

Grace & Truth Bible Church

Membership Covenant

Church membership is a privileged, covenant relationship between each member and the local church body. Membership in a biblically faithful New Testament church does not save, but it is a reflection of salvation, in that it is an obedient submission to the Headship of Jesus Christ. The local church is a body of people who profess and give evidence that they have repented of their sinful condition and have been saved from God's wrath against sin. They are saved by God's grace alone, for His glory alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. When an individual enters into a membership covenant with a local church, the church is publicly acknowledging the authenticity of this individual's salvation. Therefore, church membership is limited to those whose lives demonstrate a willingness to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, as revealed by an ever-increasing lifestyle of fruitfulness. Such transformation is produced by a faithful commitment to God's Word, prayer, and fellowship with other believers.

Membership in the local church is an especially important means by which we separate ourselves from the overtones of isolated individualism and self-rule that have become increasingly characteristic of our culture. This influence has allowed many professing Christians to develop an inaccurate understanding of the believer's relationship to the local church. Scripture commands that we cannot live the Christian life independent of a meaningful relationship with a local body of believers. God is not only concerned about the individual relationship each of us has with Him; God is also concerned about the degree to which we invest ourselves in the lives of others, and the degree to which we allow others to invest their lives in us. When we join the church, we are uniting our lives to know and be known by each other. We are agreeing to uphold an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other. We are also agreeing to encourage each other when we need to be reminded of God's work in our lives, or when we need to be challenged about inconsistencies in our Christian walk. In return, the body is strengthened by the ministry of each member's unique gifts and fruitfulness, as each of us is edified towards an ever-deepening relationship with Christ that continues to transform our lives and the lives of those around us.

Therefore, we covenant together to:

Attend Regularly

A member's pattern of attendance should be characterized by a commitment to the gatherings of the church. This means attending more than just the weekly worship gathering. A converted heart will long for the preaching of God's word and the fellowship of the church family.

Esteem the Lord's Table

The Lord's Table is a glorious reminder of the cross, and is a blessed privilege intended to preserve the harmony of our fellowship with Christ and each other.

Pray Faithfully

A member is expected to develop a habit of unceasing prayer, praying for the body corporately and individual members specifically. In addition, we are to pray fervently for the lost.

Give Faithfully

A member is expected to commit their time, energy, and material resources for the growth of our fellow members and the material needs of the church.

Evangelize Deliberately

A member is expected to embrace a willingness to be stretched outside of their comfort-zone in order to reap the joy of an ever-increasing faithfulness to the Great Commission. In the power of God's strength, we cooperate with the local body to proclaim the Gospel within our local sphere of

influence individually. As a body, we spread the gospel around our country and the world by providing support to missionaries or organizations of like faith and practice.

Embrace Accountability

Members of this church recognize that any who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates Scripture as determined by the Elder Team, shall be subject to church discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18. Scriptural passages, such as Christ's teaching in Matthew 18:15-17, outline steps to be taken prior to public discipline of a member:

1. The sinning individual is confronted privately
2. The sinning individual is confronted by a small group (2-3 people)
3. The sinning individual's failure to repent is announced to the church
4. The sinning individual is removed from fellowship

Church discipline at GTBC embraces the following principles:

- We must be quick to overlook minor offenses, taking care that our offence is not a matter of personal preference (Proverbs 19:11, Ephesians 4:1-3).
- It shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring individual's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct such erring individual in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If the erring individual does not heed this warning, then...
- The warning member shall again go to the erring individual, seeking his or her repentance, but accompanied by one or two individuals who shall confirm that the sin has occurred or is continuing to occur, and/or that the erring individual has been appropriately confronted and has refused to repent. The first and second warnings may occur with no specified time interval. If the erring individual still refuses to heed this warning, then...
- It shall be brought to the attention of the Elder Team. If the Elder Team determines—after thorough investigation in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Timothy 5:18—that there is corroborating evidence that the erring individual has sinned or is continuing to sin, that he or she has been appropriately confronted, and that he or she has refused to repent, then the Elders shall inform the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly scheduled worship service in order that the church may call the erring individual to repentance. If the erring individual demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect may be given at a regularly scheduled worship service. If, however, the erring individual does not repent in response to the church in its collective call to repentance, then...
- He or she shall be publicly dismissed from the fellowship and/or membership of the church at a regularly scheduled worship service. If the erring individual, after such dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement before the Elder Team, then he or she shall be publicly restored to all the rights, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of fellowship and/or membership.