with one another, they should seek to settle those disputes via biblical mediation so as not to undermine their witness before the world (1 Cor. 6:1-8). Courts have a responsibility to ensure civic order, but Christians have a biblical obligation to pursue mutual forbearance and love and to live at peace with everyone (Rom. 12:18).

Christian community ought to be marked by compassion. The Christian life is a pilgrimage with many painful milestones along the way (Phil. 1:29). The witness of Scripture is clear: “**We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God**” (Acts 14:22). Therefore, believers are exhorted to “**mourn with those who mourn**” (Rom. 12:15), to bear each other’s burdens (Gal. 6:2), to comfort the afflicted (2 Cor. 1:3-7).

God also calls Christians to pray together for healing, both for themselves and for others (James 5:13-16). God has provided for the ultimate removal of sin, sickness, and sorrow through the redeeming work of Christ (Isa. 53:5; Matt. 8:16-17), and He has promised that one day the painful effects of sin shall pass away (Rev. 21:4). In the meantime, God commands His people to ask in faith and hope for healing now. Nonetheless, Christians are admonished to submit themselves to God’s will, recognizing that He may, for His own good purposes, choose not to heal presently (2 Cor. 12:7b-10; Rom. 8:28). Since God is the giver of all gifts (James 1:17), Christians may seek medical assistance without any implication that they lack faith.

God commands all creation to worship Him (Ps. 150:6). He is worthy to receive all glory and honor and praise (Rev. 4:11; Rev. 5:12). Yet He has chosen to make Himself uniquely manifest among His people as they gather in His presence (Ps. 22:3; 1 Cor. 5:4). While we each have the privilege and responsibility to seek God individually (Mark 1:35; Matt. 6:6), we ought also, unless circumstances render it impossible, seek Him in community. Regular times of worship have always characterized God’s people (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:24-25).

In the Old Testament, God instituted the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship (Exod. 20:8-11). God gave His people the Sabbath as a gift for their good (Mark 2:27), to ensure a healthy cycle of labor and rest. He also intended it for His own glory with each Sabbath being “a Sabbath to the LORD” (Exod. 20:10). Every Sabbath served as a call to worship, with each 7<sup>th</sup> day serving as a reminder that God was humanity’s Creator, Provider, and Redeemer (Deut. 5:12-15; Exod. 16:21-30). When the Church was formed, Christians set aside Sunday as the Lord’s Day (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). Weekly Sunday worship commemorated the resurrection of Jesus, who was raised to life on the “first day of the week” (Matt. 28:1). While Christians do not keep the Lord’s Day legalistically, that is according to Old Testament Sabbath laws (Col. 2:16), they are nonetheless encouraged to reserve a particular day of the week where they can break from the rhythms of work for the purposes of rest, the celebration of the family, and worship. Regardless of the day, God’s people are exhorted to meet regularly with other believers whenever possible for mutual encouragement (Heb. 10:24-25), for the public reading and proclamation of God’s Word (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:1-2), for corporate prayer (Acts 1:14; Acts 5:24), for worship in song (Col. 3:16), for the exercise of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12), and for the celebration of the ordinances of baptism (Acts 2:38-41) and the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 26:26-30; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

## LIVING ON MISSION

Jesus calls us to a life of mission. Called to be His disciples, we are commanded to make disciples of others (Matt. 4:19, 28:19-20). He has commissioned us to take the gospel – the proclamation of Christ crucified, risen and presently reigning (1 Cor. 15:1-4), to the whole world. Jesus is and always will be humanity’s only Savior (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). The gospel, for every generation and culture, “is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

Jesus calls us to join Him on mission (John 20:21), and He promises to be with us “always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Furthermore, He pledged and provided the Holy Spirit’s power (Acts 1:8). While every believer has a personal responsibility to make disciples (Matt. 28:19; 2 Tim. 2:2), we are also called to labor together as partners in the gospel (Phil. 1:5) and as members of one body with each part doing its work (Eph. 4:16).

While the gospel is essentially a message of what God has done for us in Christ, living faith invariably produces in us the good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do (Eph. 2:8-10). Jesus calls His followers to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-14). Good deeds pave the way for the proclamation of the gospel (1 Pet. 2:12). They are the inevitable fruit of saving grace (Eph. 2:10) and living faith (James 2:26), and they provide unmistakable evidence that we have been truly transformed by the gospel’s power (1 John 3:16-18).

## BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES

God calls us to live as family. He adopts all those who receive Christ by faith (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26-4:7) and makes them members of His household (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15), thus comprising one spiritual family. The natural realm mirrors that same order. The human family, though not immune from the effects of the Fall, remains divinely designed. Marriage has been instituted by God as a blessing. It embodies the divine ideal for the family, providing the most stable foundation on which it can stand (Gen. 2:24). While this ideal is not always realized, and while many find themselves living in single-parent families, God, our loving Father, nevertheless graciously favors His people with His presence and provision.

God has ordained the marriage covenant as a publicly affirmed union between one man (born male) and one woman (born female) until parted by death. This is the pattern that He commands for marriage (Matt. 19:4-6). While the principle of mutual submission is for all believers (Eph. 5:21), God has appointed the husband head of the wife (Eph. 5:23). Husbands are called to love their wives sacrificially (Eph. 5:25-29), live with them with consideration and respect (1 Pet. 3:7), and not be harsh with them (Col. 3:19). Wives, in turn, are called to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:6) and to show them appropriate respect (Eph. 5:33).

Any sexual activity outside of marriage constitutes sexual immorality and is clearly forbidden in the Bible (Mark 7:20; 1 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 5:19; 1 Thess. 5:19-22; Heb. 13:4). Couples must not engage in pre-marital sex nor “live together” without the benefit of a marriage covenant. Co-habitation, however commonplace, counterfeits and distorts God’s beautiful and benevolent design for marriage. The Scriptures command believers not to marry unbelievers (1 Cor. 7:39). Churches and parents, therefore, have an obligation to teach a biblical view of marriage and to warn believers against being yoked with unbelievers. Ministers are forbidden to knowingly officiate at the marriage of a believer and an unbeliever. Furthermore, the Missionary Church forbids ministers to encourage, bless, or solemnize same-sex “marriages” or unions (Matt. 19:4-6). Since marriage is a sacred, publicly affirmed covenant, ministers

are forbidden to preside over ceremonies in which couples refuse to register with the civil authorities merely for the sake of convenience or financial benefit. They are also forbidden from knowingly officiating at marriages entered solely for the sake of citizenship or other civil benefits.

Though Scripture commends the married state (Gen. 1:18-24; 1 Cor. 7:2-9), it also affirms the value of godly singleness (1 Cor. 7:25-38). Jesus Himself remained celibate, and everyone, even those without the gift of lifelong celibacy (1 Cor. 7:7), experiences seasons of singleness. Jesus' example demonstrates that a single person can live a completely fulfilled life.

God established marriage as a lifelong union, and divorce never accords with His perfect will (Matt. 19:4-6). Christians should bear with one another, forgive one another, and whenever possible seek reconciliation to preserve the marriage covenant (Rom. 12:18). Nevertheless, because of human sinfulness, God has graciously made concessions for divorce in certain cases: a person is the wronged party in a case of sexual immorality (Matt. 5:31-32) or when an unbeliever willfully abandons a believer (1 Cor. 7:15-16), the Bible permits, though it never mandates, divorce.

Those who seek divorce without biblical grounds should first be admonished and, if necessary, subjected to the disciplinary process of the local church. Church discipline is intended to bring about repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation (Matt. 18:15-20) and to serve as a warning for others (1 Tim. 5:21; Acts 5:1-11). While we acknowledge that divorce without biblical grounds is sin, we also affirm that God graciously forgives unrighteousness, divorce included – “**mercy triumphs over judgment**” (James 2:13).

Pastors should make clear, both in public preaching and private counsel, that all forms of abuse are sin. Wherever appropriate, it should be made an occasion for church discipline. In cases of extreme abuse or physical danger, persons are admonished to seek a place of safety. Churches are encouraged to do whatever they can to provide refuge and support. Some cases may warrant either a temporary or long-term and potentially legal separation. In all circumstances, Christians should seek biblically informed pastoral counsel before contemplating a divorce. Some Scriptures place significant restrictions on remarriage after divorce (Luke 16:18). Nevertheless, ministers may solemnize a remarriage if the previously divorced persons had a biblical reason for their divorce, live demonstrably Christian lives, and intend a genuinely Christian marriage (Matt. 5:32, 19:9). Ministers need to carefully consider other factors, including whether reconciliation with a previous spouse is possible and advisable, and whether the persons were believers at the time of their divorce (Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Children are commanded to honor (Eph. 6:1-2) and obey (Col. 3:20) their parents. Following their Heavenly Father, earthly fathers in particular, are exhorted to gently shepherd their children, neither exasperating nor embittering them (Isa. 40:11; Col. 3:21). The Bible calls parents to bring their children up in the “**discipline and instruction of the Lord**” (Eph. 6:4). Because the home provides the primary place to disciple children in the faith, we urge churches to promote healthy families where parents teach Christian truth and cultivate and model Christian character. Since God loves children and desires to bless them and have them know Him, we encourage the formal dedication of children to the Lord in a public service in the local church. We also encourage churches to commit themselves to disciple children by clearly communicating the gospel to them and diligently teaching them the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:14-16).

## **PRACTICING STEWARDSHIP**

God calls us to lives of faithful stewardship. Since God creates and sustains all things, everything ultimately belongs to Him. As those redeemed by the very blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-19), Christians owe a debt they can never repay. Out of gratitude, then, they offer their very selves to Him in worship (Rom. 12:1-2). All that we have, natural abilities, spiritual gifts, material possessions, time, and our physical bodies, are gifts from God (James 1:17). We hold these things in trust, as stewards rather than owners. We must use these resources for God's glory and the good of others, as those who must give an account of ourselves to God (Rom. 14:12).

This principle extends to the created world as well, as we honor our Creator by caring for His creation. While God gave human beings dominion over the earth, He also gave them the command to work and take care of the Garden (Gen. 1:26, 2:15). We care for creation as the image-bearers of God, who providentially sustains His creation now (Ps. 104; Matt. 10:29), and who will one day free it from the decay incurred in the Fall and bring it to its intended glory (Rom. 8:20-21; Rev. 21:1-4).

Faithful stewardship also entails glad generosity. The obligation to live generously is rooted in God's generous nature and in His command that we imitate Him (Eph. 5:1-2). It is also undergirded by a biblical principle: “**Whoever sows generously will also**

**reap generously**" (2 Cor. 9:6). God's people are directed to give to the needy (Deut. 15:7-11; Prov. 19:17; Eph. 4:28) and to support those who give full-time attention to ministry (Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17). The biblical principle of "first fruits giving" (Gen. 4:4; Lev. 23:9-14; 1 Cor. 16:2) teaches us to make giving a priority. Giving should also be sacrificial (Lev. 2:1; Lev. 3:1; 2 Sam. 24:24) and proportionate to our income (1 Cor. 16:2). God intends us to give, not merely out of duty, but in joyful worship, for He loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7). The tithe, a law that was binding on God's people in the Old Testament, continues to provide a valuable benchmark for New Testament believers today.

Our earthly citizenship is likewise a matter of stewardship. God has providentially placed His people within cultures so that they might exert a redemptive influence (Matt. 5:14-16; Acts 17:26-27). Where citizens are entrusted with the gift of participatory government, they may freely seek active political involvement. This includes engaging in civil discourse, voting, or seeking office at various levels of government. In doing so, believers may promote the common good and bring the light of the gospel and the influence of biblical principles into the public square. We believe that God has established civil government for humanity's benefit (Rom. 13:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:13-14), and its duties of promoting and protecting good, restraining and punishing evil are divinely ordained. Christians are instructed to pray for all those who exercise civil authority over them (1 Tim. 2:1-4), and to render appropriate loyalty, respect and obedience (Rom. 13:5-7). Where the dictates of civil law contradict God's revealed will in Scripture, Christians must choose to "**obey God rather than human beings**" (Acts 5:29).

We believe that the Bible commands believers to love their enemies, to do good to those who hate them, to overcome evil with good, and to live at peace with everyone, whenever possible (Matt. 5:43-48; Rom. 12:21; Rom. 12:18). Though we affirm that Christians may defend themselves, when necessary (Exod. 22:2-3; Luke 22:36), and that they should seek to rescue the defenseless (Prov. 24:10-12), they must never promote strife between individuals, groups, races, classes, and nations. Furthermore, they should pursue harmony and reconciliation in every relationship – whether personal or public.

The persistence of strife and warfare, however, is a result of the fallen human condition. Since government has a mandate to protect life and preserve peace (Rom. 13:2-4), we believe a Christian may, with a clear conscience, participate in duly authorized armed forces (Luke 3:13-14). We also recognize that the practice of non-resistance has a long and distinguished history in the Church. Therefore, individuals may, for the sake of conscience, refuse to participate in armed conflict.

Finally, we believe a Christian's life should be so transparent in its honesty and integrity that one's word can be fully trusted without the swearing of formal oaths (Matt. 5:36-37; James 5:12). Nonetheless, a judicial oath may be sworn or affirmed without violation of the Scriptures.

## SEEKING JUSTICE

God calls us to live justly. Justice is an attribute of God Himself (Gen. 18:25; Deut. 32:4; Isa. 61:8). It ought, therefore, to characterize His children. Micah declares: He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (6:8). Our personal dealings should exhibit a commitment to the Golden Rule: "**So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets**" (Matt. 7:12).

We also have an obligation to pursue justice in the public sphere. In every time and culture, Christians must recognize that God's Word alone determines what is just. We have a personal responsibility to embrace biblical values and to work toward their implementation in the broader culture. We do acknowledge, however, that while the Bible sets forth timeless principles and priorities, it rarely prescribes specific political policies. The pursuit of justice is a clear and necessary implication of the gospel and its inevitable complement. We affirm with the Scriptures that "**faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead**" (James 2:17). Every person bears the image of God (Gen. 1:27; Gen. 9:6; James 3:9). Therefore, we strenuously oppose racism, sexism, and any other ideology or behavior that demeans, degrades, or defiles other human beings.

Personal and institutional racism is fundamentally an affront against the image of God in human beings. It also runs contrary to God's intention to create one universal, multiethnic, believing community comprised of members "**from every nation, tribe, people and language**" who join together in worship of God and the Lamb (Rev. 7:9-10). Sexual abuse and sexual harassment are particularly destructive forms of sexual sin since they degrade and damage other bearers of God's image. Throughout the Scriptures, in both His words and deeds, God demonstrates His concern for the vulnerable, the helpless, and the defenseless. He cares for the orphan and widow (Ps. 68:5), for the poor and oppressed (Ps. 140:12), and for the sojourner (Ps. 146:9). He expects His

people to do the same, defending and caring for the most vulnerable among us, including the refugee, the immigrant, the unborn, the elderly, the disabled, and the terminally ill (Exod. 22:21-22; Prov. 24:11-12; Prov. 31:8-9; Matt. 25:31-46; James 1:27; 1 John 3:17-18).

Finally, we would do well to remember that we ourselves are sojourners here. Our ultimate citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), and we look forward “to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb. 11:10). Yet we are also called to “shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15) as we “seek the peace and prosperity” of the cities to which we have been called (Jer. 29:7). Thus, we will pursue justice with great diligence. While some of the world’s ills can be alleviated, we also recognize that, while we wait for the perfect to appear (1 Cor. 13:10), believers will experience unjust suffering (John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 2:12, 4:5; 1 Pet. 2:19-20; Rev. 2:3). Evil will never be fully vanquished until our Savior comes in glorious power and puts every enemy beneath His feet (Phil. 3:20-21). “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20).

*Some points have minor edits for space.*

## WHO IS GRACE MISSIONARY CHURCH?

Grace Missionary Church was birthed from the fervent prayers of a small group who began meeting on March 9, 1954, in the auditorium of the Mercer County Courthouse in Celina. This prayer group grew in size, moving from homes to the Hopewell Township house, where they eventually rented space for prayer meetings and worship services. On May 27, 1954, a meeting was held to choose a name for the church, which became known as Grace Missionary Church. On May 30, the congregation voted to purchase the Andrews property, consisting of five lots in the southwestern section of Celina. This would serve as the site for the first sanctuary. The congregation met in the Amstutz Hatchery from June 1954 until June 1955 when they moved into the new church at the corner of Portland and Sycamore Streets. Over the years, our church has grown and transformed, people have come to know Christ and have been sent out for Christ, and our neighborhood has been our home, our place of ministry, and our local mission field.

### *OUR VISION AS A CHURCH*

Every disciple of Jesus is still charged with the same mission that the first disciples were given: **As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. Go and make disciples of all peoples** (John 20:21, Matt 28:19-20). This mandate from Jesus is why we exist as a local church in Celina, and why we invest in doing ministry where we're located and beyond our city.

As a church family, we're pursuing the task of making disciples by **CONNECTING WITH OTHERS TO GROW TOGETHER IN JESUS**. Becoming a disciple, and living as disciples, is something that is not done in isolation; disciples are made in community with other disciples. It's in this disciple-making community where lasting transformation occurs. As each of us grows in relying on the Holy Spirit and grows in believing God's Word, each of us are taking steps to the right towards Jesus, becoming more like Him.

We believe discipleship is something every Christian can be equipped and empowered to do; it's not limited to a select group of people. We believe discipleship begins within our day-to-day circles of influence, such as our family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. As we engage these circles, we intentionally help people take steps to the right in their pursuit of Jesus. Because of this, one's journey of discipleship begins once you begin sharing the gospel with them. In sharing the gospel, we're inviting people to become disciples of Jesus.

At Grace, we believe a healthy disciple is one who is growing proportionately in three key relationships: God (**UP**), those who attend Grace (**IN**), and those not yet attending Grace (**OUT**). Because of this, we're intentional about providing opportunities for people to grow in these relationships, to **ABIDE IN JESUS (UP)**, to **GROW AS A FAMILY (IN)**, and to **CONNECT WITH OUR NEIGHBORS (OUT)**. Each opportunity means to move people to the right as they grow in relationship with Jesus and Grace.



**CONNECTING WITH OTHERS TO GROW TOGETHER IN JESUS**

## *OUR VALUES AS A CHURCH*

As a church, we strive to infuse the following values into everything we do as a church:

- **Christ-Centered** – the point of why we gather, why we grow in faith, and why we share the gospel, is for one reason: for the name and renown of Jesus. Each ministry is done through His enablement. Each message points to who He is and what He has accomplished. Each of us are to imitate His likeness in every area of our life.
- **Bible-Centered** – from God's Word do we understand who God is, and in return, we understand who we are and how we're to live as those belonging to Him. What we believe must always be grounded in what God has spoken.
- **Prayer** – to keep ourselves abiding in God and on course as a church, we must be a people who faithfully seek Him in prayer, because apart from Him we can do nothing. While it is important to pray as individuals, it is equally important to pray together as a church. The example given in the Book of Acts needs to continue being the example today.
- **Discipleship** – every ministry and mission opportunity means to encourage, equip, and empower people to take steps to the right towards Jesus and grow proportionately **UP**, **IN**, and **OUT**.
- **Relationships** – because we believe that discipleship does not happen in isolation but rather in community, we see our church as being a family who's committed to helping each person grow as a disciple of Jesus. Because we are messy people, the reality of the gospel needs to be extended to every relationship, remembering that we have been joined to Christ and thus to one another.

## *OUR STRUCTURE AS A CHURCH*

Grace Missionary Church practices congregational authority, meaning each member has a voice and a vote in decisions that are brought before the church. We are shepherded by Pastors and Elders, all of whom make up the Leadership Team. People of the congregation are asked to serve on Ministry Teams that oversee the various ministries and operations of the church. We strive to place people on teams which they have been gifted to serve. Each year we have an Annual Meeting where ministries give report, vision continues to be cast, and people are affirmed or voted on for positions.

Each month the Leadership Team meets to discuss the business of the church; minutes of these meetings are soon posted afterwards. Those who attend Grace are welcome to address the Leadership Team with questions, concerns or suggestions.

Ministries and Ministry Teams to get involved with:

- Worship Team
- First Sunday Prayer
- Nursery
- Grace Kids
- Grace Youth
- Women of Grace
- Men of Grace
- Growth Groups
- Ministry Classes
- Visitation Team
- Meal Team
- 510 Café (Hospitality)
- Celebrate Recovery
- Welcome Team
- Outreach Team
- Missions Team
- CALL Café
- GraceLand Preschool
- Bible Release Volunteer (KHM)
- BU@Grace (Bethel University Grace Campus)
- Finance Team
- Building and Grounds Team

Sign up to get involved: <https://gracemissionary.church/serve>



CHILD'S NAME	BIRTHDAY	HOME	COLLEGE	MILITARY	ADULT

## SKILLS & SPECIAL INTERESTS

Work Experience \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Past Ministry Experience \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Education / Special Training \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies & Talents \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Community Involvement \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



CONNECTING WITH OTHERS TO GROW TOGETHER IN JESUS

# COVENANT OF MEMBERSHIP

*If in agreement, please initial...*

I believe Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior \_\_\_\_\_  
I have been baptized as a believer in Jesus Christ \_\_\_\_\_  
I am striving to walk in obedience to Christ and His Word \_\_\_\_\_  
I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit \_\_\_\_\_  
I believe the Bible as verbally inspired, without error, and is the final authority for faith and living \_\_\_\_\_  
I believe in the substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ \_\_\_\_\_  
I believe Christ's salvation is by grace through faith, and not the result of works \_\_\_\_\_  
I believe Christ physically ascended into Heaven, and we await His physical return to earth \_\_\_\_\_  
I believe in the final judgment, the restoration of all things, and God's eternal Kingdom on earth \_\_\_\_\_  
I am in full agreement with the vision and core values of Grace Missionary Church \_\_\_\_\_  
I am in full agreement with the Articles of Faith and Practice of The Missionary Church \_\_\_\_\_

Because I believe that God is leading me to become a member of Grace Missionary Church, I commit myself:

1. To live for Christ, in all areas of my life, by the Holy Spirit's empowerment
2. To regularly meet together, with my church family, to worship God
3. To regularly grow in relationship, accountability, and spiritual maturity with my church family
4. To obey the Great Commission of making disciples who submit themselves to Jesus and His way of living
5. To faithfully and generously steward all that God gives me, to build up His church and extend His Kingdom
6. To willingly submit to the biblical leadership, instruction, and discipline of the Pastors and Elders of Grace Missionary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**CONNECTING WITH OTHERS TO GROW TOGETHER IN JESUS**