



## Church Membership Matters

**Beacon of Hope Church Saint Paul  
850 Terrace Court  
St. Paul, MN 55130**

**[beaconforthecity.org](http://beaconforthecity.org)**



## Church Membership Matters

# Welcome to Beacon of Hope Church

Your interest in becoming a member of Beacon of Hope is an encouragement to us. It is our pleasure to introduce you to membership in the work Christ is doing through his local church. In becoming a part of the Beacon family you will enter into this fellowship as an active participant in the work of the ministry. A commitment to Beacon of Hope Church is a commitment to its people—a commitment that involves sacrifice. The sacrifice of your time, energy, creativity, and your resources for the glory of God. As you grow in God's grace, develop spiritual friendships, and serve Him through this church, you will be encouraged and experience the blessing of God as you "*work together with Him*" in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

It is in the church that we study the Bible, where we learn to pray, to sing, to disciple, to become equipped to serve and proclaim the gospel. It is the church that we are exhorted by the Word, edified by one another and equipped for a lifestyle of evangelism so that "in whatever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

We are available to come alongside and serve you in the love of Christ as we serve God and others together. May the Lord bless you as you continue to worship Him as part of the church family!



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## Membership Class

### Topics

Class 1

- **History, Vision and Function** (Milestones, Vision, Mission and Five Pillars)

Class 2

- **Leadership Structure** (Elders and Deacons)
- **Beacon of Hope Relational Commitments** (Peacemaking and Reconciliation, Preserving Marriages, Protecting our Children, Biblical Discipleship and Confidentiality, Accountability and Church Discipline)

Class 3

- **What We Teach** (Membership in Practice - Congregational Affirmation of Faith)
- **Steps to Membership** (Membership Covenant, Membership Questionnaires)



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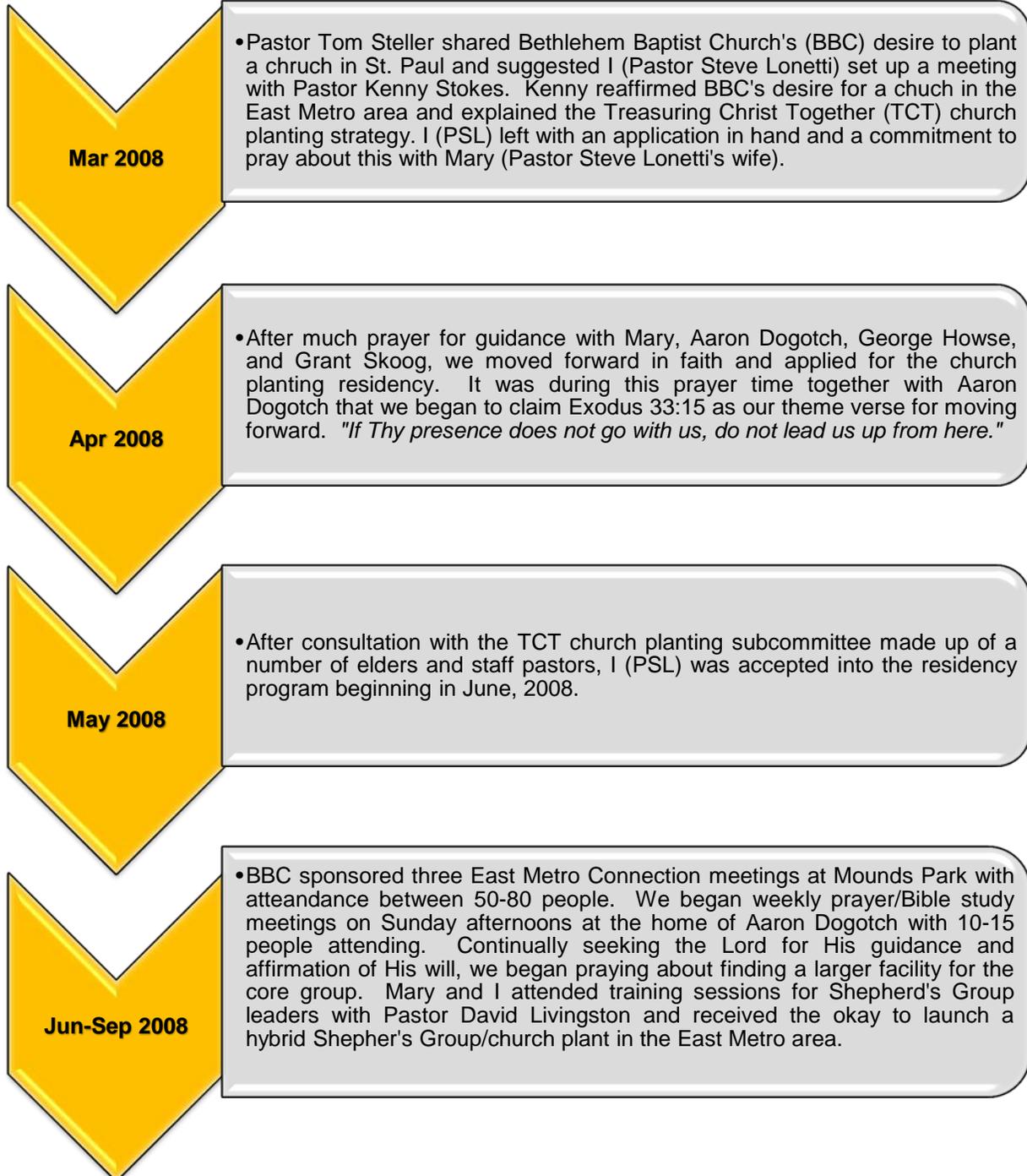
# Steps in Becoming a Member of Beacon of Hope Church

- 1 • Profession of Salvation
- 2 • Post Salvation Baptism by Immersion
- 3 • Attend Membership Class & Interview with an Elder of BoH
- 4 • Read "What We Teach at Beacon of Hope Church"
- 5 • Affirm by Signature the "Membership Covenant"
- 6 • Affirm "Congregational Affirmation of Faith"



## Church Membership Matters

# Beacon of Hope Church History and Milestones





## Church Membership Matters

**Sep 28, 2008**

- In answer to prayer, we moved to the Stonecrest Senior Residence (Presbyterian Homes) located in Woodbury to launch the East Metro Shepherd's Group/Church Plant. We met on Sunday afternoons. The beautiful community room, provided free of charge, had the potential to seat 60.

**Oct 2008**

- We began studying through the book of Titus in October. We put in place a ministry launch team (Aaron Dogotch, George Howse, Cleon Engel, Grant Skoog, Jake Tromburg, Stephen Lonetti) for corporate prayer, strategic planning, leadership development, and mutual fellowship. The number of consistent attenders continued to grow, averaging 40-50 adults with about 20 young children and babies. By God's grace, families were growing in love for one another and embracing the vision for a church plant in St. Paul. Visitors (mostly young families with small children) were coming often. Giving (from within the group) had increased substantially.

**2009 to 2013**

- We, due to outgrowing the community room at Stonecrest, moved to Metropolitan University's Founders Hall. The auditorium there seated 300, with audio visual and plenty of classrooms. This is where we began to pay a lease for the meeting facilities, but the young church stepped up to the challenge. We incorporated at this time and officially launched Beacon of Hope on February 21, 2010. In May, 2010 we held our first membership induction ceremony with 62 people becoming charter members. During this time we determined to become independent from BBC. We continue to have a good relationship with BBC but are no longer a TCT church plant. We have a loose affiliation with Converge as a "mission" church.

**2009 to 2015**

- Beacon of Hope Church has been meeting at Metropolitan University's Founders Hall. In October, 2015, we bought a building at 850 Terrace Court in St. Paul to be the home site for Beacon of Hope Church.



## Church Membership Matters

# Membership in Principle

## Philosophy of Ministry

### Our Mission

**We exist to proclaim<sup>1</sup> the excellencies<sup>2</sup> of Jesus Christ in word and deed, by the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God the Father<sup>3</sup>.**

Our statement of mission is drawn from 1 Peter 2:9 where Peter identifies the church as those who are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and specifically, those who have been “called out darkness.” Indeed, the very word translated *church* in the New Testament means “called out people” (ekklesia; ek=out+kaleo=called). As the chosen, holy, and called-out-of-darkness people of God, it is our privilege and joy to proclaim the excellencies of Christ to a crooked and perverse generation in which we shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15). In this way we will spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ drives our mission at every level, and the proclamation of His excellencies will be woven into the very fabric of our church life, from expositional preaching and teaching of Scripture, to corporate and private worship and prayer, devoted love to the household of God, expressions of mercy to the community, and gospel witness to the lost (Titus 2:11-14).

<sup>1</sup> Proclaim (*exaggello*) means “to tell out, proclaim abroad, publish completely, and make known by praising and celebrating.” It is rendered “show forth” in 1 Peter 2:9, and indicates a complete proclamation. The idea then is not just verbal proclamation, but also includes demonstrable action and behavior that gives evidence of the excellencies of Christ.

<sup>2</sup> Excellencies (*arête*) here points to all that is praiseworthy, all that is virtuous, all that is morally good, all that surpasses others and distinguishes the Christ.

<sup>3</sup> The mission statement is draw from 1 Peter 2:9, “*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...*”



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### Our Vison





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### **Our Vision**

#### **Dynamic Corporate Worship**

We envision our worship style to be a vibrant reflection of the communities we serve. Contemporary and traditional hymns, as well as ethnic music will be part of our service as a joyful expression of worship.

#### **Devoted to Prayer**

We envision a culture of prayer to permeate every aspect of church life. Prayer exhibits humble dependence upon God and opens the door to His power. It is one of the tools He has given us to do His work on earth. We will provide an environment that encourages corporate as well as personal prayer for every member of the church. Prayer must reflect the priorities God gives us in His Word, and not simply be thought of as a means to escape suffering in this present life.

#### **Saturated with Scripture**

We envision a strong pulpit ministry devoted to the clear and courageous exposition of God's Word. A high view of God requires a high view of Scripture. Additionally, the Word will be the primary curriculum in all our teaching ministries to the end that members know, love and use their bibles to joyfully speak truth to one another and their neighbors in everyday life.

#### **Intentional Discipleship and Leadership Training**

We envision helping every member to mature in their faith so that they can biblically address their own life challenges. We will equip believers to function within their spiritual gifts for the building up of the body of Christ in joy. We desire to train young men and women in Christian leadership for the next generation.

#### **Christ Exalting Community**

We envision an intimate fellowship of believers who practice the gospel with one another. Of all places on earth, the church should provide a safe haven where forgiven sinners lovingly receive one another, humbly confess their faults to one another, serve one another, and enjoy one another as they love and obey God.



## Church Membership Matters

### **Motivated Gospel Ministry**

We envision the gospel affecting our people so powerfully that a continual flow of believers move out from the safe haven of the church and become points of light in neighborhoods throughout the city. This gospel-driven impact will also motivate our people to serve in strategic ministries overseas and create a passion to support multitudes of national church planters throughout the world.

### **Mercy-Loving Community Presence**

We envision a church filled with mercy-loving people pouring out gospel grace and compassion on those who cannot repay through individual acts and intentionally created ministry channels in the communities surrounding the church. Special attention will be given to new immigrants and dominant ethnic groups in the impoverished and crime-filled lower East Side and Payne-Phalen neighborhoods.

Generally speaking, these purposes flesh themselves out through 5 functions...



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## Five Pillars of Beacon of Hope Church





## Church Membership Matters

# Five Pillars of Beacon of Hope Church

Acts 2:42-47 provides a succinct description of the church by recording the activities fulfilled by the called-out-people of God. Contained within the passage are 5 purposes or functions that will serve as guideposts for our church.

### **I. Worship and Prayer**

We will pursue God-centered worship and prayer, corporately for the congregation, and privately for individuals and families. Our passion is to develop people who honor God, exalt Christ, and joyfully treasure Him as the normal daily experience of their Christian life.

With the enabling grace of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit, our corporate worship services will focus on Jesus Christ through God-honoring music, singing, prayer and the exposition of Scripture. We value prayer as foundational for all life and ministry, therefore every worship service will incorporate joyful adoration, humble confession, and purposeful supplication as an outward evidence of our inner lives.

We will intentionally equip our people in the spiritual disciplines of personal prayer and devotions. We will cultivate the truth that such activities flow out of hearts filled with gospel gratefulness and marked by the hunger that only regeneration creates in true believers. Such prayers are motivated by deep faith and confident hope in our future secured by the Lord Jesus Christ. We will also intentionally help our families understand the importance of family worship and prayer through example and instruction. Personal worship by every member will result in glorious exultation in corporate worship as an extension of the people's personal devotion to Christ. We will provide opportunities for personal and corporate prayer consistently before, during, and after all of our public worship services.

### **II. Learning and Discipleship**

The role of learning for the disciple of Jesus Christ cannot be over emphasized. It is the hallmark of the disciple as we follow Jesus. Therefore we will provide opportunities at all age levels for growth in the Christian life through personal discipleship, classroom instruction, and training opportunities for practical experience in hands-on ministry.



## Church Membership Matters

We will pursue the biblical model of older men teaching younger men and older women teaching younger women through ongoing biblical manhood and womanhood seminars and classes. We will foster hands-on mentoring within the context of real life situations and ministry. One of our goals is to create an attitude of legacy in the younger generation, so that they will intentionally equip their own children who, in turn, will impact the next generation with the gospel.

We will demonstrate our passion for the lost by make discipleship for evangelism an integral part of all foundational classes. We will train teachers to use The Chronicles of Redemption as a core curriculum in evangelistic home Bible studies and foster the desire of members to use their gifts of evangelism and hospitality to host them.

We will give special care and attention to young men as the future leaders of their families and the church. Establishing clear understanding of gender role and godly character is a primary concern for us so that these young men will become change agents within their spheres of influence: family, school, workplace, community, and society at large for the glory of God.

### **III. Fellowship and Community**

We believe fellowship in the church is supernaturally created by the Holy Spirit when the lives of believers are brought into koinonia. It cannot be worked up through planned events or potluck dinners. Rather, fellowship is demonstrated when Christians meet one another in joy, deliberately act in response to one another's needs, and quickly move to alleviate disharmony within the body. We will teach and model the truth that our communication be marked by grace-filled use of the tongue rather than gossip or slander. Like the first century church, togetherness marked their worship, prayer, song, study, and work.

### **IV. Evangelism and Mission**

It is our desire that to build up the church through evangelism rather than relying on transfers from other churches. Therefore we will work at equipping the saints for the work of the ministry and provide both training and opportunities for evangelism in the surrounding communities of Lower Town, East Saint Paul, Oakdale, and Woodbury.

We will use The Chronicles of Redemption, which is a Scripture-dependent teaching guide. It is designed to build a biblical worldview into which the gospel can then be clearly and boldly communicated. By using key Old Testament and Gospel narratives



## Church Membership Matters

to illustrate the progressive story of redemption, it communicates complex truth in a simple way. Scripture itself thus educates the conscience of the unbeliever and prepares the way for the Holy Spirit to bring conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).

We will intentionally motivate our own people to serve and support strategic ministries around the world, focusing on unreached people groups, theological education for national pastors, and assisting trained national expositors to plant churches in their own countries.

### **V. Mercy and Compassion**

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8 cp. Galatians 6:10).

Beacon of Hope will develop its own unique ministry of mercy by looking at the needs closest to it and meeting them through loving deeds and a spirit of encouragement. We desire to motivate the entire church to deeds of mercy. As a priority, we will give to needy Christians both intensively and extensively until their need is gone. But we must also give generously to unbelievers as part of our witness to the world and because it reflects the nature of our God who is merciful to all (Matthew 5:45). (Adapted in part from Tim Keller’s book *Ministries of Mercy*).



## Church Membership Matters

# Beacon of Hope Leadership

### **Structural Leadership in the Local Church: A Brief Overview of the Biblical Principles of Church Leadership**

The local church is a precious jewel of it is God's primary tool for accomplishing His purposes in the world. Jesus Christ died to establish it<sup>1</sup> and He promised to build it.<sup>2</sup> Christ has also given us His Word which tells us what the church is to do and how the church is to order itself.<sup>3</sup> While the Bible does not contain a boilerplate constitution or an organization flowchart, which we are to follow, it does contain the core principles and key roles for each local church. It is our intention in this paper to outline God's overall plan for the church leadership structure and propose how God's plan might be put into practice here at Beacon of Hope.

#### **Christ the Head of the Church:**

Jesus Christ paid the price for the church in His own blood. As the owner of the church, Christ is the ultimate authority in the church. Paul uses the "body" metaphor for the church and presents Jesus Christ as the head of this body.<sup>4</sup> As "head," Jesus has all authority and rule. Jesus however does not visibly manifest himself or audibly speak to us. So how are we to follow His lead and submit to His rule? How are we to know what our Lord desires?

Jesus has left us His Word as our guide. The Scriptures serve as Christ authoritative voice. Jesus could rightly ask the crowd s that followed Him, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). God's Word is our only authoritative source of understanding what the local church is to do and to be.<sup>5</sup> In our Congregational Affirmation of Faith, we state that – "We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct." Therefore it is to be believe in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.

In light of Christ's rule and the Bible's authority, we as a church should commit ourselves to ordering our leadership structure in accord with the positions and principles made clear in the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 20:28

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 16:19

<sup>3</sup> 1 Timothy 3:15; Titus 1:5

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22; 4:15

<sup>5</sup> 1 Timothy 3:15



## Church Membership Matters

### **An Engaged Congregation:**

The Bible presents a picture of an engaged congregation. As believers, we share a common priesthood and we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who is able to help us rightly understand God's truth. As priest, the members of each local church are encouraged not only to attend, serve and give, but to take an active role in key community decisions. These key decisions include the selection of potential leadership.<sup>6</sup>

And all such leadership will be reviewed by the elders and if approved will be presented to the congregation for their affirmation. Other key decisions might include (but not limited to) the sale and purchase of property, approval of the annual budget, constitutional changes presented by the elders, etc. The congregation then entrusts all other decisions and the leadership of the church to the leaders they have affirmed.

### **A Congregation Following Its Leaders:**

Not only do the Scriptures paint a picture of an active and engaged congregation, but they also teach us the important place of leaders. According to the New Testament, the local church is to have leaders, and these leaders are to be followed, respected and obeyed.<sup>7</sup> Who are these leaders? The New Testament identifies two offices in the local church; Elders and Deacons.<sup>8</sup> Elders are identified as the leaders of the local church and Deacons are the servants of the church. Elders are to rule,<sup>9</sup> have charge over,<sup>10</sup> shepherd,<sup>11</sup> oversee,<sup>12</sup> and manage<sup>13</sup> the local church. In addition to the term Elder, the Scriptures also refer to this same office as Overseer, and Pastor (Shepherd).<sup>14</sup> So these three terms, elder, overseer, and pastor are used interchangeably in reference to the same singular office.<sup>15</sup> The elders must meet the biblical qualifications for church leadership listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and the leadership they are to exercise is to be servant leadership.<sup>16</sup> The Scriptures also make it clear that the church is to be led not by a single elder, but rather by a plurality of elders. Every time elders are mentioned in reference to a local church it is always in the plural.<sup>17</sup> So God has called a plurality of elders to lead the local church.

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 6:2-3; 15:22

<sup>7</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17

<sup>8</sup> Philippians 1:1

<sup>9</sup> 1 Timothy 5:17

<sup>10</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

<sup>11</sup> 1 Peter 5:1-3

<sup>12</sup> Acts 20:28

<sup>13</sup> 1 Timothy 3:4-5

<sup>14</sup> Acts 20:17

<sup>15</sup> 1 Peter 5:1-2

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 20:25-28

<sup>17</sup> With the exception of the self-reference of Peter and John in which they use the singular (1 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1).



## Church Membership Matters

The second church office that the New Testament indicate is that of Deacon. Deacons, as the literal meaning of the name implies, are first and foremost servants. They are tasked by the church to carry out needed service with the local Body. This service is intended to not only meet needs with the congregation, but also to free up the elders to lead, minister the Word, and pray.<sup>18</sup> These servants of the church are to meet the biblical qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The specific service that they render is not specified but is given a wide latitude.<sup>19</sup> Any critical area of service that is needed in the church and that could possibly distract the elders from their core ministries of leadership, the Word and prayer could be tasked to a deacon or group of deacons.

### **Applying These Biblical Principles at Beacon of Hope:**

While there is a level of freedom as to what the specific organizational structure might look like at any given local church, the core leadership positions and principles are made clear in like at any given local church, the core leadership positions and principles are made clear in the Scriptures. In light of the Biblical evidence we have seen, what might a leadership structure that reflects the Biblical principles and positions look like at Beacon of Hope?

The congregation would maintain input, involvement, and decision making in the most important church decisions including calling a senior pastor, affirming elders and deacons, approving the annual budget, buying or selling real estate, taking out loans, constitutional and bylaw changes, and anything else the leadership may decide to bring before them for prayerful consideration and final decision. Apart from these key decisions, the congregation would entrust the leadership of the church to a plurality of godly, biblically qualified elders.

Having been affirmed by the congregation and entrusted with leadership, the elders would then give themselves to the tasks of leading the church, shepherding, studying and ministering the Word and prayer. The elders would also oversee “ministry teams” for effective functioning of the church. Some of these ministry teams may come and go as the needs of the congregation change and as qualified and willing team leaders and team members become available. A congregationally affirmed elder or deacon would lead those ministry teams, which require a higher degree oversight, public trust, or confidentiality. Likewise, any individual who acts on the behalf of the church in a legal transaction would need to be a congregationally affirmed elder or deacon.

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<sup>18</sup> Acts 6:2-4

<sup>19</sup> 1 Timothy 3:13



## Church Membership Matters

### **Present Ministry Teams:**

- Finance Team
- Worship Team
- Adult Education
- Woman's Council
- Mission
- Evangelism and Outreach

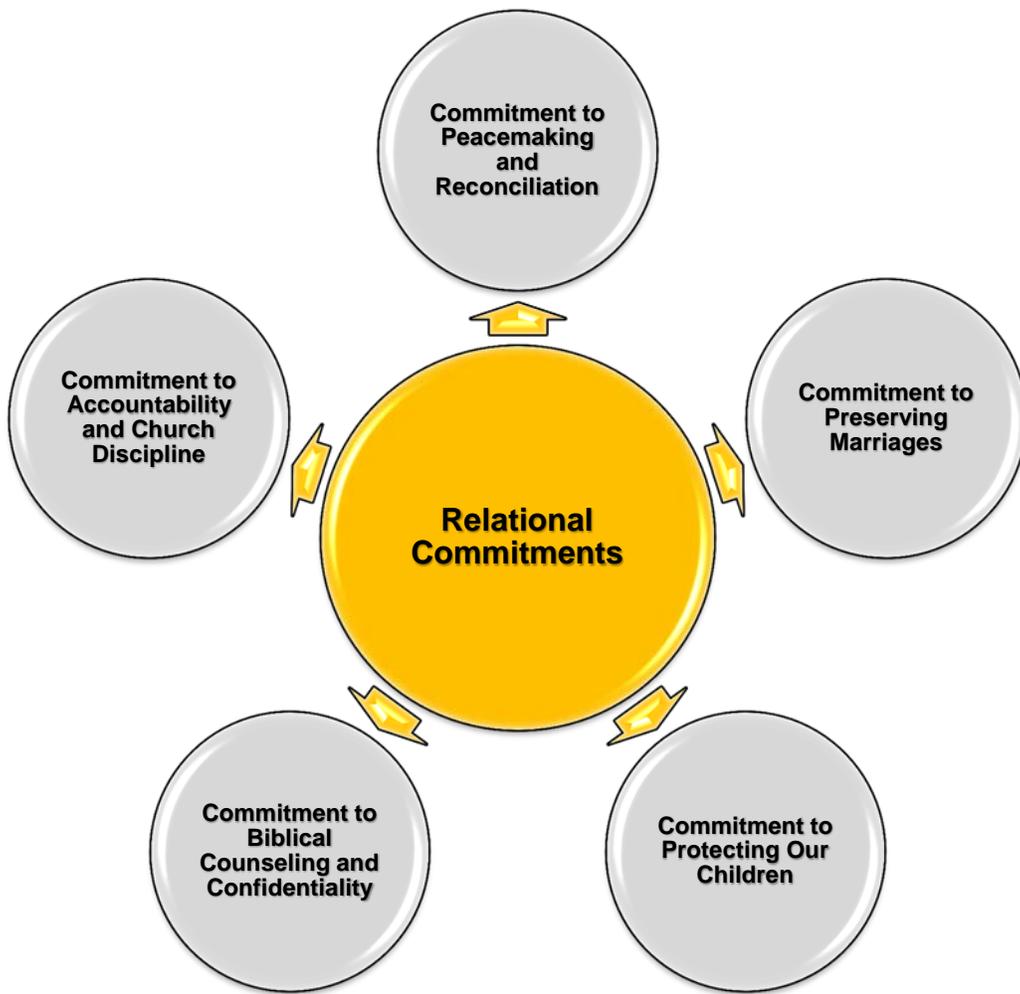
### **Ways to Connect:**

1. Fellowship Groups on Sunday Morning
2. Men and Women Bible Study
3. Around the Table

### **Ways to Serve:**

1. Hmong Village & Evangelism
2. Hospitality Team
3. Ushers & Greeters
4. Trailer Ministry
5. Set-up and Tear Down Team
6. Choir and Worship Team

## Relational Commitments





## Church Membership Matters

# Relational Commitments

### **Commitment to Peacemaking and Reconciliation**

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God (Matthew 5:9).*

Our church is committed to building a “culture of peace” that reflects God’s peace and the power of the gospel of Christ in our lives. As we stand in the light of the cross, we realize that bitterness, unforgiveness and broken relationships are not appropriate for the people whom God has reconciled to himself through the sacrifice of His only Son (John 13:34-35; Ephesians 4:29-32; Colossians 3:12-14).

Therefore, we look to the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit for guidance on how we can respond to conflict in a way that will honor God, promote justice, reconcile relationships, and preserve our witness for Christ. As God gives us His wisdom and grace, we are committed to actively teaching and encouraging one another to trust God and seek His help in living out the following principles of peacemaking and reconciliation:

#### **Personal Peacemaking**

- Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words and actions (1 Corinthians 10:31).
- We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matthew 7:3-5).
- We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Proverbs 19:11).
- We will refrain from all gossip, backbiting and slander (Ephesians 4:29-32). If we have a problem with others, we will talk to them, not about them.
- We will make “charitable judgments” toward one another by believing the best about each other until we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Corinthians 13:7).
- If an offense is too serious to overlook, or if we think someone may have something against us, we will seek reconciliation without delay (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15).
- When we offer a word of correction to others, we will do so graciously and gently, with the goal of serving and restoring them, rather than beating them down (Proverbs 12:18; Ephesians 4:29; Galatians 6:1).



## Church Membership Matters

- When someone tries to correct us, we will ask God to help us resist prideful defensiveness and to welcome correction with humility (Psalm 141:5; Proverbs 15:32).
- When others repent, we will ask God to give us grace to forgive them as he has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32).
- When we discuss or negotiate substantive issues, we will look out for others' interests as well as our own (Philippians 2:3-4).

### **Assisted Peacemaking**

- When two of us cannot resolve a conflict privately, we will seek the mediation of wise people in our church and listen humbly to their counsel (Matthew 18:16; Philippians 4:2-3). If our dispute is with a church leader, we will look to other leaders for assistance.
- When informal mediation does not resolve a dispute, we will seek formal assistance from our church leaders or people they appoint, and we will submit to their counsel and correction (Matthew 18:17-20).
- When we have a business or legal dispute with another Christian, we will make every reasonable effort to resolve the conflict within the body of Christ through biblical mediation or arbitration, rather than going to civil court (1 Corinthians 6:1-8). If the other party attends another church, our leaders will offer to cooperate with the leaders of that church to resolve the matter.
- If a person coming to our church has an unresolved conflict with someone in his former church, we will require and assist him to make every reasonable effort to be reconciled to the other person before joining our church (Matthew 5:23-24; Romans 12:18).
- When a conflict involves matters of doctrine or church discipline, we will submit to the procedures set forth in our Commitment to Accountability and Church Discipline.
- If we have a legal dispute with or within our church and cannot resolve it internally through the steps given above, we will obey God's command not to go into the civil court (1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Instead, we will submit the matter to mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker Ministries.



## Church Membership Matters

### **Commitment to Preserving Marriages**

*So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate (Matthew 19:6).*

God designed marriage to reflect the beauty and permanence of Christ's loving relationship with His bride, the church (Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 19:7). Therefore, he established marriage to be a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman (Matthew 19:4-6). God also designed it to provide mutual companionship through life's joys and difficulties, to create stability for raising and nurturing children, and to give strength and cohesiveness to society in general.

In our society, marriages fail under a wide range of circumstances. Many people have gone through a divorce before having a relationship with Christ and have found repentance and forgiveness in coming to Christ and sought reconciliation where possible. Others have experienced divorce through no desire or decision of their own. Still others, even after professing faith in Christ, may have divorced because of their own wrongful choices, but have since repented and received the forgiveness offered through our Lord Jesus and sought reconciliation where possible. We want all of you to know that you are welcome in our church.

Because our church recognizes both the divine origin of marriage and the devastating effects of divorce, we are deeply committed to preserving marriages and preventing divorce. Toward this end, we will devote a significant portion of our preaching and teaching ministry to strengthening marriages and families. We require and provide serious premarital counseling to help couples enter into marriage advisedly, and be well-prepared for its many challenges.

We also encourage couples to nurture their marriages by participating in our small-group ministry where they can grow together in their love for God and for one another (Hebrews 10:24-25). As relationships deepen within these groups, we expect husbands to spur each other on in loving and cherishing their wives, and wives to encourage one another in respecting and loving their husbands (Ephesians 5:33).

Our leaders are committed to helping individuals and couples receive biblical counsel and support when they face marital difficulties. We will discourage couples from using



## Church Membership Matters

divorce as a way to run away from issues that instead can be resolved through Spirit-guided counseling, repentance, forgiveness and ongoing discipleship.

We believe that the scripture permits divorce under the very limited circumstances of unrepentant adultery or decisive abandonment or protracted life-endangerment. In these cases we believe the marriage truly ends and the reconciliation-desiring, aggrieved spouse is free to remarry in the Lord.

### **Statement of Guidelines for Mutual Accountability**

We agree to live by the following guidelines concerning the nurturing of marriages and the exercise of redemptive church discipline wherever needed.

1. A believer and unbeliever should not marry (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14-15).
2. Since death breaks the marriage bond (Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39), remarriage is permissible without sin for a believing widow or widower, if the marriage is with another believer.
3. Divorce may be permitted based upon only two biblical grounds; that is sexual sin or desertion. (1 Corinthians 7:12-15; Matthew 5:32, 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:11). We do not believe that divorce must be the last word. Even after long periods of separation and alienation, reconciliation can happen, as when the people of God return to the Lord after periods of waywardness (Hosea 2:14-23). We want to emphasize that the phrase "divorce may be permitted" holds out the possibility that inquiry may reveal that the deserted partner engaged in a wrong behavior that drove the other away, so that a change is called for at home rather than divorce. We want to stress that forgiveness and reconciliation between sinning spouses is preferable to separation or divorce even where adultery has occurred. Remember that "God hates divorce," according to Malachi 2:14-16. Reconciliation should always be our most ardently sought course of action in all fractured relationships, especially marriage. This is implied in Matthew 18:21-22, "Then Peter came and said to Jesus, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven'" (see Luke 17:3- 4).
4. The remarriage of a divorced spouse may be viewed as severing the former marriage so that the unmarried spouse whose behavior did not biblically justify being divorced, may be free to remarry a believer (Matthew 19:9), if he or she has confessed all known sin in the divorce, and has made significant progress in overcoming any destructive behaviors and attitudes.



## Church Membership Matters

All of us urge every member who contemplates remarriage to struggle in prayer and study with all the relevant Scriptures, with the sole aim of glorifying God through full obedience to his word. Consider fairly the arguments against remarriage and those for it.

Moreover we want to affirm the goodness and beauty of a life of singleness in God's service both before marriage and after divorce or death. It is commended in 1 Corinthians 7:7, 11, 32-35, and elevated by the examples of Jesus and Paul and hundreds of great single saints.

5. After serious efforts have been made toward reconciliation the aggrieved partner referred to in guideline #3 may, together with the leadership of the church, come to regard the marriage as irreparably broken. In such cases remarriage may be a legitimate step, if taken with serious reckoning that this cuts off all possibility of a reconciliation that God may yet be willing to produce.
6. The aggrieving partners referred to in #3 (who were guilty of abandonment or sexual sin, i.e. adultery) should repent and be reconciled to God and to their spouses (1 Corinthians 7:11; 1John 1:9).
7. Church leaders' marriages should be modeled demonstrations of Ephesians 5:22-29, the relationship of Christ to His church. In cases where a potential leader has been divorced, the church must be confident that he has given evidence of "ruling his family well" and proven his ability to lead those close to him to salvation and sanctification. His family is to be a model of faithful and righteous living (1Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6). It would be necessary to carefully examine the circumstances surrounding his divorce (whether it was before or after salvation, on what grounds, etc.) and any consequences still remaining that may affect his reputation –because God desires the leaders of His church to be the best possible models of godliness before men. If he truly desires to be "above reproach" (1 Timothy 3:2), a potential leader will be willing to undergo such scrutiny.
8. The amount of time that has passed and the change in standing from unbeliever to believer does not alter the application of the guidelines for divorce and remarriage (See Matthew 19:4- 6 which highlights the fact that enduring marriages are part of God's plan for all his human creation, not just his redeemed people.)

Even though divorce is permissible under the circumstances described above, we want to stress that it is not required. It is not the best testimony to the covenant-keeping love of Christ and his church. God patiently bears with our sins, repeatedly calls us to



## Church Membership Matters

repentance, and freely forgives us when we turn back to Him (Psalm 103:8-12; Isaiah 55:7).

When divorce seems inevitable, an offended spouse can imitate God's love by offering a straying spouse these same evidences of grace (Ephesians 5:1-2). This may involve patiently bearing neglect or lovingly confronting serious sin (Colossians 3:12-14; Galatians 6:1). In some situations, love may require asking the church to initiate formal discipline to rescue a spouse and a marriage from the devastating effects of unrepentant sin (Matthew 18:12-20).

Just as church leaders are involved in beginning a marriage, they should be involved when it is threatened with seeming dissolution. Therefore, when a member of our church is considering divorce, he or she is expected to bring the situation to our elders and cooperate with them as they determine whether biblical grounds exist for the separation, and as they endeavor to promote repentance and reconciliation, and pursue redemptive discipline, if appropriate.

Separated spouses who are moving toward divorce, but are still legally married, should refrain from dating or any other activity that is inconsistent with being married.

We are always interested in helping divorced people restore their previous marriage if that is possible and appropriate. We will support a decision to pursue a second marriage to a different person only when we have determined that it is warranted according to the guidelines mentioned above, and that every reasonable effort has been made to seek and grant forgiveness of the sins that contributed to a previous divorce.

We rejoice that divorce never diminishes God's free offer of love, grace and forgiveness. He cherishes and loves every person who has been unwillingly divorced, as does our church. God also graciously extends his love to those who have wrongly left their marriages. That love moves Him (and us) to call them to repentance, to encourage and aid reconciliation when possible, and to gladly restore those who have done what the scripture requires to rebuild broken relationships.

### **Commitment to Protecting Our Children**

*The prudent see danger and take refuge (Proverbs 27:12a).*

Children are a blessing from God, and he calls the church to support parents in their responsibility to train children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Therefore, the



## Church Membership Matters

church should be a place of safety and blessing for children, where they can grow, play, form friendships, and learn to experience and share the love of Christ.

Since sin affects every person and organization in the world, it is possible that children could be harmed even during church activities. We cannot guarantee that such things will never happen at our church, but we are committed to taking every reasonable precaution to protect our children and youth from foreseeable harm.

If a child or youth is harmed in our church, we will take immediate steps to inform the parents, to accept responsibility for our role in the situation, and to hold offending workers fully responsible for their actions. We will also regularly review our policies, practices and procedures, to consider changes that might reduce the likelihood of such harm to children in the future. This includes thorough background checks of everyone who desires to work with our children.

### **Commitment to Biblical Counseling and Confidentiality**

*I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another (Romans 15:14).*

Our goal in providing Biblical Counseling is that we may “present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28). We believe that the Bible is God-inspired guidance, instruction and power for faith and life (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Therefore, our counseling relies on Biblical teachings and principles applied with “all wisdom” through the Holy Spirit to each situation we counsel. We are committed to asking the question, “What does Scripture say regarding this matter?” and to counseling in the light of the response to this question.

We believe that Christ has equipped His body, the church, to provide wisdom, knowledge and instruction to one another (Romans 15:14) in order for each member to live a godly and holy life, pleasing God in all ways. Christ has also equipped His church with spiritually mature leaders who are able to shepherd, lead, teach, and counsel others (Hebrews 5:11-14) in the church. Though the educational and experiential background of each leader who counsels at our church is unique, the essential training and practice for all leaders who counsel here centers around their ability to apply Scripture to the situation they are counseling. For this reason, those who counsel at our church do not present themselves as psychotherapists nor mental health professionals but as Biblical counselors.



## Church Membership Matters

In order to avoid misunderstandings regarding the role of leaders in the church that provide “spiritual counsel” these clarifications should be kept in mind:

- Leaders who provide spiritual counsel may also be trained in other areas of life that are outside of the realm of providing spiritual counsel. Thus, if a doctor provides “spiritual counsel” through the church, you need to understand that this is separate from his providing “medical counsel” at his clinic.
- God calls the leaders in His church to set an example in “speech, in life, in love, and in faith and purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). If any leader should not live up to this standard in any counseling situation, the counselee needs to report to the leadership team any conduct that fails to meet this standard.
- Confidentiality is an important factor in establishing a relationship to receive spiritual counsel. The leader providing spiritual counsel will keep confidentiality except in the following situations:
  1. When the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (Proverbs 24:11-12);
  2. When a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to promote repentance through accountability and redemptive church discipline (Matthew 18:15-20);
  3. When leaders are required by law to report suspected abuse (Romans 13:1).

Providing spiritual counsel requires a relationship between the leader and the counselee. Occasionally there may arise a misunderstanding between the counselor and the counselee. We require our members to handle these misunderstandings in a Biblical way. This includes being willing to submit to legally binding arbitration rather than filing a lawsuit and also not attempting to require a “spiritual counselor” to appear in court or to provide his notes.

Our desire is to provide “wise, spiritual, godly counsel” to each person in our church. By sharing these guidelines, we hope the “Biblical counseling” offered at our church will help many become “mature in Christ.”



## Church Membership Matters

### **Commitment to Accountability and Church Discipline**

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds  
(Hebrews 10:24).*

Like all of our Relational Commitments, the principles and practices described below will apply to all Covenant Members of Beacon of Hope Church in Saint Paul.

#### **Accountability and Discipline Are Signs of God's Love**

God has established the church to reflect His character, wisdom and glory in the midst of a fallen world (Ephesians 3:10-11). He loves His church so much that he sent His Son to die for her (Ephesians 5:25). His ultimate purpose for His church is to present her as a gift to His Son; thus Scripture refers to the church as the "bride" of Christ (Revelation 19:7). For this reason the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are continually working to purify the church and bring her to maturity (Ephesians 5:25-27).

This does not mean that God expects the church to be made up of perfectly pure people. He knows that the best of churches are still companies of sinners who wrestle daily with remaining sin (1 John 1:8; Philippians 3:12). Therefore, it would be unbiblical for us to expect church members to live perfectly. What we can do, however, is confess our common struggle with sin and our mutual need for God's mercy and grace. We also can spur one another on toward maturity by encouraging and holding each other accountable to love, seek after, and obey God with all of our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30-31; Hebrews 10:24-25).

We sometimes refer to this process of mutual encouragement and accountability as "discipline." The Bible never presents church discipline as being negative, legalistic or harsh, as modern society does. True discipline originates from God himself and is always presented as a sign of genuine love. "The Lord disciplines those he loves" (Hebrews 12:6). "Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord, the man you teach from your law" (Psalm 94:12). "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline" (Revelation 3:19).

God's discipline in the church, like the discipline in a good family, is intended to be primarily positive, instructive and encouraging. This process, which is sometimes referred to as "formative discipline," involves preaching, teaching, prayer, personal Bible study, small group fellowship and countless other enjoyable activities that challenge and encourage us to love and serve God more wholeheartedly.



## Church Membership Matters

On rare occasions God's discipline, like the discipline in a family with growing children, also may have a corrective purpose. When we forget or disobey what God has taught us, he corrects us. One way he does this is to call the church to seek after us and lead us back onto the right track. This process, which is sometimes called "corrective" or "restorative" discipline, is likened in Scripture to a shepherd seeking after a lost sheep.

*If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off (Matthew 18:12-13).*

Thus, restorative or corrective discipline is never to be done in a harsh, vengeful or self-righteous manner. It is always to be carried out in humility and love, with the goals of restoring someone to a close walk with Christ (Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1), protecting others from harm (1 Corinthians 5:6), and showing respect for the honor and glory of God's name (1 Peter 2:12).

Biblical discipline is similar to the discipline we value in other aspects of life. We admire parents who consistently teach their children how to behave properly and lovingly discipline them when they disobey. We value music teachers who bring out the best in their students by teaching them proper technique and consistently pointing out their errors so they can play a piece of music properly. And we applaud athletic coaches who diligently teach their players to do what is right and correct them when they fumble, so that the team works well together and can compete for the championship.

Similarly, in the church, we need to be taught what is right and to be lovingly corrected when we do something contrary to what God teaches us in His Word. Therefore, we as a church are committed to help one another obey God's command to be "self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined" (Titus 1:8).

The elders and leaders of our church recognize that God has called them to an even higher level of accountability regarding their faith and conduct (James 3:1; 1 Timothy 5:19-20). Therefore, they are committed to listening humbly to loving correction from each other or from any member in our church, and, if necessary, to submitting themselves to the corrective discipline of our body.



## Church Membership Matters

### **Most Corrective Discipline Is Private, Personal and Informal**

God gives every believer grace to be self-disciplined. “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7; cf. Galatians 5:23). Thus discipline always begins as a personal matter and usually remains that way, as each of us studies God’s Word, seeks Him in prayer, and draws on His grace to identify and change sinful habits and grow in godliness.

But sometimes we are blind to our sins or so tangled in them that we cannot get free on our own. This is why the Bible says, “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently” (Galatians 6:1). In obedience to this command, we are committed to giving and receiving loving correction within our church whenever a sin (whether in word, behavior or doctrine) seems too serious to overlook (Proverbs 19:11).

If repeated private conversations do not lead another person to repentance, Jesus commands that we ask other brothers or sisters to get involved. “If he will not listen, take one or two others along” (Matthew 18:16). If informal conversations with these people fail to resolve the matter, then we may seek the involvement of more influential people, such as a small group leader, Sunday school teacher, church leader, or elder. If even these efforts fail to bring a brother or sister to repentance, and if the issue is too serious to overlook, we will move into what may be called “formal discipline.”

### **Formal Discipline May Involve the Entire Church**

If a member persistently refuses to listen to personal and informal correction to turn from speech or behavior that the Bible defines as sin, Jesus commands us to “tell it to the church” (Matthew 18:17a). This first involves informing one or more church elders about the situation. If the offense is not likely to cause imminent harm to others, our elders may approach the member privately to personally establish the facts and encourage repentance of any sin they discover. The member will be given every reasonable opportunity to explain and defend his or her actions. If the member recognizes his sin and repents, the matter usually ends there, unless a confession to additional people is needed.

If an offense is likely to harm others or lead them into sin, or cause division or disruption, our elders may accelerate the entire disciplinary process and move promptly to protect the church (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Titus 3:10-11).



## Church Membership Matters

As the disciplinary process progresses, our elders may impose a variety of sanctions to encourage repentance, including, but not limited to, private and public admonition, withholding of the Lord's Supper, removal from office, withdrawal of normal fellowship, and, as a last resort, removal from membership (Matthew 5:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Matthew 18:17).

If the straying member does not repent in response to private appeals from our elders, they may inform others in the church who may be able to influence that individual or be willing to pray for him or her, or people who might be harmed or affected by that person's behavior. This step may include close friends, a small group, a Sunday school class, or the entire congregation if our elders deem it to be appropriate (Matthew 18:17, 1 Timothy 5:20).

If, after a reasonable period of time, the member still refuses to change, then our elders may bring the situation before the congregation, with the recommendation that the member be removed from membership and normal fellowship. If the congregation supports that recommendation, we will treat the member as an unbeliever. This means that we will no longer treat the member as a fellow Christian. Instead of having casual, relaxed fellowship with the member, we will look for opportunities to lovingly bring the gospel to him or her, remind him or her of God's holiness and mercy, and call him or her to repent and put his or her faith in Christ (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:20).

We realize that our natural human response to correction often is to hide or run away from accountability (Genesis 3:8-10). To avoid falling into this age-old trap and to strengthen our church's ability to rescue us if we are caught in sin, we agree not to run away from this church to avoid corrective discipline. Therefore, we waive our right to withdraw from membership or accountability while discipline is pending against us. Although we are free to stop attending the church at any time, we agree that a withdrawal while discipline is pending will not stop the process of discipline until the church has fulfilled its God-given responsibilities to encourage our repentance and restoration, and to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, as described in these Commitments (Matthew 18:12-14; Galatians 6:1; Hebrews 13:17).

If a member leaves the church while discipline is in effect or is being considered, and our elders learn that he or she is attending another church, they may inform that church of the situation and ask its leaders to encourage the member to repent and be reconciled to the Lord and to any people he or she has offended. This action is intended



## Church Membership Matters

both to help the member find freedom from his or her sin and to warn the other church about the harm that he or she might do to their members (see Matthew 18:12-14; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 3 John 1:9-10).

Loving restoration always stands at the heart of the disciplinary process. If a member repents, and our elders confirm his or her sincerity, we will rejoice together and gladly imitate God's forgiveness by restoring the person to fellowship within the body (see Matthew 18:13; Luke 15:3-7, 11-32; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; Colossians 3:12-14).

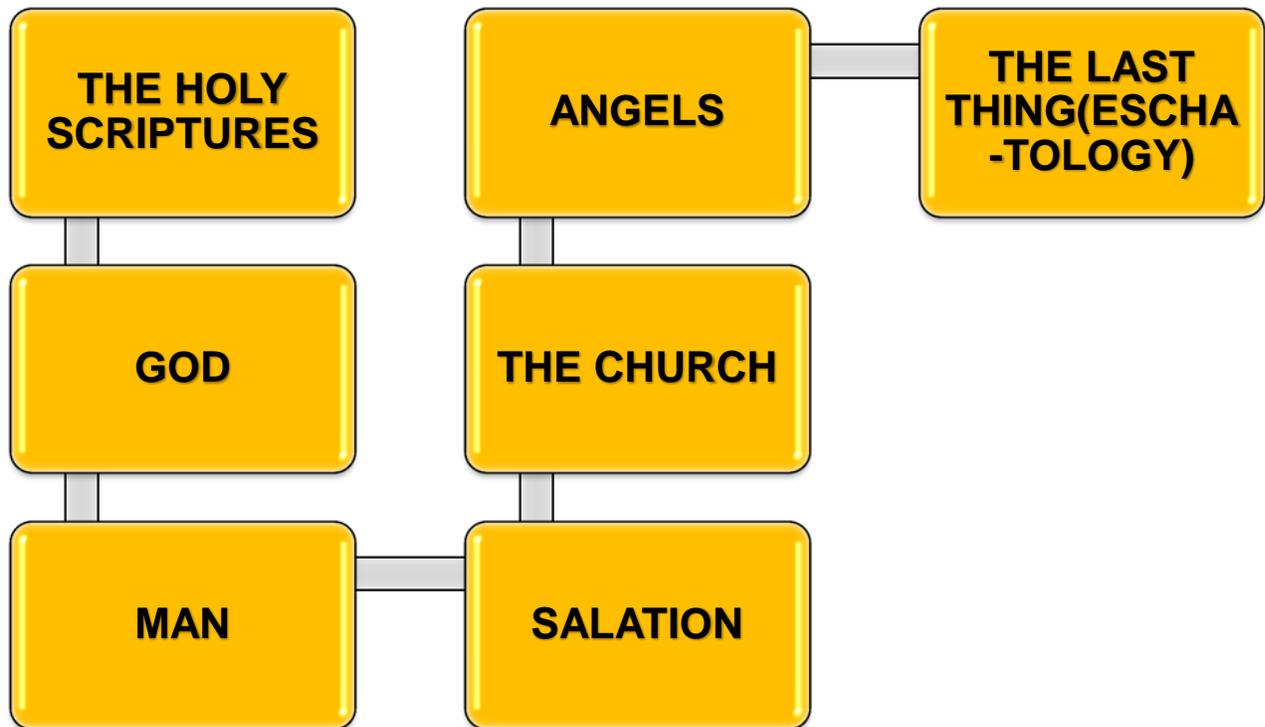
People who have been disciplined by another church will not be allowed to become members at Beacon of Hope until they have repented of their sins and made a reasonable effort to be reconciled, or our elders have determined that the discipline of the former church was not biblically appropriate.

As we pursue the blessings of accountability and church discipline, we will hold fast to the promise of Scripture: "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:10-11).



Church Membership Matters

## What We Teach at Beacon of Hope Church





## Church Membership Matters

# What We Teach at Beacon of Hope Church

### THE HOLY SCRIPTURES<sup>4</sup>

We teach that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, and thus the 66 books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2 Timothy 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed. We teach the literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17).

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; Matthew 24:35; John 10:35; John 16:12-13; John 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20-21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16).

We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

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<sup>4</sup> This document is adapted from Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, CA



## Church Membership Matters

### GOD

We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

#### **God the Father**

We teach that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither the author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6); He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

#### **God the Son**

We teach that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; John 14:9).

We teach that God the Father created according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2).

We teach that in the incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity accepted all the essential



## Church Membership Matters

characteristics of humanity and so became the God-Man (Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9).

We teach that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; John 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35); that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

We teach that, in the incarnation, the second Person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God, assumed the place of a Son, and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

We teach that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; Romans 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

We teach that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; John 14:19; Romans 1:4; Romans 4:25; Romans 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).



## Church Membership Matters

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His Body, unto Himself at the rapture, and returning with His church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23):

Believers (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)

Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46)

Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15)

As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of His Body the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

### **God the Holy Spirit**

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; Acts 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7).

We teach that the work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost, when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also



## Church Membership Matters

indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today, and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and are not now evidenced in a normative way<sup>5</sup> or need be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

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<sup>5</sup> Normative in the sense that these sign gifts are no longer evidenced in the church in the normative sense in which they were evidenced in the early church. This does not mean that God is not able nor does not perform miracles today, but only that speaking in tongues, the gift of healing and miracles, etc. are no longer operating in the same normative sense as they were at the time of the early church. Paul's directives for the use of tongues also provide guidelines for the proper use of tongues in a church, 1) they are a sign for unbelievers, 1 Corinthians 14:22; 2) only 2 or 3 at most are to speak in a meeting, 1 Corinthians 14:27; 3) women are not to speak in the meeting, 1 Corinthians 14:34; 4) all things are to be done properly and in an orderly manner.



## Church Membership Matters

### **MAN**

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, became subject to the wrath of God, and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17; Genesis 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

We teach that, because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; Romans 5:10-12).

### **SALVATION**

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

#### **Regeneration**

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24) when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word



## Church Membership Matters

of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

### **Election**

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith, and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part or to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

### **Justification**

We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter



## Church Membership Matters

2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

### **Sanctification**

We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 10:10, Hebrews 14; Hebrews 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that there is also by the work of the Holy Spirit a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17,19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23).

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

### **Security**

We teach that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; John 6:37-40; John 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; Romans 8:1, Romans 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of



## Church Membership Matters

Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-22; Romans 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, Galatians 25-26; Titus 2:11-14).

### **Separation**

We teach that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase (2 Corinthians 6:14 -7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We teach that, out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us, and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11).

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10).

### **THE CHURCH**

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

We teach that the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; Ephesians 5:32).



## Church Membership Matters

We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23,27; Acts 20:17,28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor-teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

We teach that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Each local church, however, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. The elders should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government as well (Acts 15:19-31; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19;



## Church Membership Matters

Acts 2:38-42) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

We teach the calling of all saints to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12).

We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

We teach that there were two kinds of gifts given the early church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12); and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 13:13-14:12; Revelation 13:13-14). The only gifts in operation today are those non-revelatory equipping gifts given for edification (Romans 12:6-8).

We teach that no one possesses the gift of healing today, but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42). Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1



## Church Membership Matters

Corinthians 11:28-32). We also teach that, whereas the elements of Communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, participation in the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ, who indwells every believer, and so is present, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

### **ANGELS**

#### **Holy Angels**

We teach that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; Revelation 19:10; Revelation 22:9).

#### **Fallen Angels**

We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1-15).

We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10); the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20); and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

### **LAST THINGS (ESCHATOLOGY)**

#### **Death**

We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8), that there is a separation of soul and body (Philippians 1:21-24), and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), which initiates the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 1 Corinthians 50-54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).



## Church Membership Matters

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13-15).

We teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:13-15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28-29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41-46), cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

### **The Rapture of the Church**

We teach the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ before the seven-year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13) to translate His church from this earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:11) and, between this event and His glorious return with His saints, to reward believers according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

### **The Tribulation Period**

We teach that immediately following the removal of the church from the earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; Daniel 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 16), and that these judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Matthew 24:27-31; Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12). At that time the Old Testament and tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged (Daniel 12:2-3; Revelation 20:4-6). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-31; 25:31-46).

### **The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign**

We teach that, after the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-11; Acts 2:29-30) and establish His messianic kingdom for 1,000 years on the earth (Revelation 20:1-7). During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Revelation 19:11-16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17-27; Revelation 20:1-7).



## Church Membership Matters

We teach that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Isaiah 65:17- 25; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Zechariah 8:1-17) to restore them to the land that they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1-26), but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Romans 11:25-29).

We teach that this time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isaiah 11; Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 36:33-38), and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Revelation 20:7).

### **The Judgment of the Lost**

We teach that following the release of Satan after the 1,000-year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10), whereupon Christ, who is the Judge of all men (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne Judgment.

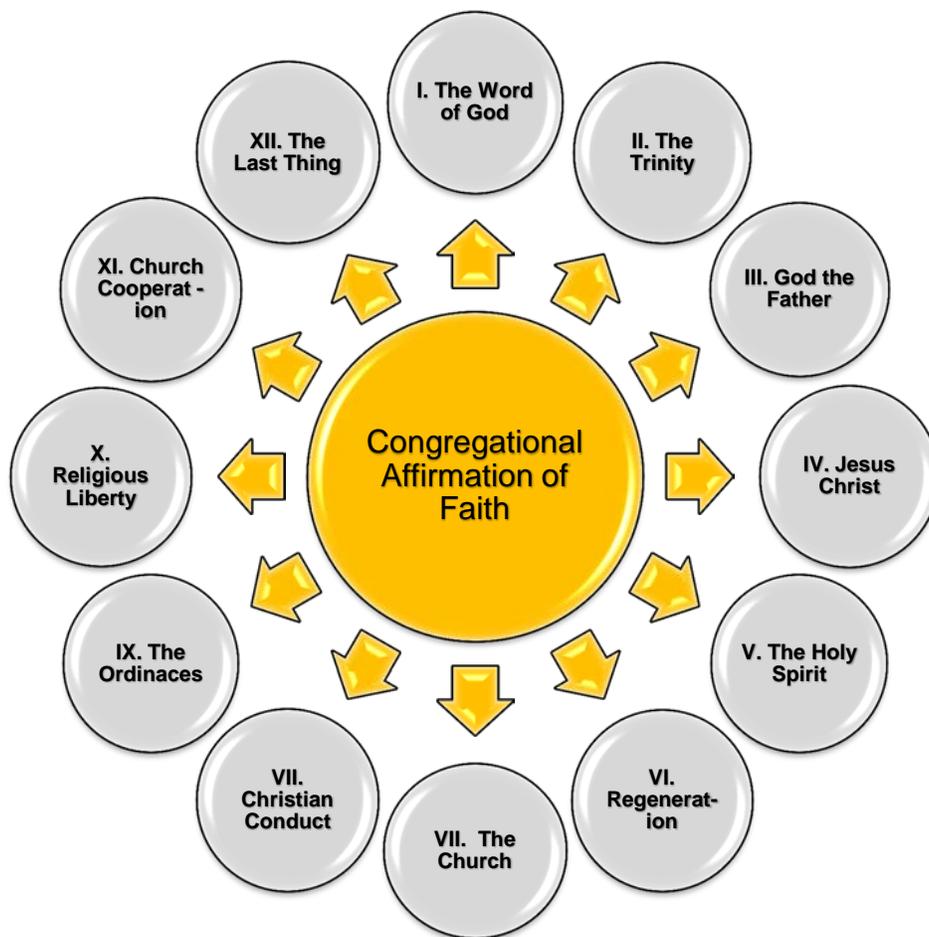
We teach that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment (Romans 14:10-13), they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15).

### **Eternity**

We teach that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7-15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth, wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15, Revelation 21-22). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21-22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28), that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).

**Membership in Practice**

**Congregational Affirmation of Faith**





## Church Membership Matters

# Membership in Practice

## Congregational Affirmation of Faith

### **I. The Word of God**

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Mark 13:31; John 8:31-32; John 20:31; Acts 20:32

### **II. The Trinity**

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons; that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption. Genesis 1:1, 26; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1, 3; John 4:24; Romans 1:19-20; Ephesians 4:5-6

### **III. God the Father**

We believe in God the father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He infallibly foreknows all that shall come to pass, that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. Matthew 23:9; Luke 10:21-22; John 3:16; John 6:27; Romans 1:7; 1 Timothy 1:1-2; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 1 Peter 1:3; Revelation 1:6

### **IV. Jesus Christ**

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth. Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1; John 20:28; Romans 9:5; Romans 8:48; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:21-23; John 20:30-31; Matthew 20:28; Ephesians 1:4; Acts 1:11; Romans 5:6-8; Romans 6:9-10; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Timothy 3:16



## Church Membership Matters

### **V. The Holy Spirit**

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide. John 14:16-17, 26; John 15:26-27; John 16:9-14; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 6:19; Galatians 5:22-26

### **VI. Regeneration**

We believe that man was created by God in His own image; that he sinned and thereby incurred physical, spiritual and eternal death, which is separation from God; that as a consequence, all human beings are born with a sinful nature and are sinners by choice and therefore under condemnation. We believe that those who repent and forsake sin and trust Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and become new creatures, delivered from condemnation and receive eternal life. Genesis 1:26; Genesis 2:17; Genesis 3; Genesis 3:19; Genesis 5:2; Psalm 51:7; Proverbs 28:13; Ecclesiastes 2:11; Jeremiah 17:9; John 1:13; John 3:14; John 3:16; John 5:24; John 5:30; John 7:13; John 8:12; John 10:26; Romans 3:19; Romans 5:19; Romans 8:1; Romans 9:22; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; James 1:14; 1 John 1:9; Revelation 19:3, 20; Revelation 20:10, 14, 15; Revelation 21:18

### **VII. The Church**

We believe in the universal church, a living, spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and associated for worship, work, and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost world. Acts 1:8; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:19; Ephesians 5:19-21; Hebrews 10:23-25

### **VIII. Christian Conduct**

We believe that a Christian should live for the glory of God and the well-being of his fellow men; that his conduct should be blameless before the world; that he should be a faithful steward of his possessions; and that he should seek to realize for himself and others the full stature of maturity in Christ. John 14:15; John 14:23-24; Romans 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 4:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9; Colossians 1:9-10; Hebrews 12:1-2; 1 John 2:3-6



## Church Membership Matters

### **IX. The Ordinances**

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church, baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of the believer in water into the name of the triune God. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for the commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

### **X. Religious Liberty**

We believe that every human being has direct relationship with God, and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that each church is independent and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; that therefore Church and State must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of each other. Romans 14:7-9, 12; 1 Timothy 2:5

### **XI. Church Cooperation**

We believe that local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in a denominational organization. Such an organization, whether a regional or district conference, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in a conference is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Acts 15:36, 41; Acts 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 1:1-3; Revelation 1:4, 10, 11

### **XII. The Last Things**

We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal felicity of the righteous and the endless suffering of the wicked. Matthew 16:27; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 15; Philipians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2 Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13; Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15



## Church Membership Matters

### Membership Covenant

God, by His grace alone, has led me to repent of my sin and believe upon Jesus Christ, trusting Him alone as my Savior and Lord. As one who has been baptized as a believer in Christ, I desire to unite with this church family. Therefore, in humble reliance upon the Holy Spirit, I will endeavor to the following:

- To faithfully attend the church's worship services. (Acts 2:24; Hebrews 10:25)
- To diligently guard the truth, upholding the standard of sound words recorded in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1; 6:3-4, 20; 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:14-15, 24-26; 4:3-4)
- To wholeheartedly support, love, and care for the church's ministries and members, offering:
  - My prayers (2 Corinthians 13:9; Ephesians 1:15-20; 3:14-21; 6:18; Philippians 1:3-6; 9-11; Colossians 1:3-12; 4:2-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4; 5:17; 1 Peter 1:22)
  - My financial gifts (Leviticus 27:30; Malachi 3:10; Matthew 23:23; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; 1 Timothy 5:17-18)
  - My service (Ezekiel 2:36:23b, 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; 12:4-11, 25-26, Ephesians 4:11-16; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 10:24; 1 Peter 2:5, 9, 12; 4:10; Jude 17-21)
- To boldly witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, living a transformed life and sharing the gospel as God gives me the enabling grace and as often as possible. (Matthew 4:19; 28:19; Acts 1:8; 5:42; 1 Peter 3:15)
- To actively pursue personal holiness before God, loving others as Christ has loved us. (John 13:34-35, 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 1 John 3:3)
- To diligently promote unity of the church, being a peacemaker with all in the body of Christ (Matthew 5:9; 23-26; Romans 12:18-21; 14:19; Ephesians 4:1-3; Philippians 2:1-4; Colossians 3:12-14; 2 Timothy 2:22; Hebrews 12:14)
- To respectfully follow the leaders of this church, trusting and supporting their leadership (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17-20; Hebrews 13:7, 17)
- To humbly submit to the church's discipline, graciously repenting when approached about personal sin, and loving restoring others who become entangled in sin (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:6-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15; 2 Thessalonians 3:5-6; Ephesians 4:29; Philippians 2:14)

I have read and understand Beacon of Hope's Congregation Affirmation and the Relational Commitments. I will endeavor, by the enabling grace of God and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to live in accordance with them for the glory of God.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



beacon of hope

Church Membership Matters

# Membership Questionnaire

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (C) \_\_\_\_\_

MARITAL STATUS: (circle one) Single / Married / Divorced

SPOUSE: \_\_\_\_\_

## CHILDREN

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Church Membership Matters

In which of the two ways below would you like to become a member of Beacon of Hope? (Circle one)

1. I would like to join Beacon of Hope by transfer of letter another church and I am currently a member in good standing at:

Name of Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number and Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

2. I would like to become a member of Beacon of Hope by confession of faith that I have repented of my sins, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and Savior.

Please write a brief summary of the gospel message. What must someone know in order to be saved?

Please give a brief summary of your repentance and belief in Christ as Lord and Savior (use additional pages if necessary).

Have you been baptized by immersion since salvation? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways do you see proof (or "fruit") of salvation present in your life since your profession?

In what areas of ministry do you most desire to serve?