

Bellwether Membership Covenant

Our Verse:

John 10:16 - "There are others, not of this fold. I must go to them. They will hear My voice and there will be one flock with One Shepherd.

Our Values:

1) Seeing a Big God

Our worldview should be a Big God in all situations, all relationships, all encounters. Easy to believe, yet tough to live. It's why we say: "there are no accidents in Christianity" (Romans 8: 28, 37-39). This should lead our affections to worship, reverence, and awe of a mighty God. Hearts change when we see God's grace invade the darkness of this world through Christ's crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension (2 Corinthians 4). Changed hearts are the key to changed lives that glorify Christ in every way.

2) Love the Other Person

Love is a cultural value, Christian or not. It's easy to love those you like. It's even easier to love those whom you want to like you. Yet as Christ followers, we are called to love the other person. The one in the shadows, the one who's not cool, the one whom you get nothing in return for your kindness. Jesus modeled this. He loved lepers, prostitutes, and tax collectors. We should too. God's love is gritty and messy and goes to the gutters for the broken and the lost. It's why our theme verse is John 10:16. Jesus goes to others not of this fold. We follow.

3) Go to the World

Jesus is clear. Go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28: 19). Jesus' Go literally means "as you go." You don't have to go to Italy or India. As you go to school, to dinner, to work, to baseball games, make disciples there. He says in Acts 1:8 - "You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Some of us are called to go further: Honduras, Italy, India, and elsewhere. Jesus gives us supernatural courage to live our faith boldly. We can be His witnesses at any place, at any time, with any person. Our life is His mission.

Our Membership Covenant

Bellwether Church membership covenant is written *out of love* for our church body. *Our hope* is each member discovers and experiences *true joy* found in Jesus Christ our Lord, in service to His Kingdom locally & globally.

This membership covenant is a teaching document with 3 aims:

- Show what the Bible requires & expects for elders and members of Bellwether Church.
- Show what we believe at Bellwether Church

- Show how we can grow together in Christ.
- These aims connect with the covenant's purpose to give an easy explanation of Scripture in the hope Bellwether Church grows in the grace & truth of Jesus Christ.

Bellwether Church's Membership Covenant has a section on:

- 1) What is the Church?
- 2) What is a Covenant?
- 3) What do we believe?
- 4) What do we emphasize?
- 5) What are Elders?
- 6) What are Members?

1) What is the Church?

The Church exists to show the glory of God & be used by the Holy Spirit for His Kingdom throughout the world. Those who trust & follow Jesus are part of something greater than ourselves. We are invited to be part of God's redemptive plan for the world.

From the beginning, God has been creating and calling people for His purposes in His story of redemption & reconciliation. Although creation still suffers the curse of Genesis 3, the Gospel is the means which the world is being made right. The Gospel carries the promise of ultimate renewal, a restoration more glorious than Eden. Thus, believers wait for the return of Christ.

The Church universal is all Christians everywhere. It is the means by which God is fulfilling His purposes in the world (2 Corinthians 5: 17-20). It is being used to write God's story of redemption & restoration.

A local church body is a group of believers in a particular place. An opportunity to join a local church is thus much more than a commitment to come on Sunday's or be involved. It is a sacred call to be part of God's redemption in raising His Kingdom in the darkness of our fallen world by the power of the Holy Spirit in the light of His Son, Jesus Christ.

In the Bible, the Church is called:

- The gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (Ephesians 2:19).
- The bride of Christ (Revelation 21: 2, 9).
- The body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12: 12-31).

1 Corinthians 12 speaks of many members in the same body. As a human body is dependent of individual members to live, so the body of Christ requires each member to serve. The Scriptures say: "the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need for you'" (1 Corinthians 12:21). Likewise, a member of the church cannot say to another member he or she

is unnecessary. We all have different gifts given by the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:3-8). We need each other.

Membership at Bellwether is to be part of Jesus' family, a glimpse of the eternal house of God. All members are united to Christ and to each other. Unity within the church is shown in love for God and a love for others, both those within the family and those who are not (1 John 4: 7-21). Christians are expected to display His Gospel within His church in a manner worthy of Christ (Ephesians 4:1).

2) What is a covenant?

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

The covenant of Bellwether Church is comprised of general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians should submit to Scripture, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. These are universal obligations for Christ followers regardless of any failure on the local church to live up to her covenant obligations.

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

While focusing primarily in language on the responsibilities between the individual parties, the corporate church body, her elders and her individual members, the covenant is first and foremost an acknowledgement of general Christian beliefs and an agreement to grow as disciples for God's glory and the good of the Church.

3) What do we believe?

The following beliefs are core, orthodox beliefs from a biblical and historical perspective. While a full understanding and ability to articulate these beliefs is not required, the rejection of any one of these beliefs disqualifies one from membership at Bellwether Church.

We believe....

- The Scriptures are true, authoritative, and sufficient (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Peter 1:20-12).
- There is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6 and 46:9-10; John 17:3; I Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 Timothy 2:5).
- The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. The Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit. The Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 45:6-7; Psalm 110:1; Matthew 3:13-17; Matthew 28:17-20; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6).
- I am, along with all humanity (Christ excluded), am by birth and action a sinner (We recognize that Adam and Eve were not “born” and were not created sinful; rather, they became sinful through their action). (Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; Romans 5:8, 12-21; Romans 7:18; Ephesians 2:1-3).
- The deserved penalty for sin is death, both physical and spiritual (Genesis 2:15-17, Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12; Romans 6:23; James 1:14-15).
- Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, was born of a virgin, and is both fully God and fully human (Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:52; John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3).
- Jesus Christ died as my substitute to pay the penalty for my sin (John 1:29; John 10:1-18; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 3:18).
- Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead (Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-53; John 1:20-21:25; 1 Corinthians 15:12-34).
- Jesus Christ physically ascended into heaven and will one day return (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7).
- There will be a future physical resurrection of the dead. Those who trust in Jesus Christ alone will be raised to eternal glory. Those who do not trust in Jesus Christ alone will be raised to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:31-46, John 5: 28-29, Acts 24:15).

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- Only by trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone can I be reconciled to God and experience true life and joy (John 3:18, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Romans 3:21-26; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).

4) What do we emphasize?

The doctrines expressed above in “We Believe” are recognized as universal and primary within the Church. There are secondary beliefs about which the leadership of Bellwether Church is passionate. Complete agreement is not required for membership. It should be known Bellwether Church will preach, teach, and counsel with these theological convictions.

- Divine sovereignty
- The gifts of the Holy Spirit
- The role of men and women in the church and home
- Importance of baptism by water

In this community we hope all members understand the importance of our biblical obligation to preserve unity and peace. We do so by adhering to our primary beliefs and not being divisive about secondary beliefs.

5) What are Elders?

Elders are shepherds and overseers of a local church, entrusted with protecting, leading, equipping, and caring for the corporate church body and her individual members. The following is an extensive overview of requirements for elders found in Scripture.

Elders covenant to...

- Appoint elders and deacons according to the criteria assigned in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- Prayerfully seek God’s will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following of the Spirit (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- Care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth, and love (Matthew 28:16-20, Ephesians 4:15-16, Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- Provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scriptures (Acts 20:27-28; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:1).
- Equip the members of the church for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).

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- Be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matthew 7:15, Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).
 - Lovingly exercise discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined, and the health for the church as a whole (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).
 - Set an example for and together join all members in growing to become a disciple and leader for Christ, and by Christ. (Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:3).

6) What are Deacons?

The deacon office exists to relieve the elders of distractions and pressures that would divert them from the ministry of the Word and prayer and the general, visionary oversight of the church. The word “deacon” comes from the Greek word *diakonos* that has the general meaning of “servant”.

Deacons covenant to...

- Serve the church in very practical acts of table-service for food and hospitality events (Acts 6:1-6)
- Help with dire needs arising from hunger, thirst, alienation, sickness, emergencies or unusual pressures with a benevolence fund or other material support (Matthew 25:44, 2 Timothy 1:16-18, Philemon 13, Hebrews 6:10)
- Assist the elders in practical needs of ministry such as care for church property, communion and baptismal needs, greeting, budget and personnel needs, or any “service” that would support and promote the ministry of the Word (1 Peter 4:10-11, Romans 15:25-26, Acts 11:29, 2 Corinthians 8:4, 2 Corinthians 9:12, Ephesians 4:12)
- Set an example for and together join all members in growing to become a disciple and leader for Christ, and by Christ. (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2-13, Matthew 20:26, John 12:26).

7) What are members?

As those who experience the grace of life change by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ in growing together. We do

so by pursuing certain attitudes and actions and rejecting others. Scripture refers to this reality as “living by the Spirit” (Romans 8).

These actions are NOT to be an addition to biblical obligations of a believer. Instead, they are to be areas where we help one another grow together and become the people Jesus Christ wants us to be.

Together, we covenant to...

- Submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- Pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and practice of spiritual disciplines (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22).
- Follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church:
 - By being baptized after my conversion
 - By regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through Communion.
- Regularly participate in the life of Bellwether Church by attending weekly services, engaging in gospel-centered community and serving those within and outside of this church (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14).
- Steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts, and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service, and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- By God’s grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, and by the love and help of Bellwether members and elders, begin to pursue and grow in holiness where my life can be an act of worship for Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:13-16, 1 Peter 4:1-3). Believers can pray and help one another put certain actions and attitudes to death while stirring love and good deeds through the Spirit. Below are a few examples of actions addressed in the Scriptures:
 - Pursue complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity means, among other things, that regardless of marital status, pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, premarital sex, and pornography (Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, Ephesians 5:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4).
 - Seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation at Bellwether Church before pursuing

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- divorce from my spouse (Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11; for the role of the church in the process of divorce, see Paul's concern for the resolution of legal matters within the assembly of the church in 1 Corinthians 6).
- Pursue to refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (Romans 1:28-32; Romans 13:3; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18).
 - Take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions from situations that could present a stumbling block to another (1 Corinthians 8:1-13).
 - In addressing conflict with other members or those outside the church:
 - Follow the biblical procedure for church discipline where sin is evident in another - the hope always being repentance and restoration (Matthew 18: 15-17, 1 Corinthians 5)
 - Receiving righteous and living discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11).
 - Do the following when I sin;
 - Confess my sin to God and to fellow believers,
 - Repent and seek help to put my sin to death (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10).
 - Submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5).
 - Do the following should I leave the church for righteous reasons;
 - Notify appropriate staff members.
 - Seek another church with which I can carry out my Biblical responsibilities as a believer.

To this we covenant as members of Bellwether Church who are growing together in Christ, for Christ, and by Christ.

Signatures

Date
