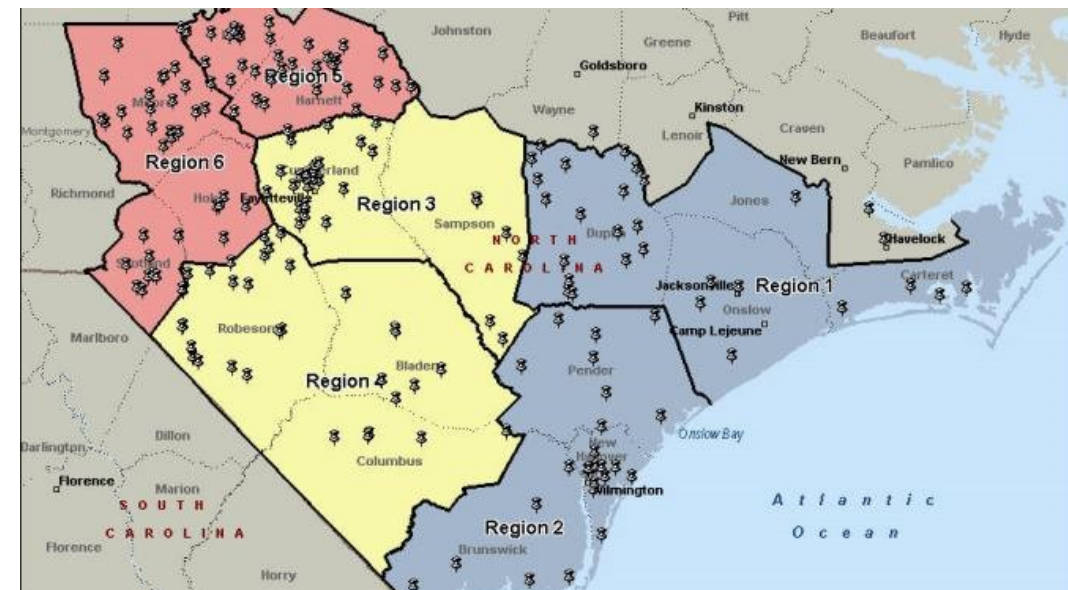




New Member Training Packet



Resources for use by the churches of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina



10 Points To Include In A Church Membership Class

JULY 12, 2017 BY [PATRICIA](https://SMARTCHURCHMANAGEMENT.COM/CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP-CLASS/) [HTTPS://SMARTCHURCHMANAGEMENT.COM/CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP-CLASS/](https://SMARTCHURCHMANAGEMENT.COM/CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP-CLASS/)

Churches love when they get visitors because they know that [visitors are potential members](#). However, visitors need help taking that step toward membership. And while not all churches have official membership, those that do experience an increased engagement with members. This is because when congregants attend a new membership class, they have a better understanding of the church's history, why it exists and what it hopes to achieve.

Churches that take the time to develop a new members class have the benefit of interacting with new members and helping them ease into the church community. Putting together a membership class doesn't have to be complicated, it just needs to be thought through and organized for delivery to new members.

10 Points to Include in a Church Membership Class

1. Introduction

A new member class is often made up of a small group of people and connection is another important outcome of membership classes.

Take the time to help people feel comfortable and start with an introduction and ice breaker.

This will increase participant comfort level, help them to participate and to get to know each other.

For instance, ask everyone to introduce themselves, how long they have been attending the church and why they chose your church to join.

2. Who's Who

When someone is new to a church, they don't know who anyone is and have an interest in figuring out who's who.

They want to know who the pastor is, who any associate pastors are and who the high level leaders and/or decision makers are.

For example, new members should know who the [church employees](#) are and who the volunteer leaders are, i.e.; volunteer coordinator.

This helps new members associate with [church leadership](#) and increases their familiarity and comfort levels – which ultimately helps them to connect.

3. Church History

A church history is often a fascinating story to tell.

Whether it is a denominational heritage that has been continued, or an independent beginning, people who are new to the church have an interest in learning its history.

Share pictures of the early days and help the new members understand the challenges and triumphs along the way.

This will help them feel engaged by having a deeper understanding of the missional journey.

4. Mission, Vision and Values

A membership class is a good time to restate the [mission, vision and values](#).

Help members understand why the church exists (mission), what is trying to accomplish (vision) and the values or principles that guide its behaviors and [decision making process](#).

This reiteration provides an opportunity for class participants to understand what the church is trying to achieve and further understand church priorities.

7. The Priesthood of All Believers

No one in the church is more important than anyone else. All persons are gifted for the ministry and should use their gifts for the benefit of the church and the community it serves. Male and female are equally called to service and leadership according to their gifts. Members of Presbyterian churches choose elders who have particular gifts for ministry to exercise leadership, discipline, and government of the church life. Ministers who are ordained to the office of Word and Sacrament differ from other elders in their function of leadership. They have particular tasks and training to proclaim the Word and celebrate the sacraments.

8. Reality of history as the realm of God's activity.

Reformed Christian faith is not otherworldly. We believe that this world, human life, and our history are important to God. God made the world and all people, and the Biblical story is one of God's caring activity with us and with the world. God acts through history and cares about it, and we are expected to care also. Part of being Reformed is to take seriously our participation with God in building a kingdom of justice and peace on earth.

9. Predestination

Predestination is not the same thing as fatalism. We do not say, "Whatever will be, will be," or claim that every thing that happens does so because God wills it. We know that God has created people with freedom, including freedom to sin, and many things occur that are contrary to God's desires for us. Predestination does not mean that before we are born some of us are condemned to hell and others blessed for heaven. Many people use the word "election" rather than "predestination," reminding us that God brings us the gift of faith and freedom for new life.

Predestination reminds us simply that God holds the future, not us, and that God's purposes will eventually prevail.

10. The Church as the Community of Believers

The Reformed tradition has a suspicion of privatized religion. As Presbyterians, we avoid piety that focuses only upon a personal relationship with Jesus without also emphasizing the horizontal dimension of discipleship. We take the community of faith very seriously. Therefore we do not have private ceremonies for baptism or the Lord's Supper. Worship together and sharing the sacraments are central to the Reformed understanding of the spiritual life. Redemption has a communal dimension as well as a personal one. We pray together, sharing in the common life of prayer of the whole church. Unity of the church does not diminish the value of the inner life of prayer. As Presbyterians, we experience balance of heart, mind, and action, in our personal lives and together in the body of believers.

Reformed Beliefs

1. Sovereignty of God

To be sovereign means to be supreme and to be supremely in dominion of creation, human life, and history. God is above us, bigger and better than we are. God is the free, majestic Creator. We cannot fully comprehend the ways of God. God does not depend upon us; we depend upon God. These are some of the characteristics attributed to God as the Sovereign: God is omnipresent, not limited by space; God is omniscient, all-knowing; God is eternal, not limited by time; God is unchangeable, always faithful, loving, dependable, and just.

2. Dependence of Humanity

To be dependent is to know our need of God. We are not complete or perfect and in our human life we never will be. John Calvin called this doctrine the “Total Depravity of Man.” Another way is to say: “We are all *tainted*” by sin. Sin is a part of who we all are as human beings. We all need forgiveness, and only God can provide the kind of mercy to forgive our sins and restore our relationship with God.

3. Salvation by Grace

Because of our sinfulness, we are separated from God and from one another. We cannot achieve reconciliation by any good deeds, correct beliefs, or religious rituals. Salvation is the state in which we are made right, or whole again, in which we are brought back into union with God. We cannot do anything to earn our salvation. Salvation is a gift offered to us by God through Jesus Christ. We are made right with God by God’s loving and graceful action.

4. Reconciliation in Jesus Christ

It is in Jesus Christ that we are offered divine forgiveness and mercy. Jesus uniquely reveals God to us as the source of Love that will not let us go. Jesus is “real God” and “real human being,” God Incarnate (in the flesh), and God-with-us. Though he was sinless, Jesus died for our sins. He suffered humiliation and rejection and died a painful physical death. His resurrection is our source of hope. In the Resurrection, the Suffering Servant becomes the Triumphant Lord. The Resurrection is about faith, not proof. It is our source of hope.

5. Renewal through the Holy Spirit

God is Creator, Savior, and also the Life-Renewer. The presence of the Holy Spirit brings new life. Although we can experience this Spirit within us, the Spirit is not confined to the interior life. It is also outside of the human experience. That is why Christian spirituality is not self-centered, but God-centered and Christ-centered. The Spirit is present in this world, in its ordinary events and in good and bad times.

6. Authority of Scripture

Jesus Christ is the Logos, the Living Word of God. The Holy Scriptures are the written word which bear witness to him. In reaction to abuses in the Roman Church, the early reformers cried, “*Sola scriptura!*” – Scripture alone is the source and test of true belief and the most authoritative witness to Jesus as the Christ. Yes, there are other sources of religious authority, such as the inner experience and the traditions of Church teaching, but we rely on sound and strong biblical interpretation as the primary guide for our faith. We value Bible study and biblical scholarship. We strive to love God with our minds, remembering that, “*Faith seeks understanding.*”

5. Statement of Faith

Most people have an interest in what a church believes because churches have a wide variety of beliefs that dictate its doctrine.

Every church should have a statement of faith or belief statement. This is where it is communicated what the church’s core beliefs are and corresponding scripture that supports their faith.

6. Strategic Objectives

Churches should invest the time and resources to develop a strategy and [strategic plan](#) for achieving its mission.

These strategic goals should be shared with members so they can embrace, financially support and provide the labor to help pull it off.

This also helps new members understand the mission in practical steps.

7. What the Church Expects From Members

This point should be communicated *tactfully* and is intended to help new members understand the concepts of spiritual development, giving, serving and participation in church events and programs.

For example, if your church takes attendance at the weekly service, explain the process and why it is important to participate by completing an attendance card or using a [church’s mobile app](#) to sign in.

This type of communication is important because this might be a new cultural experience for someone coming from a church that does not do this.

8. What Members Can Expect From The Church

Take some time to explain how the church can support members and how to access that support.

For example, if the church offers counseling services, explain what services are available and the intention and limitations of those services. This will help to manage the expectations when a member calls for help.

Also explain what, when and how the church shares information with its members. Help them understand the [church communication process](#) so they can watch for when information is shared.

For example, the church might want to make members aware of the [annual church budget](#). This could mean explaining the process to notify members of a [church business meeting](#) and what communication tools (email, text, [church app](#), website, mail) are used to spread the word.

9. FAQ

Spend some time putting together a frequently asked questions page for members. Share things like:

- Who to call for {blank}.
- What do I do if {blank}.
- How do I find out about {blank}.
- Who is in charge of {blank}.
- What {blank} are offered.

Put this information together as a hand out, go over the highlights and let them take this home to reference later.

10. Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are the labor engine of the church and without them most churches would not be able to pull off their weekend services.

Take some time to explain the different volunteer roles and make the case for involvement. Do a mini-session on the importance of serving and explain the [process to become a volunteer](#). Have volunteer packets available to make it easy to take the first step!

[Getting people involved in the local church](#) can be a challenge. However, ministries that understand the importance of connecting with members, have found success in gaining this involvement. They have also learned to create a membership process with the intention of getting a commitment and support from people who have decided to make the church their home.

Interviewing New or Prospective Members

What Do We Need To Know In Order To Minister Sensitively ?

1. What has been the history of their religious experience? Church involvement?

- A. Can they recall especially positive experiences of church? Negative experiences?
- B. Do they recall memorable experiences of worship? Why memorable ?
- C. When have they experienced "real community"?
- D. Were there occasions when a particular Bible passage "spoke" to them ?
- E. Have they found it more helpful to study the Bible alone or in a group?
- F. Have they found any particular spiritual disciplines helpful?
- G. Can they recall particular times when they "grew spiritually"?

2. Learnings from their life experiences:

- A. What accomplishments throughout their life have been especially satisfying?
- B. What do those accomplishments reveal about their God given gifts/talents?
- C. What do they enjoy doing most? Find most rewarding?
- D. When and for what have they experienced affirmation from others?
- E. What do they currently do all week long? What is fulfilling about it? Frustrating?

3. What are their hopes and aspirations?

- A. What are their personal goals for the future?
- B. What expectations do they have of the church?
- C. In what ways would they like to be involved?
- D. In what ways do they aspire to grow as disciples?
- E. What are their hopes/fears for the future of society?
- F. What are their hopes/fears for the future of children?...grandchildren?

Six Central Beliefs of the Reformed Tradition

1. Sovereignty of God
 - ◇ There is no part of life that is separate from God
 - ◇ Every human being at every moment has to do with the living God
 - ◇ Human life is rooted in the will and intention of God
 - ◇ The Glory of God and God's purposes in the world are more important than the salvation of one's own soul.
2. The Authority of Scripture
 - ◇ The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule of faith and practice
 - ◇ The Bible is to be interpreted in light of its witness to God's work of reconciliation in Christ (*BoC 9.29*)
3. The Lordship of Jesus Christ
 - ◇ Christ alone is deserving of our allegiance and devotion
 - ◇ The presence of God in Jesus Christ makes more sense out of life, and gives more meaning to life than any other revelation
4. Justification by Faith
 - ◇ We are put right with God by grace through faith alone and not by any thing we are, believe, or do
 - ◇ Note: the opposite of justification by faith takes two forms: *works righteousness* (where we earn our salvation by being good) and *beliefs righteousness* (where we earn our salvation by believing the right things) - both of which put the responsibility for salvation in humans, not God
5. The Priesthood of All Believers
 - ◇ All persons have equal access to God
 - ◇ No priest (minister) can answer for any human being
 - ◇ Believers have a right and responsibility to answer for themselves and for their neighbors before God
 - ◇ There is no qualitative distinction between clergy and lay, sacred and secular, Sunday Christianity and work - week life
6. The Fellowship of the Church
 - ◇ You can't be a Christian by yourself; Christianity is corporate as well as personal
 - ◇ Love of neighbor is the truest test of orthodoxy and doctrine

The Reformed Motto

Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda

- The Church reformed and always reforming
- Or, the Church reformed and always to be reformed

Comparison to Other Traditions

- Polity
 - ◇ Reformed: governance by clergy and elders in representative democracy
 - ◇ Episcopalian: hierarchical authority through bishops
 - ◇ Baptist: Congregational: authority vested in individual congregations
- Lord's Supper
 - ◇ Catholic: bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus
 - ◇ Lutheran: the substance of the bread and wine coexists with the body and blood of Christ
 - ◇ Reformed: bread and wine are unchanged, but we are lifted by the Holy Spirit into the presence of Christ, and share the meal with all the saints.

THE PRESBYTERIAN/REFORMED TRADITION

Reformed Tradition in Historical Context

- Made in the Image of God
- Covenant Children of God through Abraham (Jews)
- Adopted Children of God through Christ (Christians)
- One Body of Christ (The One, Holy, Universal, Catholic Church)
- Roman Catholic Christians
- Protestant Christian
- Reformed Christians
- Presbyterian Christians PC(USA)

The Protestant Reformation

- Reforming the Roman Catholic Church
- Martin Luther challenged the abuses of the church system
 - ◊ Indulgences - salvation by works
 - ◊ Scriptures interpreted only by clergy
- Church Authority vs. Scriptural Authority
- Return to Grace alone, Faith alone, Scripture alone, Christ

The Reformed Reformation

- Developed by Swiss reformers in the sixteenth century
 - ◊ Ulrich Zwingli
 - ◊ John Calvin (Frenchman who made his home in Geneva)
- Became alternative to Lutherans and Anabaptists

Major Beliefs of the Catholic (Universal Church) Tradition

- One holy, catholic, and apostolic Church
- Recognition of canonical Scriptures
- Formation and adoption of essential tenants through the ecumenical creeds
 - ◊ Nicene Creed - personhood of Jesus Christ as both human and divine, and the reality of the Holy Spirit
 - ◊ Apostles' Creed - One God in three persons (Trinity) and God as creator of heaven and earth

Major Beliefs of the Protestant Tradition

- God's grace in Jesus Christ is revealed in Scripture
- Grace alone - God's gift
- Faith alone - not our works
- Scripture alone - no other authority

Four Major Affirmations of the Reformed Faith

1. Election of God's people not only for salvation but also for service
2. Covenant life together marked by disciplined concern for order in the church according to God's Word
3. Faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks proper use of the gifts of God's creation
4. Recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God.

STEPS TOWARD READINESS FOR REVIVAL

by Dr. James A. Forbes
(Union Theological Seminary, New York)

- 1) Pray each morning, mid-day, and night, that God will send the kind of revival which is needed by you, your family, the Church, and the community.
- 2) Set aside a special time each day for Bible reading and meditation.
- 3) Do a personal spiritual inventory--
 - a. Describe the kind of person God wants you to be.
 - b. List some of the gifts God has given you which may be used in the service of the Kingdom.
 - c. Identify the ways God desires to use your life.
 - d. Identify what stands between you and the will of God.
- 4) Take definite action toward stronger Christian commitment--
 - a. As much as possible, change the things in your life which hinder your spiritual progress.
 - b. Put into God's hands the things too hard for you.
- 5) Find a person or persons with whom you can share your spiritual aspirations and prayerfully support each other toward the realization of your goals for growth.
- 6) Enter into a period of special attentiveness to what the Lord is trying to say to you. Keep alert at all times to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- 7) Turn your care and concern to the needs of others, especially those whom the Lord puts on your heart. Let God use you as an instrument of encouragement. Speak to people, as you are led, about God's love and power to transform and enrich our lives.
- 8) Seek to nourish your mind and spirit with things that are uplifting. Through prayer, inspirational reading, meditation and fasting, purify the inner chambers of your heart.
- 9) Begin to make plans for the kind of future into which you believe the Lord is calling you and your Church.
- 10) Maintain an attitude of gratitude; use every opportunity to give thanks and praise for God's many blessings.



"God loves you . . . but don't let it go to your heads."

1. Give your full name, and describe how your parents decided upon that name.
2. What is the farthest place from here you have ever been?
3. What is the best thing that has happened to you in the past year?
4. Describe one church or worship related experience that has had special meaning or significance for you.
5. Share the story of a difficult moment in life (it may be a personal family or friendship experience) when you saw "God works for good for those who love him."
6. If you had to describe the way you feel about God right now using only one of these terms listed below, which term would you use?

Father	Friend	Distant	Mother
Judge	Loving	Mysterious	Awesome
Almighty	Comforter	Lord	Gracious

Theology

1. God is revealed in "three persons", and therefore referred to as the _____ God.
2. Within this God-head in three persons, Presbyterians tend to focus their theology and worship on the person of God the _____.
3. Because of this focus, our theology is often identified as _____-centric rather than _____-centric or _____-centric.
4. We place a great deal of importance on the all-powerful nature of God, stressing the _____ of God.
5. We believe that God is constantly at work in the world and in our lives. Therefore our theology cannot be static and is referred to as _____ Theology.
6. Because God is constantly at work in the world, we refer to God as a God of _____.
7. We emphasize very strongly the _____ relationship between God and his people. This relationship was established through Abraham to the Jews and the through Jesus to all believers.
8. We administer two sacraments in the church that confirm God's covenant of grace. They are _____ and _____.
9. We believe that we are justified by _____ through _____ and not by works.
10. According to the first question of the shorter catechism, "the chief end of man is to _____ God and _____ Him forever."
11. Because praising God is so important, we stress the necessity of _____, not only on Sunday mornings, but as a part of everyday life.
12. We believe that loving God involves not only our heart, but our mind. Therefore, we emphasize the importance of Christian _____.
13. Worship, study, fellowship and service are all important aspects of the church. But all of these aspects point to the one reason for the church's existence: The church has a _____ to fulfill.
14. The five basic doctrines of strict Calvinism can be identified by the acronym TULIP. What do the five letters stand for?
 T _____
 U _____
 L _____
 I _____
 P _____
15. Because we emphasize the role of God's election in the salvation of God's people, Presbyterians are often known for their doctrine of _____.

MEET THE PRESBYTERIANS

Early History

1. The Church began as one, universal, holy, _____ Church
2. Protestant churches grew out of what great event which occurred in 1517?

3. Who is considered to be the Father of Presbyterianism? _____
4. John Knox, a great Presbyterian leader who greatly affected the future of American Presbyterianism, lived and worked in what country? _____
5. The earliest and most basic confessions written by Presbyterians are the _____ Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter _____.
6. The "Presbyterian Rebellion" is another name for the _____ Revolution.
7. What social issue caused the division between the Northern and Southern Presbyterian churches in the 1800's? _____
What theological issue? _____
8. What is the full name of our denomination now? _____.

Church Government

1. _____ is the head of the Church.
2. The Greek word "presbyter" (from which our name comes) translates into what word in English?

3. What is the name of the governing body that guides the local church? _____
4. Some local churches also have a Board of _____, which helps carry on the visitation.
5. Some local churches also have a separate Board of _____ to manage legal issues, property and/or finance. (If not a separate board, the Session assumes this function.)
6. There are three higher governing bodies above the level of the local church. They are called the _____, _____ and _____.
7. Presbyterians are considered to have a _____ form of government, as opposed to a congregational or hierarchical form.
8. Presbyterians always do things _____ and in order. (1 Corinthians 14:40)
9. The main book that guides the Church is the _____.
10. The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church consists of two parts:
The rules and guidelines of the government in the Book of _____.
The historical statements of belief in the Book of _____.

Your Tree of Faith



Drawing by George Marsden

Which character reminds you the most of yourself in your spiritual life right now?

Why?

Which character represents where you want to be in your spiritual life?

What goals can you set to accomplish that?

THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

(as outlined in the Book of Order of the PCUSA)

THE CHURCH

F-1.0201 The Authority of Christ

Almighty God, who raised Jesus Christ from the dead and set him above all rule and authority, has given to him all power in heaven and on earth, not only in this age but also in the age to come. God has put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has made Christ Head of the Church, which is his body. The Church's life and mission are a joyful participation in Christ's ongoing life and work.

F-1.0301 The Church Is the Body of Christ

The Church is the body of Christ. Christ gives to the Church all the gifts necessary to be his body. The Church strives to demonstrate these gifts in its life as a community in the world (1 Cor. 12:27-28):
The Church is to be a community of faith, entrusting itself to God alone, even at the risk of losing its life.
The Church is to be a community of hope, rejoicing in the sure and certain knowledge that, in Christ, God is making a new creation. This new creation is a new beginning for human life and for all things. The Church lives in the present on the strength of that promised new creation.
The Church is to be a community of love, where sin is forgiven, reconciliation is accomplished, and the dividing walls of hostility are torn down.
The Church is to be a community of witness, pointing beyond itself through word and work to the good news of God's transforming grace in Christ Jesus its Lord.

F-1.0303 The Notes of the Reformed Church

Where Christ is, there is the true Church. Since the earliest days of the Reformation, Reformed Christians have marked the presence of the true Church wherever:
 the Word of God is truly preached and heard,
 the Sacraments are rightly administered, and
 ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly ministered.

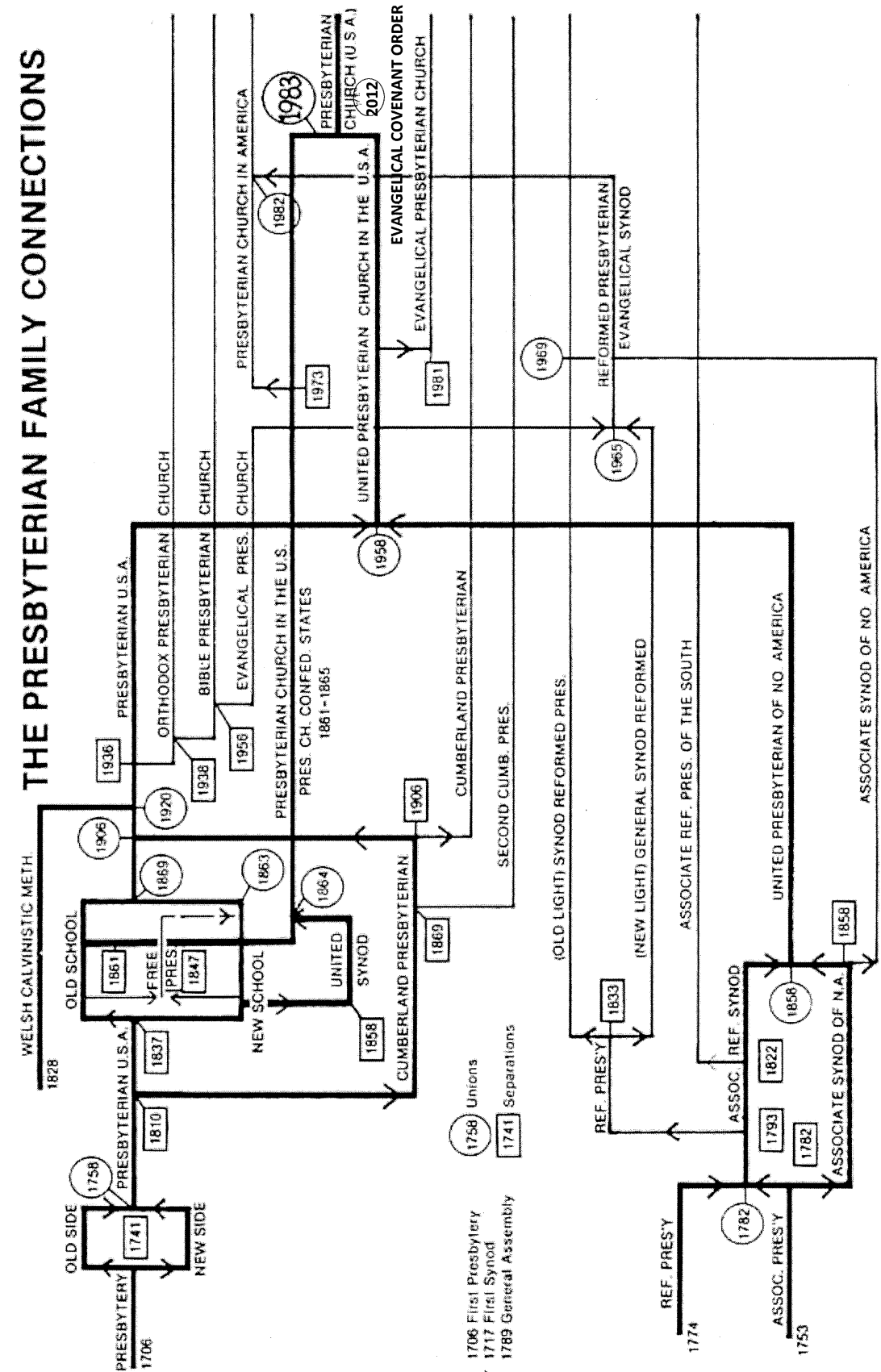
In our own time, we affirm that, in the power of the Spirit, the Church is faithful to the mission of Christ as it:
Proclaims and hears the Word of God,
 responding to the promise of God's new creation in Christ, and
 inviting all people to participate in that new creation;

Administers and receives the Sacraments,
 welcoming those who are being engrafted into Christ,
 bearing witness to Christ's saving death and resurrection,
 anticipating the heavenly banquet that is to come, and
 committing itself in the present to solidarity with the marginalized and the hungry; and

Nurtures a covenant community of disciples of Christ,
 living in the strength of God's promise and
 giving itself in service to God's mission.

F-1.0304 The Great Ends of the Church

The great ends of the Church are:
 the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
 the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
 the maintenance of divine worship;
 the preservation of the truth;
 the promotion of social righteousness; and
 the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.



Our Presbyterian Heritage

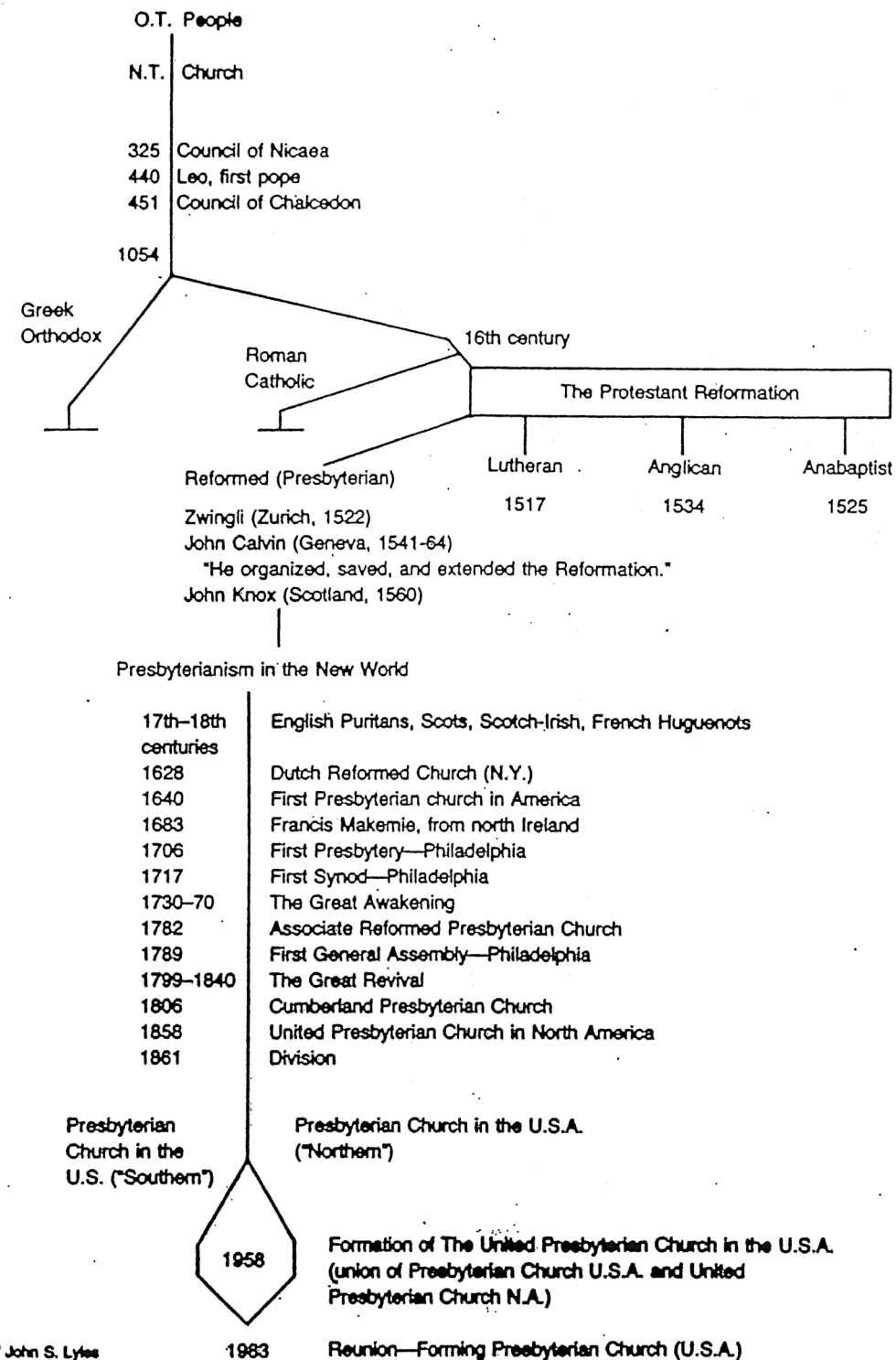


Chart by permission of John S. Lyles

MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

G-1.0304 The Ministry of Members

Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and a privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ's mission. A faithful member bears witness to God's love and grace and promises to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ's Church. Such involvement includes:

- proclaiming the good news in word and deed,
- taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation,
- lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support,
- studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life,
- supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,
- demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,
- responding to God's activity in the world through service to others,
- living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,
- working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment,
- participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and
- reviewing and evaluating regularly the integrity of one's membership, and considering ways in which one's participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful.



QUESTIONS CONFIRMING OUR CALLING AS CHURCH MEMBERS

Membership Questions

- Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving his displeasure, and without hope save in his sovereign mercy?
- Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and depend upon him alone for salvation as he is offered in the Gospel?
- Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
- Do you promise to serve Christ in his Church by supporting and participating in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
- Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to further its purity and peace?

What Do We Expect of Our Members?

Many congregations suffer from an absence of meaningful expectations of church members. Often members lose interest and become inactive because they have not been challenged to grow, make a difference or be a living part of the Body of Christ. What are the norms for membership in your congregation? Please check all those that apply!

1. To support the congregation financially?
2. To tithe?
3. To give a percentage of their income?
4. To attend regularly on Sunday morning?
5. To intentionally pursue their spiritual growth through Bible study, prayer and other spiritual disciplines?
6. To conform to our congregational culture? (i.e. like the hymns we like and accept the service the way it is)
7. To discover, develop and exercise their God given gifts and talents in the life of the church?
8. To exercise their God given gifts in the workplace, home and community?
9. To discover in what they are doing all week long a "calling" and not just a job?
10. To talk about the work of God in their lives and share their faith with others?
11. To invite their friends and family members to church?
12. To accept the norms of the congregation as to how we deal with our differences?
13. To serve on a committee?
14. To participate in a small group that will provide nurture and pastoral care?
15. To show up at Christmas and Easter?

4. **Those outside the congregation will view the church as providing a critical service and being a vital part of the health and well being and spiritual direction of the community.**
 - Our love will lead us to expand our mission opportunities in the community and world.
 - Ministry to those outside the church walls and beyond the membership roles will be the focus of our concern and our giving.
 - Members will find their faith leading them into organizations and positions of leadership where they can positively impact the quality of life in our area.
 - The church will use its skills, knowledge and resources to identify and meet the needs of our Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world.
 - Language, cultural and lifestyle differences will become less important as we engage in caring communication and emphasize the bond of Christ that holds us together in unity.
5. **An atmosphere in which the gospel is naturally exhibited in daily life and persons in the community are consistently invited to become part of the family of Christ will permeate the congregation.**
 - The members of the church will be as friendly and welcoming to strangers as they are to one another.
 - Guests in worship will be warmly received and embraced in the church fellowship .
 - A well planned program for identifying, greeting and assimilating guests into the life of the church will help our guests feel more comfortable and appreciated.
 - Our guests will be blessed by receiving a personal note indicating the church's joy over their presence.
 - Our members will develop the ability and desire to seek out and relate to unchurched people and share their stories of faith with others.
 - The fruits of the Spirit will be witnessed in the life of the congregation.
 - Our basic mission will be to share Christ with the world.
6. **People will experience the reward, blessing and spiritual strength that comes when they utilize all their resources in the development of their faith journey.**
 - An attitude of gratitude will pervade the entire congregation.
 - A deep connection will be made between faith and finances leading people to discover financial freedom in Christ.
 - People will discover how to move beyond a lifestyle that is chaotic, disconnected, and distracted by temptations toward materialism, consumerism and busyness, and learn to give priority to the things that matter most in life.
 - Time commitments and daily scheduling will be examined and rearranged in light of Christ's desires.
 - Members will understand that tithing is not a fund-raising device but an act of faithfulness expressing our love and dedication to God.
 - Persons of all ages will discover, claim and use both their spiritual gifts and natural talents as they exercise their ministry with joy and passion.
 - Those with accumulated assets will recognize their calling to support the future ministry of the church of Jesus Christ through special gifts and bequests.
7. **All members will grow toward a deeper recognition of the importance of prayer in their lives and the Christian community, and they will yearn for a vibrant prayer life.**
 - Education in the basic ministry of prayer will be emphasized.
 - The church will be known in the community as a church with a strong and meaningful prayer ministry.
 - More persons in the church will be involved in small groups with prayer as a focus.
 - Members will learn how to build a ministry of prayer in the workplace, school and neighborhood.
 - Offering public and spontaneous prayer will be something that becomes more and more comfortable as people practice their skills in communicating with God.
 - Special services of healing and wholeness will be offered to the church and community in special times of community or national crises.
 - Those who are homebound will be included as prayer participants as well as prayer recipients.

DREAMS AND VISIONS STATEMENT

These are the desired outcomes for our congregation during the coming years.

1. **Children and youth who attend this church will grow to understand and be committed to a life of discipleship in which they will discover the pure joy of loving and serving Jesus as Savior and Lord.**
 - A strong spiritual foundation will be provided for all children and youth.
 - This ministry will be Bible-based and will emphasize the importance and power of Scripture.
 - The best educational materials and equipment available will be sought out and used.
 - Parents will be well grounded in scripture and be taught how to play the central role in the Christian formation of their children.
 - Committed and loving teachers, advisors and care group leaders will participate in a team ministry approach to faith development.
 - Youth will offer their skills and insight as full participants in the committees and governing boards of the church and presbytery.
 - The entire family will be lead into a deeper and richer relationship with the Triune God.
2. **In worship, hearts will be moved and minds enlightened as we reach out to more people in the community and invite them to experience the presence of the Living God.**
 - A variety of worship styles and settings will be offered in our attempt to proclaim the gospel message to a broader audience.
 - Worship will be designed with thought given to bridging generational, cultural, racial, gender and economic lines.
 - Greater emphasis will be placed upon the importance of the sacraments.
 - Congregational participation will be encouraged in all aspects of worship/worship leadership.
 - Hymns and other musical selections will be selected and taught in ways that will encourage the congregation to sing with energy and gusto.
 - The musical talents and gifts of persons in the congregation and community will be encouraged and shared in our worship and fellowship gatherings.
 - Opportunities will be given for persons to share with others their stories of God's grace.
 - More opportunities for bringing worship into the home will be developed.
3. **People in the congregation will be equipped to fulfill their role as full time disciples and ministers of Jesus Christ.**
 - We will become a congregation comprised of small groups that meet regularly to learn and love, support and serve in the name of the Lord.
 - The educational program will concentrate on proclaiming the basic message of the Christian faith and the Presbyterian/Reformed heritage so that all people will have a solid foundation upon which to base their beliefs.
 - Classes and study groups will move beyond the presentation of information about God and focus on leading persons toward forming relationships with God and others and God's creation.
 - Teachers and leaders will have received training that encourages their competence and confidence and leads them toward conveying the unity and vitality of the congregation.
 - A variety of educational experiences will help lead us to better understand teachings of Jesus.
 - Members will understand and cherish their role as providers of pastoral care to those in need in the church and community.
 - Training will be provided to a new generation of church members that will actively engage in supporting persons with spiritual ministry.

The Nature of Mature Faith

What are the characteristics of a person with mature Christian faith? Based on interviews with theological scholars and denominational executives, open-ended surveys of several hundred adults from the six participating denominations, and reviews of the literature in psychology and religion, we posited that a person of mature faith integrates eight core dimensions of faith. They are:

1. Trusts in God's saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus.
2. Experiences a sense of personal well-being, security, and peace.
3. Integrates faith and life, seeing work, family social relationships, and political choices as part of one's religious life.
4. Seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, and discussion with others.
5. Seeks to be part of a community of believers in which people give witness to their faith and support and nourish one another.
6. Holds life-affirming values, including commitments to racial and general equality, affirmation of cultural and religious diversity, and a personal sense of responsibility for the welfare of others.
7. Advocates social and global change to bring about greater social justice.
8. Serves humanity, consistently and passionately, through acts of love and justice.

From *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Six Protestant Congregations*, The Search Institute, 122 West Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404, March 1990.

SEVEN RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH MEMBERS

Did you know, ordinary church member, that Jesus has given *you* a job? Your church leaders have a special office, to be sure, but so do you. So if Jesus's discipleship program gives every single member a job, what responsibilities come with this job? There are at least seven.

1. Attend Church Regularly

You, as a baptized Christian and ordinary member of a church, are responsible to attend church regularly. Scripture could not be clearer about this fundamental responsibility so that you can give yourself to love and good works and encouragement.

And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, not staying away from our worship meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near. ([Heb. 10:24-25](#))

The stakes are high indeed. After all, if you do not attend, you cannot fulfill the next six responsibilities. Attendance makes everything else possible.

2. Help Preserve the Gospel

You, as a baptized Christian and ordinary member of a church, are responsible for protecting and preserving the gospel and the gospel's ministry in your church.

Think about Paul's "amazement" in Galatians 1: "I am amazed that you are so quickly . . . turning to a different gospel" (v. 6). He upbraids not the pastors, but the members.

What this means, Christian, is that you are responsible to study the gospel and know it. Can you summarize the gospel in 60 seconds or less? Can you explain the relationship between faith and works? Can a person be a Christian and continue to purposefully sin? Why is it important for a Christian to affirm the doctrine of the Trinity? What role do good deeds, fellowship, and hospitality play in promoting a church's gospel ministry?

These are the kinds of questions, Christian, that you are responsible to answer in order to help guard the gospel. Know the gospel, and what the gospel requires in the church's and a Christian's life.

3. Help Affirm Gospel Citizens

You, as a baptized Christian and ordinary member of a church, are responsible for affirming other gospel citizens, other brothers and sisters in Christ in the church.

It involves working to know and be known by your fellow members seven days a week. You cannot affirm and give oversight to a people you don't know, not with integrity anyhow. That doesn't mean you're responsible to know personally every member of your church. We do this work collectively. But look for ways to start including more of your fellow members into the regular rhythm of your life. Paul offers a useful checklist for doing this:

The Four Congregational Sizes

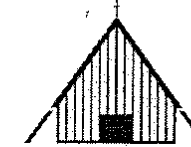
Patriarchal/Matriarchal Under 50 at worship



1. A family with patriarchs/matriarchs.
2. High ownership for survival.
3. Want clergy for traditional care.
4. Clergy succeed when consulting P/M's
5. Very high pastor turnover.
6. Survive by not taking clergy seriously.
7. Assimilate new members by adoption.
8. May grow if one clergy stays long time.
9. Judicatories try to merge/disband.
10. Considered "First Call" parishes, yet toughest place for new pastors just out of seminary, therefore...

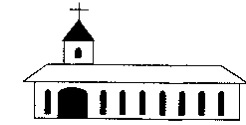
Greener Pastures ⇨

Program 150 – 350 at worship



1. Several lay members, clergy and lay.
2. Lay leadership vital.
3. Clergy still central, but role shifts.
4. Administration: recruiting, planning, training, evaluating, and coordinating.
5. Pastor helps people arrive at consensus.
6. Pastor-Motivator and trust builder.
7. Pastors need to be very clear about their mission, with consensus.
8. Difficult to move from pastoral size to this size without crisis.
9. Need well-designed computerized system to keep track of members, programs.
10. Careful, intentional program of visitor follow-up, new member assimilation.

Pastoral 50 to 150 at worship



1. Pastor is central, relates to everyone.
2. Expectations high, personal.
3. Most churches this size
4. Growth often depends on popularity of pastor.
5. Communication with leaders important.
6. Near 150, demands on pastor become oppressive, delegate or else.
7. Pastor recruits, shepherds new members through assimilation.
8. Can be hard on spouse and children.
9. Blocks to growth: pastor tries to be on intimate level with all, or people insist on it.

We Want, We Need ♦ *Vision of the Future*

Corporate 350 or more at worship



1. High priority on quality.
2. Top notch music.
3. Head of staff spends quality time on sermon preparation and worship planning.
4. Head pastor is unity-stability symbol.
5. Multiple staff collegial, yet diverse.
6. Staff must have fun working together.
7. Leaders generate energy, momentum.
8. Very sophisticated computer system to track members, programs.
9. Visitor follow-up, new member assimilation programs very intentional.
10. Myers-Briggs type variations.

A STATEMENT OF CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS

• We Worship The Living God.

God Almighty, revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of the world. This Triune God is the one true and living God, who will be the center of our devotion, worship and service.

Matthew 3: 16-17, Matthew 28: 19, 2 Corinthians 13: 13/14, Psalm 96: 4-5, Acts 17: 29

• Jesus Is Our Life.

God's love came to earth in Jesus. Through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus restored the relationship with God which sin had broken. Salvation comes by grace through faith in Christ. He alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Jesus is ruler of heaven and earth. We will dedicate our hearts to Jesus as Lord of all.

John 1: 1-10, John 3: 16, Luke 2: 11, 2 Corinthians 5: 19, Philippians 2: 10, Ephesians 2: 5, 8, Acts 4: 12, John 14: 6

• The Bible Is Our Source of Truth.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the inspired Word of God. They serve as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, and are our source for doctrine, for guidance, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. We will read and study these Scriptures, for they are our only rule of faith and life.

2 Timothy 3: 16, Psalm 119:105, John 20: 30-31, Isaiah 40: 8, Psalm 19: 7-11

• Faith Will Transform Our Lives.

God loves us, accepts us as we are, and transforms us into the people we were intended to be. As disciples of Christ we are to lead a life worthy of our calling, as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. We are to bear the fruits of the Spirit, expressing love through service in God's kingdom and seeking obedience to God's will. We will strive to grow in understanding and faithfulness, adjusting our lives to reflect God's glory.

Ephesians 4: 1, Romans 12:1-2, John 15: 10, Galatians 5: 19-23, Colossians 3: 5, I Timothy 1: 10, Romans 1: 26-27

• We Are Part of a Christian Family.

Each person who confesses faith in Jesus as Lord receives new life and salvation. Faith is a personal decision, but it is not a private event. Christians are called to become actively involved in the Christian community through the Church, the Body of Christ on earth, and to make their faith public to the world. In thought, word and deed, we will declare our commitment to Christ through the community of the Church.

Romans 10:9, I Corinthians 12: 27, Acts 2: 42-47

• The Spirit Guides Our Mission to the World.

The Holy Spirit gives individuals within the Body of Christ a variety of gifts to equip the Church for its work and ministry. God intends us to be the light of the world, sharing the good news of the love of Christ so that all might come to a fuller knowledge of God's eternal purposes. We will use our gifts to build a Church that is a model of God's kingdom on earth. We will be known for our love, marked by our unity, and determined to have an impact on the world through our outreach and mission.

1 Corinthians 12: 2-4, Ephesians 4: 5-6,12, John 13: 34-35, John 17: 20-26

• We Have a Long Way to Grow.

As God's elect, holy and beloved, we are to clothe ourselves with kindness, humility and meekness, for we still sin and fall short of God's glory, and cannot claim to know the will of God fully. We are to study and pray, worship and serve, and together discern what God is calling us to believe and to do. In love, we will run this race of faith, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, always looking to Jesus as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

1 Corinthians 13: 9-12, Colossians 3: 12-17, Romans 3: 23, Hebrews 12: 1-2

Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lack diligence; be fervent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer.

Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality. ([Rom. 12:10-13](#))

How are you doing on this list?

4. Attend Members' Meetings

Show up consistently for members' meetings. Different churches make decisions in different ways, which is fine. But whatever venue your church uses for making decisions, you should be there to be part of the meetings..

This is Christ's body. You are a member of it. You are responsible for helping to move the ministry and mission forward. You cannot do your job if you don't show up to get involved in the process your church uses.

Admittedly, sometimes meetings have a bad rap. But by God's grace, you can help create a church where the members' meetings feel like warm, encouraging, and engaging family gatherings. Part of that depends on the leadership in those meetings and how they plan it. Part of that depends on you.

5. Disciple Other Church Members

You, as a baptized Christian and ordinary member are responsible for discipling other church members.

Remember [Ephesians 4:15-16](#). The church builds itself up in love as each part does its work. You have work to do to build up the church. And part of that includes the ministry of words. A few verses later, Paul says, "Speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another" (v. 25). Speak truth to them, and help them to grow. Our words should be "good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear" ([Eph. 4:29](#)). Also, make yourself available to be spoken to. Are you willing to listen?

Basic Christianity involves building up other believers. It is a part of fulfilling the Great Commission and making disciples. Speaking of . . .

6. Share the Gospel with Outsiders

If through union with Christ, God has called you into the priesthood of all believers, your whole life should reflect the gospel in word and deed. You are an ambassador. Paul's charge and example is worth repeating here:

He has committed the message of reconciliation to us. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, certain that God is appealing through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God." ([2 Cor. 5:19b-20](#))

Every Christian has been reconciled, and thus every Christian has received this message of reconciliation. Therefore, we plead and we pray for sinners to be reconciled to God.

This, too, is a part of your job. The command to "Go and make disciples" belongs to you ([Matt. 28:19](#)).

7. Follow Your Leaders

It's the job of the pastors or elders to equip the saints for the work of ministry: for these previous six responsibilities ([Eph. 4:12](#)).

Christian, this means that you're responsible to avail yourself of the elders' instruction and counsel. Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching you've learned from them ([2 Tim. 1:13](#)). Follow their teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, love, and endurance, along with their persecutions and sufferings ([2 Tim. 3:10–11](#)). When they ask for help, provide it. Before they have to ask for help, offer it.

Be the wise son or daughter in Proverbs who takes the path of wisdom, prosperity, and life by fearing the Lord and heeding instruction. It is better than jewels and gold.

Authority Brings Responsibility

The Bible gives final authority and therefore responsibility to the gathered congregation. With authority comes responsibility. By joining a church, you become responsible for what your church teaches, for every single member's discipleship, and for the church's mission into the world.

More than 60 Minutes

Friend, by joining this church, you will become jointly responsible for whether or not this congregation continues to faithfully proclaim the gospel. Will you sit back and stay anonymous, doing little more than passively showing up for 60 minutes on Sundays? Or will you jump in with the hard and rewarding work of studying the gospel, building relationships, making disciples, and sharing in mission? We need more hands for the harvest, so we hope you'll join us in that work.

This excerpt is adapted from Jonathan Leeman's new book, *Understanding the Congregation's Authority*. Copyright 2016 by B&H Publishing Group.

COVENANT OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

I acknowledge that my walk of faith has called me to this particular church at this particular time. In my desire to offer my highest and best for the sake of Christ, I, as a member of this Church, and the Body of Christ in the world, make the following covenant before God and my brothers and sisters in Christ:

- 1. I will be faithful in my attendance of worship --**
sharing in the corporate adoration and praise of God by participating regularly in the services offered through the church.
- 2. I will participate in the Christian Education and Fellowship Events of the church --**
Seeking out opportunities for spiritual growth, nurture, and fellowship that allow the upbuilding of faith within myself and the entire body of Christ.
- 3. I will volunteer my time, energy, and gifts --**
seeking opportunities for involvement in the life of the church and serving in positions of leadership that provide for the ongoing work of the church within the congregation and the community.
- 4. I will offer my financial resources in support of the church's ministry --**
giving regularly and faithfully to the financial support of the church and to its missions through the annual pledge and other special offerings, as the Lord provides the opportunity.
- 5. I will continue in an attitude of prayer --**
praying regularly and earnestly for myself, for others, and for the church.
- 6. I will seek out the wisdom and guidance of God's Holy Word --**
Participating in the reading and study of Scripture on a regular basis, discerning God's will and way for my life.
- 7. I will dedicate myself to Christ's mission in the world --**
Looking for opportunities to reach out in love and compassion to those in need, Offering tangible expressions of God's grace and concern.
- 8. I will share the good news of Christ and His Church --**
Always prepared to tell the story of what Jesus has done for me, is doing through this church, and can do in the lives of others.
- 9. I will model Christian discipleship in everyday life --**
attempting in all aspects of life to present a witness to the reality of Jesus Christ, by living righteously, promoting justice, and exhibiting love for both God and neighbor.

Covenant comments:

Name

Date