



## **Cross of Grace Church**

### **Membership Agreement DRAFT – Jan 2016**

#### **Outline**

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- 2. Statement on the Nature & Mission of the Church
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  - Why membership?
  - What is our mission as a church?
- 3. Statement of Faith
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## **1) Membership Covenant**

*The following is the key covenant that members commit themselves to as they join the church. This covenant is supported and explained in the following sections.*

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We confess together as members of Cross of Grace Church:

That a holy and loving God made the world and humanity (Gen 1-2); that humanity chose sin and rebelled against God (Gen 3), coming under God's just judgement (Rom 1-3); that God sent Jesus, both fully God and fully man (John 20:28, Heb 4:15); that Jesus lived a blameless and righteous life (Heb 4:15); that Jesus was crucified and bore the wrath of God in the place of his people (Romans 5:9-11, 2 Cor 5:21, 1 Peter 2:24); that Jesus rose again and is seated at the right hand of God (Romans 8:34); that all who place their faith in Jesus will be saved from their sins, redeemed, justified, and adopted (Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 3:13, Romans 3:23-25, Ephesians 1:5). This gospel we confess as of first importance in our lives and our church (1 Cor 15:1-5).

To this end, by the grace of God, we commit solemnly and joyfully together in Christ:

We will follow Jesus together as disciples of Jesus through Bible reading, prayer, spiritual disciplines, and a pursuit of holiness and purity (2 Tim 3:14-17, Acts 17:11, 1 Cor 9:24-27, 1 Thess 5:17, Gal 5:16-24).

We will not forsake assembling together, but will faithfully attend our corporate worship and other times of fellowship (Heb 10:25, Acts 2:42-47). We will practice and pursue together the biblical ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper (Acts 2:38, Matt 28:19, 1 Cor 11:24-25).

We will walk together in unity and brotherly love (Ephesians 4:1-3); praying for and serving one another (James 5:16, Gal 5:13), rejecting gossip and slander and division (Ps 15:1-5, Titus 3:10), encouraging one another and building one another up in the faith (Eph 4:29). We will practice with love, and receive when necessary, biblical church discipline (Matt 18:15-20).

We will follow the leadership of our Chief Shepherd, as expressed through his infallible Word, and support and follow appointed leaders in the church as they follow Christ (1 Peter 5:1-5, Heb 13:7). We will, if so appointed, seek to lead others with the heart of Christ and submitted to Christ (1 Peter 5:1-5).

We will seek to make disciples of Jesus by proclaiming and adorning the gospel of Jesus before our family, friends, and neighbors, and pass on the gospel to future generations (1 Peter 2:9-10, Titus 2:10, Ps 78:1-8).

We will steward our talents, time, and resources for the support of our local church body, the care of our members, and the advance of the gospel (Matt 25:14-30, 1 Peter 4:10, 2 Cor 9:6-7).

We will, if we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and teaching of God's Word.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be will us all. Amen.

*I have read and agreed to the membership covenant*

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date* \_\_\_\_\_

*I have read and reviewed the following documents (Initial):*

*Statement of Faith* \_\_\_\_\_

*Statement on Nature & Mission of the Church* \_\_\_\_\_

*Statement on Marriage* \_\_\_\_\_

*Contact Information*

*Name* \_\_\_\_\_

*Phone* \_\_\_\_\_

*Email* \_\_\_\_\_

## **2) Statement on the Nature & Mission of the Church**

### **1. What is the Church?**

#### The Church Is Key to God's Redemptive Plan

In the beginning God created humanity to be in perfect relationship with him, and in perfect relationship with one another, living under his good rule. But humanity rejected God and chose sin instead (Gen 1-3), breaking this relationship with God and one another. So God launched a plan to restore and redeem a people for his own possession. This people and plan were glimpsed and foreshadowed in the Old Testament people of Israel but find full expression in the New Testament church (Gen 12, Is 49:6). The pictures used to describe the church help us see how closely God relates to it: the bride of Christ (Eph 5), the body of Christ (Col 1:18), a building on the Cornerstone (1 Peter 2:1-10), a flock with a Shepherd (1 Peter 5).

#### The Church Is God's Vehicle for Mission Today

The church is intended by Christ to be the unique vehicle for his plan for the world and the church receives this commission to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28, Acts 1-2). God intends to use the church proclaim the gospel of Jesus to make disciples, and to model a community of disciples shaped by this gospel (1 Peter 2, Eph 2). God has seen fit to accomplish this mission as variously gifted people come together, working as part of a body, to accomplish his will (1 Cor 12).

### **2. Why church membership?**

#### Membership Matters Because Disciples Don't Follow Jesus Alone

Disciples are not called to follow Jesus alone, but in specific and real community with a specific and real local group of believers. This was the pattern of Jesus' disciples throughout the gospels and in the early church. Overwhelmingly, when the New Testament is speaking of "the church" it's speaking of a specific local church. Christians participate in all that the church is in a universal sense by participating in a specific local church with real disciples around them.

#### Membership Expresses the Scriptural Picture of Life Together

The pictures used to describe the church connote a close relationship: living stones built together, one body working together, members of a family functioning in a household (1 Peter 2, Ephesians 2, 1 Cor 12). This kind of life is expressed as believers come together in close fellowship, worshipping together, confessing sin to one another, serving one another, encouraging one another to holiness (Acts 2, James 5:16, 1 Peter 4:9, 1 Thess 5:11, Mark 10:42-25). Church membership is a key way this relationship is defined and expressed. As a result, disciples in New Testament churches had a clear understanding of who was part of that church body and who was not. This was necessary for them to hold one another accountable, and necessary so that local church leaders knew who they would give an account for (1 Cor 5, Heb 13:17). While these biblical principles can be expressed in various practical ways across cultures and centuries, we express this through formal church membership

## Membership Provides a Process for Commitment and Involvement

In light of all that Scripture says about disciples and their relationship to the local church, Christians must prayerfully and soberly consider where God is calling them. This includes considering the theology and mission of the church in light of Scripture and their individual call from the Lord. At Cross of Grace those exploring membership go through a class to understand the church, its beliefs, and its mission. During this process a prospective member can ask questions and interact with members and leaders at the church so that they can make a faith-filled commitment either at Cross of Grace or at another church.

Cross of Grace members are united around our mission, our statement of faith, and our core values. While complete agreement on secondary issues of theology is not required for membership be aware that the elders will teach and defend our statement of faith through regular preaching and teaching. Additionally, while complete agreement on the application of our mission and key structures of our church is not required, our elders will lead the church toward the mission of making disciples according to these things. We do require new members to have clear agreement on primary doctrinal issues, especially the basic gospel message (1 Cor 15:1-15).

### **3. What is our mission at Cross of Grace Church?**

In light of the above, as a local church we state our mission this way: *Cross of Grace Church exists to make disciples, with the gospel of grace, for the glory of God.*

- *Make disciples* –We are called together as a local church in order to fulfill the mission Jesus has given us in Matt 28:18-20 because this mission takes all of us with our various gifts and talents and resources to fulfill.
- *With the gospel of grace* –We make disciples by proclaiming the good news of Jesus life, death, and resurrection, and testifying to the reality of that message with our lives and actions (1 Cor 15:1-5, Titus 2:10).
- *For the glory of God* –We exist as a church not first for ourselves or even for the world around us, but for the glory of God himself (Is 26:8, 1 Cor 10:31).

We walk this out together in some key ways:

- *Sunday morning*: We gather to sing, study, and fellowship around the gospel of Jesus
- *Community groups*: We meet together in specific groups to live in community as we apply the gospel and reach out around us
- *Equipping ministries*: We bring specific teaching and application to different seasons of life or specific groups of people
- *Mission Opportunities*: We work together to reach our neighborhoods and the nations around us
- *Everyday Discipleship*: We apply the gospel personally, walk with other disciples, and take the gospel to those around us

While some of our structures may change, our mission and our theology help guide us forward as a church.

### **3) Cross of Grace Church Statement of Faith<sup>1</sup>**

#### **The Scriptures**

We accept the Bible, including the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, as the written Word of God. The Bible is the only essential and infallible record of God's self-disclosure to mankind. It leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Being given by God, the Scriptures are both fully and verbally inspired by God. Therefore, as originally given, the Bible is free of error in all it teaches. Each book is to be interpreted according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord who speaks through it in living power. All believers are exhorted to study the Scriptures and diligently apply them to their lives. The Scriptures are the authoritative and normative rule and guide of all Christian life, practice, and doctrine. They are totally sufficient and must not be added to, superseded, or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation, or worldly wisdom. Every doctrinal formulation, whether of creed, confession, or theology must be put to the test of the full counsel of God in Holy Scripture.

#### **God is triune**

There is one God: infinite, eternal, almighty, and perfect in holiness, truth, and love. In the unity of the godhead there are three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, co-existent, co-equal, co-eternal. The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Holy Spirit, yet each is truly Deity. One God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is the foundation of Christian faith and life.

#### **God the Father**

God the Father is the Creator of heaven and earth. By his Word and for his glory, he freely and supernaturally created the world from nothing. Through the same Word he daily sustains all his creatures. He rules over all and is the only Sovereign. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He is faithful to every promise, works all things together for good to those who love him, and in his unfathomable grace gave his Son, Jesus Christ, for mankind's redemption. He made man for fellowship with himself, and intended that all creation should live to the praise of his glory.

#### **Jesus Christ**

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was the eternal Word made flesh, supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He was perfect in nature, teaching, and obedience. He is fully God and fully man. He was always with God and is God. Through him all things came into being and were created. He was before all things and in him all things hold together by the word of his power. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, and in him dwells the fullness of the godhead bodily. He is the only Savior for the sins of the world, having shed his blood and died a vicarious death on Calvary's cross. By his death in our place, he revealed the divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God. Having redeemed us from sin, the third day he rose bodily from the grave, victorious over death and the powers of darkness, and for a period of 40 days appeared

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<sup>1</sup> Shared in common with all Sovereign Grace churches: <http://sovereigngrace.com/statement-of-faith>

to more than 500 witnesses, performing many convincing proofs of his resurrection. He ascended into heaven where, at God's right hand, he intercedes for his people and rules as Lord over all. He is the Head of his body, the Church, and should be adored, loved, served, and obeyed by all.

### **The Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Through the proclamation of the gospel he persuades men to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord. By the same Spirit a person is led to trust in divine mercy. The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth, and dwells within the regenerate. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son, who in turn came to glorify the Father. He will lead the Church into a right understanding and rich application of the truth of God's Word. He is to be respected, honored, and worshiped as God the Third Person of the Trinity.

### **Man**

God made man—male and female—in his own image, as the crown of creation, that man might have fellowship with him. Tempted by Satan, man rebelled against God. Being estranged from his Maker, yet responsible to him, he became subject to divine wrath, inwardly depraved and, apart from a special work of grace, utterly incapable of returning to God. This depravity is radical and pervasive. It extends to his mind, will, and affections. Unregenerate man lives under the dominion of sin and Satan. He is at enmity with God, hostile toward God, and hateful of God. Fallen, sinful people, whatever their character or attainments, are lost and without hope apart from salvation in Christ.

### **The Gospel**

Jesus Christ is the gospel. The good news is revealed in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Christ's crucifixion is the heart of the gospel, his resurrection is the power of the gospel, and his ascension is the glory of the gospel. Christ's death is a substitutionary and propitiatory sacrifice to God for our sins. It satisfies the demands of God's holy justice and appeases his holy wrath. It also demonstrates his mysterious love and reveals his amazing grace. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other name by which men must be saved. At the heart of all sound doctrine is the cross of Jesus Christ and the infinite privilege that redeemed sinners have of glorifying God because of what he has accomplished. Therefore, we want all that takes place in our hearts, churches, and ministries to proceed from and be related to the cross.

### **Man's response to the gospel**

Man's response to the gospel is rooted and grounded in the free and unconditional election of God for his own pleasure and glory. It is also true that the message of the gospel is only effectual to those who genuinely repent of their sins and, by God's grace, put saving faith in Christ. This gospel of grace is to be sincerely preached to all men in all nations. Biblical repentance is characterized by a changed life, and saving faith is evidenced by kingdom service or works. While neither repentance nor works save, unless a person is willing to deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow Christ, he cannot become his disciple.

### **Man's inheritance through the gospel**

Salvation, the free gift of God, is provided by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. Anyone turning from sin in repentance and looking to Christ and his substitutionary death receives the gift of eternal life and is declared righteous by God as a free gift. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. He is justified and fully accepted by God. Through Christ's atonement for sin an individual is reconciled to God as Father and becomes his child. The believer is forgiven the debt of his sin and, via the miracle of regeneration, liberated from the law of sin and death into the freedom of God's Spirit.

### **Sanctification**

The Holy Spirit is the active agent in our sanctification and seeks to produce his fruit in us as our minds are renewed and we are conformed to the image of Christ. Though indwelling sin remains a reality, as we are led by the Spirit we grow in the knowledge of the Lord, freely keeping his commandments and endeavoring to so live in the world that all people may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. All believers are exhorted to persevere in the faith, knowing they will have to give an account to God for their every thought, word, and deed. The spiritual disciplines, especially Bible study, prayer, worship and confession, are a vital means of grace in this regard. Nevertheless, the believer's ultimate confidence to persevere is based in the sure promise of God to preserve his people until the end, which is most certain.

### **Empowered by the Spirit**

In addition to effecting regeneration and sanctification, the Holy Spirit also empowers believers for Christian witness and service. While all genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion, the New Testament indicates the importance of an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion as well. Being indwelt by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit are theologically distinct experiences. The Holy Spirit desires to fill each believer continually with increased power for Christian life and witness, and imparts his supernatural gifts for the edification of the Body and for various works of ministry in the world. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the church of the first century are available today, are vital for the mission of the church, and are to be earnestly desired and practiced.

### **The Church**

God by his Word and Spirit creates the Church, calling sinful men out of the whole human race into the fellowship of Christ's Body. By the same Word and Spirit, he guides and preserves that new redeemed humanity. The Church is not a religious institution or denomination. Rather, the Church universal is made up of those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ and have personally appropriated the gospel. The Church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It also exists to serve him by faithfully doing his will in the earth. This involves a commitment to see the gospel preached and churches planted in all the world for a testimony. The ultimate mission of the Church is the making of disciples through the preaching of the gospel. When God transforms human nature, this then becomes the chief means of society's transformation. Upon conversion, newly redeemed men and women are added to a

local church, in which they devote themselves to teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayer.

All members of the Church universal are to be a vital and committed part of a local church. In this context they are called to walk out the New Covenant as the people of God, and demonstrate the reality of the kingdom of God. The ascended Christ has given gift ministries to the church (including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) for the equipping of Christ's body that it might mature and grow. Through the gift ministries, all members of the Church are to be nurtured and equipped for the work of ministry. Women play a vital role in the life of the church, but in keeping with God's created design they are not permitted "to teach or to exercise authority over a man" (1 Timothy 2:12 ESV). Leadership in the church is male. In the context of the local church, God's people receive pastoral care and leadership and the opportunity to employ their God-given gifts in his service in relation to one another and to the world.

### **Sacraments of the Church**

Water baptism is intended only for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become his disciple. Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the Church, oneself, and the world, a believer should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a visual demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of his death and resurrection. It signifies that his former way of life has been put to death, and vividly depicts a person's release from the mastery of sin.

As with water baptism, the Lord's Supper is to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ. This ordinance symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on our behalf, and is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. As we partake of the Lord's Supper with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls, and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body.

### **The Consummation**

The Consummation of all things includes the visible, personal and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the translation of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the Consummation, Satan with his hosts and all those outside Christ are finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, enduring eternal punishment, but the righteous, in glorious bodies, shall live and reign with him forever. Married to Christ as his Bride, the Church will be in the presence of God forever, serving him and giving him unending praise and glory. Then shall the eager expectation of creation be fulfilled and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God who makes all things new.

## 4) Statement on Marriage

Today there are few lives that have not been touched by the painful facts of divorce. As Christians who have turned away from sin and turned to Christ let us remember the words of Romans 8:1 “There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” As we look ahead we should seek to walk out marriage in a God-glorifying way. While God has, from the beginning, intended that marriage be lifelong<sup>2</sup> and glorify God by reflecting the relationship of Christ to his church<sup>3</sup>, there are times when our Lord permits a believer to seek a divorce without sinning against God or a spouse. The two conditions under which this may happen are:

- When a spouse commits sins that involves sexual contact with another person<sup>4</sup>
- When an unbelieving spouse abandons a marriage<sup>5</sup>

It is important to note that God permits divorce in such cases. Divorce is not required, nor will the church encourage a spouse to divorce when he or she has faith toward God for the marriage to be restored—even when the situations listed above exist. For the church to condone a divorce in these cases, the spouse should submit the facts of his or her marital situation to the pastors for examination in light of Scripture. If a spouse who is a member of the church should seek a divorce from another member due to abandonment, he or she should usually first wait for the church to follow its practice of church discipline to the end of treating the sinning spouse as an unbeliever before divorce is an option.

Separated spouses awaiting a pending divorce should consider themselves married until the day a civil court declares the divorce final and legally recognized. They should thus conduct themselves in the church as married persons. If a divorced person becomes a member of the church, he or she must understand that remarriage will only be condoned by the church when the circumstances prior to the divorce, or following after the divorce, fall under the two conditions listed above. If the circumstances of the divorce do not conform to what Scripture deems acceptable, the divorced person should consider before God whether he or she should seek reconciliation with their former spouse. He or she should also seek to confess to God and to his or her former spouse any sins committed in the seeking of a divorce that did not comply with the teaching of Scripture.

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<sup>2</sup>Matthew 19:4-5; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 <sup>3</sup>Ephesians 5:22-33 <sup>4</sup>Matthew 5:31-32 <sup>5</sup>1 Corinthians 7:12-16