



Introduction to Advance Partnership

History - Advance Community Church began with a night of prayer, vision, and open discussion in late October of 2013. There were just over a dozen adults and more than twenty children. In early November, the congregation and leadership of St Thomas Church in the Fields invited Advance to start meeting for weekly "Boot Camp" (church planting training) on Sunday evenings. Community Groups and Bible Studies began to form. God's blessing was apparent as the church focused its mission on disciple-making and church planting. Advance celebrated its grand opening on September 21, 2014.

Strategy - Our strategy is to "bless people unconditionally, create an inclusive community, and cultivate communion with God". We believe to "love God" ([Mt. 22:37-38](#)) and to "love others" ([Mt. 22:39](#)) are best expressed through making disciples of Jesus Christ ([Mt. 28:18-20](#)). Disciples are baptized and learn to observe Jesus' teaching. A growing disciple of Jesus is a person who is maturing in the character and attributes of Christ ([2 Cor. 3:18](#)).

Structure - Advance Community Church is an elder-led church under the authority of Jesus Christ ([Col. 1:18](#)) and is affiliated with the [Acts 29 Network](#). Advance has been greatly influenced by the Apostle Paul's teaching in [Eph. 4:11-16](#). The role of elders is "to equip" people for ministry, unity, and maturity. Elders are directly responsible for church oversight, alignment of vision, and doctrine. The church is not a company, therefore the elders are not a board. Rather, their function is more closely defined as pastors or shepherds. The second form of leadership at Advance is that of deacon. Deacons function as "specialists" serving in specific roles within the church and community. They are servant-leaders. For more biblical information on elders and deacons, see [1 Timothy 3:1-7](#), [Acts 20:17-38](#), [1 Peter 5:1-3](#), [Titus 1:5-9](#), [Acts 6:1-7](#), and [1 Timothy 3:8-13](#).

What does the Bible say about being a member of the body of Christ? Jesus came full of grace and truth ([John 1:14](#)) as the ransomed Lamb of God on behalf of His church. His church transcends history, nationalities, denominations, and other divisions. Scripture teaches Christians are members of the body of Christ. The apostle Paul described Jesus' church as having many members, each with various spiritual and physical sets of gifts ([Rom. 12:3-8](#), [1 Cor. 12:12-19](#)). Disciples are united in Christ. Membership in the body of Jesus Christ is a Kingdom perspective describing saved people in general which surpasses that of any local church. Being members within the body of Christ is the highest of all honors and blessings.

Why Partnership instead of Membership? Membership in western culture implies a "status" mentality to many. People sign-up, pay their dues, and enjoy the benefits of being an insider (ex: country club membership). Conversely, partnership describes more of a two-way relationship. Elders, deacons, and members of the body of Christ share a common unity, mission, and Spirit. We work together for the honor of Jesus and the purpose of His church. Our desire is for membership in Christ to not be confused with partnership within a local church. *Note: elder and deacons of Advance are required to be partners.*

Why Commitment instead of Covenant? Advance cares just as much about *seating* capacity as *sending* capacity. The mission and vision expects people to be partners with us for a while before leaving to expand the Kingdom as church planters, missionaries, support teams of future church plants, etc. By definition, "covenant" implies a long-term relationship (often until death). We are using the word *commitment* to mean "while we're living in this region, this is our place of gospel-centered community and growth". Advance Partnership will be reviewed every 2-3 years.

Partnership Commitment

Personal Statement of Faith:

- I am a Christian saved from the wrath of God by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, through His death and resurrection, by which I am assured of eternal life (John 3:16-18, Romans 3:23-26, Ephesians 2:8-9).
- I believe Jesus Christ is exactly who He claimed to be (Isaiah 53:6, Matthew 26:64, Mark 14:62, Luke 22:70, John 4:25-26, 6:29, 8:58, 11:25-27, 14:6-7, 15:5).
- I have repented of my sins and have been made a new creation in Christ (1 John 1:9, 2 Corinthians 5:17).
- In obedience to Scripture, I have been baptized to personally identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and to publicly demonstrate my commitment as a disciple of Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:12, 1 Peter 3:21).

* **More on Baptism:** This section is meant to demonstrate grace and Kingdom-inclusivity. There are many churches who practice infant-baptism. Yet, many people do not fully understand the biblical reasons for that baptism. The elders desire all partners to know their convictions of baptism based in Scripture. Since Jesus commands all of his disciples to be baptized, baptism is a requirement for all Advance Partners (Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:38, 10:48, 1 Peter 3:21). If you've already been baptized since you became a Christian, you don't need to be re-baptized. Advance Community Church performs believer baptisms only, which means we don't baptize infants. However, if a prospective partner was baptized as a baby and does not want to be re-baptized *due to reasons of biblical conviction*, that is acceptable as long as this decision remains a personal conviction and does not become a divisive issue within the church.

Our Beliefs:

I understand and agree with the primary doctrinal beliefs of Advance Community Church as written below. Additionally, I commit to not being divisive over secondary issues (Ephesians 4:1-3, Hebrew 13:7, 17).

1. **The Word of God** - God wrote the book called the Bible. We believe the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, and only infallible authoritative Word of God. It is the greatest book of all time! (2 Timothy 3:15-16, Hebrews 4:12, 2 Peter 1:19-20, Isaiah 55:11, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)
2. **The Triune God** - We believe in one eternal God, existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Although each person of the Trinity has different functions, they each possess equal power and divinity. (Genesis 1:26, Matthew 28:19, Mark 1:9-11, John 17:22)
3. **God the Father** - We believe God freely and supernaturally created the world from nothing by His Word and for His glory. He is the Sovereign ruler over all creation. He is faithful to every promise and works all things together for good to those who love Him. In His grace He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, for mankind's redemption. (Genesis 1:1, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 1:20, Hebrews 11:3, Revelation 5:9)
4. **Jesus Christ** - We believe Jesus Christ is an eternal person of the Trinity. He came to earth as fully man while also being fully God. He is the only plan for bringing people back into a right relationship with God. He lived a perfect life, died a painful death, rose in victory over sin and death, and is now seated in authority over all creation. True life and satisfaction is only found in Him. (John 1:1-14; 10:30-38, 14:6, Philippians 2:5-8, Matthew 7:12-27, 27:32-28:8, John 3:16-17, Acts 2:22-24, Romans 5:6-8, Ephesians 2:1-5)
5. **Holy Spirit** - We believe the Holy Spirit was sent into the world to empower people to live according to the will of God. He is the true witness who convicts people of sin, draws them to God, refines their will, equips and empowers them to serve, and seals their salvation. He

supplies life and unity within the church (John 3:5-8, 14:16-17, 16:7-11, 20:19-22, Romans 8:2, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 12:1-19, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 1:13)

6. **Humanity** - We believe man was created in the image of God. Early in the pages of Scripture, we learn sin entered the world because of man's desire for autonomy and disobedience resulting in physical and spiritual death. (Genesis 1:26-27, 3:1-24, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:23, 6:23a)

7. **Salvation** - We believe a person's only hope for eternal life is through faith in Jesus Christ. We do not deserve anything good from God. However, He displays his love in providing a way of salvation we could never earn. Everyone who repents of their sin and puts their trust in Jesus Christ will be saved. (John 3:16-17, Acts 3:19, Romans 3:20-28, 6:23b, 1 Corinthians 15:10, Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 2:8-9)

8. **Judgment and Eternity** - We believe there will be a final judgment before Jesus Christ resulting in eternal life in a glorified body with Him in the New Heavens and New Earth or eternal punishment with Satan in the lake of fire - Hell. (Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 2:1-9, 1 Corinthians 15:35-58, Hebrews 9:27, Revelation 20:11-15, 21:1-4).

The responsibility of the Elders and Deacons of Advance Community Church to its Partners:

- We promise as your elders and deacons to do our best in meeting the criteria as assigned to us in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- We promise to do our best in seeking God's will for the church as we study the Scriptures, follow the Spirit, and obey Jesus' teachings (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-5).
- We promise to care for you and seek your growth as a disciple of Christ, in equipping you for service and praying for you regularly (Ephesians 4:11-13, James 5:14).
- We promise to provide teaching and counsel from Scripture (Acts 20:27-28, Galatians 6:6, 1 Timothy 5:17-18).
- We promise to be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31).
- We promise to prayerfully exercise church discipline when necessary in grace and love with the intentions of reconciliation and restoration (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:5-8, Galatians 6:1).
- We promise to set an example and join you in fulfilling the responsibilities of church partners (1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:17, 1 Timothy 4:12).

The responsibility of the Partners to Advance Community Church:

- I am in agreement with the doctrinal beliefs of Advance Community Church and will not be divisive as to what it says. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Ephesians 4:1-3, Hebrews 13:7 & 17).
- I promise to view Scripture as the final authority on all issues.
- I promise to pursue a maturing relationship with Jesus by means of reading the Bible, prayer, and fellowship with the church body. My relationship with Jesus will be evident through my participation in weekly worship, communion, service, and living a life that seeks to glorify God in our community (Psalm 105:1-2, Psalm 119:97, Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:23-25, 2 Peter 1:3).
- Out of gratitude to Jesus for all He has done on my behalf, I will steward my time, talents, and treasure (Proverbs 3:9-10, Romans 12:1-2, Galatians 5:22-26, Ephesians 4:1-16, Ephesians 5:15-18). This stewardship includes regular financial giving, volunteerism, and participation in the community that is sacrificial and cheerful (Romans 12:1-8, 2 Corinthians 8-9, 12:7-13, 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- I will not function as an active member in another church (some exceptions may apply).

- I will strive to believe the best regarding the motives of the elders and deacons of the church knowing they are human and capable of making mistakes.
- I promise to submit to discipline by God through the Holy Spirit, to follow biblical procedures for church discipline in my relationships with my brothers and sisters in Christ, to submit to righteous discipline when approached biblically by brothers and sisters in Christ, and to submit to the discipline of church leadership if the need should ever arise (Psalm 141:5, Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 2 Corinthians 2:5-8, Galatians 6:1-5, 1 Timothy 5:20, 2 Timothy 2:25, Titus 1:9, 3:10-11, Hebrews 12:5-11, Revelation 2:5-7, 2:14-25).
- I agree, by God's grace, to walk in holiness as an act of worship to Jesus Christ, who saved me from my sin and gave me new life (2 Corinthians 5:17). From this point forward, I agree to confess my sins to Christian brothers and/or sisters and seek help to put my sin to death (Romans 8:13, Colossians 3:5, 1 John 1:6-10).

3 Decisions Elders cannot make without its Partners (votes will be initiated by the elders):

1. The elders may not appoint a new senior pastor without a 75% approval vote of its partners.
2. The elders may not approve an increase of debt in excess of one-twelfth of the previous year's annual operating budget without a two-third's approval vote of its partners.
3. The elders cannot establish (or later change) the church's denominational affiliation without a two-third's vote of its partners. [Note: Acts 29 Network is not a denomination.]

Strategic Commitment:

Since Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-38 the greatest commandments are to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind AND love your neighbor as yourself, Advance has committed to a 4-part strategy. Advance asks all partners to pursue these strategies in attitude, word, and action.

- I will strive to be an active participant in blessing people within and outside the church (to believers and unbelievers).
- I will strive to be an active participant in creating an inclusive community free of gossip and slander since this does not build up and is not edifying.
- I will strive to represent Jesus in word and deed in all areas of life.
- I will strive to support our mission of making disciples and vision of church planting.

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Elder's Signature: _____

Date: _____