

Appendix I. Membership Covenant

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

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

Each of these functions is in accordance with the document's overall vision to provide an accessible explanation of the Scriptures in hopes that Welsh Baptist Church would grow in the grace and truth of Jesus Christ. The Welsh Baptist Church membership covenant is comprised of a section on the Church, the nature of covenants, a statement of basic belief, a statement of biblical doctrine, the obligations of Welsh Baptist Church elders to the Welsh Baptist Church body and the obligations of members to the Welsh Baptist Church body.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

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

Since the beginning, God has been creating and calling forth His people for the display of His glory in a grand narrative of redemption and reconciliation. Though creation now suffers the curse of Genesis 3, the gospel is the means by which the world is being made right. The gospel also carries with it the promise of ultimate renewal, a restoration even more glorious than Eden, and thus believers eagerly anticipate the return of Christ. The Church Universal (i.e., all believers, everywhere) is the means by which God is fulfilling His purposes in the world (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). The Church Universal is being used to write God's beautiful and dramatic story of redemption and reconciliation. In light of this reality, the opportunity to join a local church body (i.e., a particular group of believers in a particular locale) is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in community. It is also a sacred call to be involved in the redemptive work of our sovereign God to push back the darkness of a fallen world through the power of the Holy Spirit with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ. The church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (Ephesians 2:19), the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2, 9), and the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). 1 Corinthians 12 speaks of many members within the same body. Just as a human body relies upon mutual dependence of individual members for proper functioning, so the body of Christ requires sacrificial and responsible service by its individual members. As the Scriptures say, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Corinthians 12:21). Likewise, a member of the church cannot say to another member that he or she is unnecessary. We all have gifts that differ according to the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:3-8). Contrary to the beliefs of our culture, we need each other.

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

WHAT IS A COVENANT?

A covenant is generally defined as "a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action."¹ Within the Scriptures, we find a number of examples of covenants; some between God and man (Genesis 6, 9, 15; Ezekiel 20; Hosea 2; Jeremiah 31; Matthew 26), while others are solely between men (1 Samuel 18, 2 Samuel 5). Some covenants are unconditional, meaning that two or more parties obligate themselves in such a way that the obligation of each party is not dependent on the faithfulness of the other. In other words, there is a pledge to be faithful to the covenant regardless of the other person's faithfulness. Other covenants are conditional, meaning that the obligation of one party is at least in part dependent upon the faithfulness of the other. While God's gracious covenant with the Church Universal is unconditional, the local church covenant itself is in part conditioned upon the faithfulness of each party. If at any time one of the parties, the individual member or corporate church body, fails in its obligations, the other party is freed from certain aspects of the covenant. The covenant of Welsh Baptist Church contains many conditions that are merely general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, whether members of Welsh Baptist Church or elsewhere, are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. Such requirements are universal obligations for the Christ-follower regardless of any failure on the part of the local church to live up to her covenant obligations.

If at any time an individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness then the member is freed from his or her membership obligations and is encouraged to seek membership elsewhere given the church's disobedience. In addition, certain circumstances may provide sufficient and righteous grounds to transfer membership elsewhere. While focusing primarily in language on the responsibilities between the individual parties, the corporate church body, her elders and her individual members, the covenant is first and foremost a promise made to God as a commitment to His glory and the good of the body and bride of His Son.

STATEMENT OF BASIC BELIEF

The following beliefs represent the core of central orthodox beliefs from a biblical and historical perspective. While a full understanding and the ability to adequately articulate these beliefs is not required, the explicit rejection of any one of these particular beliefs disqualifies one from membership in Welsh Baptist Church.

I believe...

- that the Scriptures are true, authoritative and sufficient (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
- that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6; Isaiah 46:9-10; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 Timothy 2:5).
- that the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God; and that the Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit, the Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit and 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).
- that I am, along with all humanity (Christ excluded), by birth and action a sinner² (Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; 5:8, 12-21; 7:18; Ephesians 2:1-3).

¹ Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Includes Index., 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993).

² We recognize that Adam and Eve were not "born" and were not created sinful; rather, they became sinful through their action.

- that the deserved penalty for sin is death, both physical and spiritual (Genesis 2:15-17; Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12; 6:23; James 1:14-15).
- that 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, 14; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3).
- that Jesus Christ died as my substitute to pay the penalty for my sin (John 1:29; 10:1-18; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 3:18).
- that 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).
- that Jesus Christ physically ascended into heaven and will one day physically return (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7).
- in a future physical resurrection of the dead. Those who trust in Jesus Christ alone will be raised to eternal reward. Those who have not trusted in Jesus Christ will be raised to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).
- that 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, 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:21-26; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).

STATEMENT OF BIBLICAL DOCTRINE

While the doctrines expressed in the "Statement of Basic Belief" are those that are recognized to be universal and primary within the Church, there are a number of secondary beliefs about which the leadership of Welsh Baptist Church is passionate. Complete agreement is not required for the sake of membership, but it should be known that Welsh Baptist Church will preach, teach, and counsel in accordance with these theological convictions. I understand it is a responsibility of covenant membership to have read the "Statement of Faith" of Welsh Baptist Church in its entirety and address any questions, comments, or concerns with a pastor or elder. I also understand that Welsh Baptist Church has certain theological convictions to which it is strongly committed.

Finally, I understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace; I will adhere to Welsh Baptist Church's "Statement of Basic Belief," and I will not be divisive over Welsh Baptist Church's theological distinctives expounded in the "Statement of Faith."

BIBLICAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH ELDERS TO THE WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH BODY

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

The elders covenant...

- to appoint elders and deacons (including staff members who serve in these offices) according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- to prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- to care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth and love (Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:15-16 Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- to provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:1).

- to equip the members of the church for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- to be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).
- to lovingly exercise discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined and the health of the church as a whole (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).
- to set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below (Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:3).

BIBLICAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE MEMBERS TO THE WELSH BAPTIST CHURCH BODY

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

I covenant...

- to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- to pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of spiritual disciplines (Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22).
- to follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church:
 - by being baptized after my conversion.
 - by regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through the Lord's Supper.
- to regularly participate in the life of Welsh Baptist Church by attending weekly services, engaging in biblical community and serving those within and outside of this church (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14).
- to steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:1-3). Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death, while stirring and stimulating love and good deeds through the Spirit. Below are a few examples of actions addressed in the Scriptures:
 - I will practice 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 my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, premarital sex and pornography (Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4).
 - I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation at Welsh Baptist Church before pursuing 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).

- I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (Romans 1:28-32, 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18).
- to refrain from such activities that the Scriptures would deem foolish (Romans 14:14-23).
- to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially actions or situations that could present a stumbling block to another (1 Corinthians 8:1-13).
- to submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:
 - following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another -- the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
 - receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11).
- to do the following when I sin:
 - confess my sin to God and to fellow believers.
 - repent and seek help to put my sin to death (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10).
- to submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and to be diligent to strive for unity and peace within the Church (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5).

New Member Signature

Date

Interviewer Signature