

St. Marks' Core Values Covenant

Leader Board signatures:

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to define the core values of St. Mark's and to establish a covenant based on those core values and to promote and maintain the covenant.

Applicability

By their signatures on the cover sheet of this covenant, members of the St. Marks leader board have pledged before God and each other to live by the core values of the covenant. By coaching with love and grace, the St. Marks staff will be guided in living by the core values covenant. The covenant will be promoted to the congregation by the example of the leader board and staff living the covenant in the day to day life of the church.

Definitions

Covenant: A tool for becoming the community God calls us to be. A written document drawn up and owned by those who promise to keep it. It summarizes how participants agree to live in community with one another. It is a spiritual discipline to be practiced daily. The covenant supports the core values of St. Mark's.

Core Values: Core values are those beliefs that are central to St. Mark's mission and vision. The mission is to inspire, equip and connect communities of faith to cultivate world-changing disciples of Jesus Christ. The vision is to invite all people into sharing life's journey, and serving Christ by serving others. The Core Values covenant promotes and maintains these core values.

Conflict: A simple definition of conflict is the presence of two or more ideas occupying the same space. Conflict does not mean hostility, but conflict may become hostile if not addressed in a healthy manner with Christian love and grace.

Matthew 18 Model: A model for conflict resolution based on the scripture Matthew 18, "If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him, work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend. If he won't listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again." (from The Message)

Triangle: A triangle is created when a third person is drawn into a conflict between two parties. Note that serving as a witness to a meeting of two people who are resolving a dispute is not considered as creating a triangle since the witness is not serving as a mediator.

Accountability: From a biblical point of view, accountability is coaching with an attitude of grace and forgiveness. Accountability may include loving correction, which is neither harsh or unfounded.

General Rules: The General Rules of the early Methodists were to do no harm, do good and stay in love with God. These General Rules are a basis from which to deal with conflict and give loving correction when the covenant is not met.

Confidentiality: The stewardship of information to which access is carefully limited. Confidentiality does not mean secrecy, in which information is shared informally, but not officially; nor does it mean silence, in which information is never divulged under any circumstances. Rather, responsible stewardship of information requires limiting access and divulging only on a need-to-know basis, through appropriate channels.

1.0 Core Values

The four core values defined for St. Mark's are given below. Examples of behaviors that support these core values are listed in Attachment 1.

1.1 The Body of Christ

We welcome all into the body of Christ, the church. We seek to love one another as Christ loved us. We work together to further God's Kingdom on earth, treating each other with respect, kindness and grace. We invest our time, energy and prayers in each other, so that we may all become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

1.2 A Mission of Service

We keep God at the center of everything we do and all decisions we make. We seek to further God's Kingdom on Earth by serving others as modeled in Matthew 25. We encourage each other in discovering our spiritual gifts, building up those talents, and using them in discipleship for the glory of God.

1.3 Discerning God's Will

We keep God at the center of everything we do and all decisions. To discern God's will, we pray, seek the counsel of our fellow believers, and pause to ponder any decision. Finally, we listen for God's voice, wherever it may be heard.

1.4 Shalom

The apostle Paul documented many conflicts within the early church. We accept that differences of opinion and conflict will occur. We also acknowledge that the resolution of these differences, if dealt with in an open and healthy way, can lead to meaningful change. We pledge to resolve conflicts between individuals with respect, compassion and grace. We will employ the model given in Matthew 18:15 for resolution.

2.0 Leader Board Members and Staff

2.1 Leader board members pledge before God and each other to live by the Core Values Covenant of St. Mark's. By their example, Leaderboard members will promote the covenant to the congregation.

2.2 Leader board members shall participate fully in the decision making process. Once a decision has been reached, it is important for the leader board to speak with one voice when communicating with the congregation. Expressing doubt or disagreement will undermine the decision.

2.3 As leaders of the church, leader board members must be willing to coach others when their behavior is not in accordance with the covenant.

2.4 Staff will be trained on the covenant. This can be done by a read and sign, one on one discussion or a group presentation.

2.5 Staff are expected to live by Core Values Covenant.

3.0 Conflict Resolution

3.1 When presented with a conflict, engage the messenger by actively listening to what they have to say. Sometimes listening is enough to defuse conflict if the messenger believes they are being heard.

3.2 Maintain confidentiality, if possible. Be aware that some activities must be communicated to the Pastor, Staff Parish Relations Committee Chair and Leader Board Chair in accordance with existing church policies. Refer to the Children and Youth Protection Policy, the Adult Protection Policy and the Workplace Violence Policy for more details.

3.3 Avoid triangles. If the conflict is a dispute between the messenger and another person, they may be trying to recruit an ally into their dispute. Make no commitments. Note that serving as a witness to a meeting between two persons resolving a dispute is not considered creating a triangle as the witness is not serving as a mediator.

3.4 If the conflict is a dispute between two individuals, follow the model given in Matthew 18 for resolving disputes between fellow believers, as described in the following steps.

3.5 Ask the messenger if they have discussed their issues with the person involved. If they have not, suggest to the messenger the best solution is for them to discuss their concerns with the second person directly.

3.6 If the messenger is unwilling to meet with the other person, offer to go with them to such a meeting. Be clear that you serve only as a witness to the meeting, not as an arbiter. In Jesus' time a dispute resolved between two people that was witnessed by a third person was legally binding.

3.7 If the messenger will not meet with the second person, either alone or with a witness, no further discussion is warranted and the matter is considered settled. Communicate to the messenger that any further discussion with outside of the two persons involved will only harm the body of Christ, the church.

3.8 Always offer to end the meeting in prayer. Pray that relationships may be healed and God's will to be done.

4.0 Breaches of the Covenant

4.1 A breach of the covenant occurs when a person's behavior is not in line with the standards of the core values and the covenant.

4.2 A breach of the covenant should be addressed quickly.

4.3 Ideally, coaching will be most effective coming from a trusted peer. If that is not possible, a member of the St. Mark's leader board shall attempt to meet with the offender to discuss the breach and offer coaching to improve their understanding of the covenant. Follow the model of Matthew 18 for conflict resolution, a second member of the leader board shall attend the meeting to serve as a witness.

4.4 When coaching, remember the General Rules of "do no harm, do good and stay in love with God." Also recall that the biblical version of accountability is to lovingly correct in an attitude of grace and forgiveness. Coaching this way has the power to grow one's faith and their discipleship.

4.5 Emphasize that those involved should not discuss the breach of the covenant with others, as any further discussion outside of those involved will only harm the body of Christ, the church.

4.5 Always offer to end the meeting in prayer. Pray that relationships may be healed and God's will to be done.

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5.0 References

Johnson, Jaye. The Journey: Missional Accountability, the Vehicle, Driver and Destination of Your Congregation.

Publisher: Kevin Slimp, 2021

Attachment 1

Examples of Core Value Behaviors

1.1 The Body of Christ

We respect and honor each other by:

- Strengthening one another (Ephesians 4:29)
- Being gentle with one another (Galatians 5:9)
- Not speaking ill of others in fellowship (James 5:9)
- Not judging each other (Romans 2:1)
- Respecting differences and being welcoming
- Keeping life in perspective by preserving a sense of humor
- Listening to each other (James 1:19)
- Making positive investments in each other's lives
- Praying for each other daily

1.2 A Mission of Service

We will support the Mission and Vision of St. Mark's by:

- Keeping God at the center of everything we do and all decisions
- Being involved in the Community and in Community Outreach
- Sharing Jesus
- Freely participating in the Body of Christ according to our gifts and talents (Matthew 10:8) (Discipleship Development)

1.3 Discerning God's Will

Decisions will be made by:

- Keeping God at the center of everything we do and all decisions
- Listening to each other (James 1:19)
- Seeking to discover what is best for our group as a whole, not what may be best for the individual or for some small subgroup.
- Affirming the wisdom of silence, pausing from time to time to ponder what others have said and to discern the Spirit's movement.
- Being open to new ideas
- Seeking to communicate clearly and completely

1.4 Shalom

We pledge to resolve conflict by:

- Affirming people's right to hold and express differing opinions, assuming best intentions, listening carefully to each other without interrupting
- Respecting differences and being welcoming.
- Acknowledging that everyone should be heard.
- Accepting that God's will be done, not ours.
- Concentrating on what we have in common instead of our differences.
- Holding each other accountable with an attitude of grace and forgiveness (Romans 12:9-13)
- Accepting disagreement, conflict and evaluation as normal and natural.
- Dealing with people directly; not complaining about others. If someone complains to you about another member, help that person follow the principle for resolving differences described in Matthew 18:15.
- Respecting the confidentiality of individual members and their stories. Respecting the Privacy of Those Who Confide (Proverbs 11:13)