

When You Join Our Church. . .

. . . Join for the sake of non-Christians.

* Church membership helps make the gospel clear to non-Christians by providing a unified witness of what it means to be a Christian.

* Membership provides this unified witness by implementing a statement of faith, encouraging unity in doctrine, and a church covenant, encouraging unity in lifestyle.

. . . Join for the sake of weaker Christians.

* God is not merely concerned about our own private piety, but also about our care for the other sheep. If we don't love God's people, then John says we have reason to question our love for God Himself (1John 4:8).

* God wants us to encourage weaker Christians and run the race with them. Don't leave it to other people to care for those outside your circle of friends. This is your responsibility.

* Members should see themselves as providers - coming to serve others, not to be served.

. . . Join for the sake of God's cause.

* God wants His glory displayed and His gospel spread to all the nations.

* We can take God's glory and gospel to the nations better if we band together than if we remain alone.

* Being part of God's plan to spread His glory and gospel to all nations is a privilege that we will not have in heaven. We seize the privilege of evangelism best if we work together as one diverse unit.



THE FIVE G'S

GRACE, GROWTH, GROUPS, GIFTS, GOOD STEWARDSHIP

Grace

Grace is the foundation of our relationship with God. Not only are we saved by faith, but as we grow spiritually, we also learn to live by grace.

As disciples of Jesus, we receive, live in, and extend God's grace. Christ followers understand and have individually received Christ's saving grace. They have abandoned all attempts to earn God's favor through accomplishments of their own and find security only through Christ's sacrificial death on their behalf.

In obedience to Christ's command, they have undergone water Baptism as believers, giving outward witness to the inner cleansing and renewal experienced in Him.

Growth

Spiritual growth is normal for someone who is spiritually alive. But just like our bodies require nourishment and exercise, so do our souls require nourishment for spiritual health.

Christ-followers know the grace of God that saved them is only the beginning of His work in them. They gratefully respond by actively pursuing a lifelong process of spiritual growth in Christ and seek to become conformed to His image. To this end, they consistently nurture their spiritual development through prayer, worship and Bible study.

They regard the Bible as the final authority in all areas that it teaches about and desire to be wholly obedient to it. Christ-followers honestly confront areas of personal sin and engage the Holy Spirit's power in seeking to turn from sin.

Christ-followers also desire to extend the grace they've received to others through personal evangelism and participation in the collective ministry of the church in their community, their country and around the world

Groups

A Christ follower honors God's call to participate in community in order to grow in Christlikeness, to express and receive love and to carry out the ministry of the church.

For this reason, Christ followers give priority to attending the corporate gatherings of the church for the purpose of worship, teaching and participation in the sacrament of communion, and are connected relationally to a small group (A Circle of Friends) of believers for the purpose of mutual encouragement, support, and accountability.

Christ followers also:

* pursue Christ-honoring relationships at home, within the church and in the marketplace, and are committed to pursuing the biblical pattern of reconciliation when conflict arises.

* support the leadership of the church and are biblically submissive to it.

* affirm and uphold the fundamental truths of Scripture (as summarized in our statement of faith) and refrain from promoting other doctrines in ways that cause dissension.

Gifts

Spiritual gifts help us serve God and His Kingdom. You have at least one spiritual gift, maybe several. Learning about and developing your spiritual gift(s) will help you fulfill God's purposes for your life.

Participating Membership includes discovering and deploying spiritual gifts—here and wherever we go.

Key Bible passages about spiritual gifts are:

Ephesians 4:11–12

Romans 12:6–8

1 Corinthians 12:7–11

1 Peter 4:9–11

Christ followers recognize that the church is composed of interdependent members, each uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body and furthering the ministry of the church.

They therefore seek to discover, develop and deploy those God-given gifts and to seek a place of service within the church, with the support and affirmation of the body.

Giving - Stewardship

Because all of life is a gift from God, all of life must come under His leadership. This includes our time, talents and treasures. To be a good steward means to use everything at our disposal wisely and well. Good stewards are generous, sharing what we have as God leads—and managing well what we keep.

At Hope Church, we use the historic measure of a tithe (one tenth) as a goal to meet or even exceed in giving. We desire to use both our time and treasures to care for the poor, to further God's work and to build bridges between people of diverse back-

grounds and ethnicities. Guided by the truth that "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1), we seek to reflect His glory everywhere—beginning with whatever part of His world we control.

Christ followers realize that they have been bought with the price of Christ's blood, and that everything they are and have belongs to Him.

In light of this, they desire to be responsible caretakers of the material resources that God has entrusted to them. They recognize the tithe (10% of one's earnings) as the historic standard of giving in Scripture. But moreover, in response to Christ's abundant giving, they increasingly submit their resources to His lordship and display a spirit of generosity and cheerfulness in supporting the work of the church.

MEMBERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

When you unite with a church it is because there is a need in your soul for the message and the inspiration of the church. You also are uniting with it because there is an innate need to give and to do. Christ's work is unfinished. This unfinished work is for us to do. When you unite with a church you accept a responsibility - a sacred responsibility - to do your part for your Master and for others.

Your sacred responsibilities of membership:

* **Serving.** There is a place of service awaiting you somewhere in the church. God has given you a talent to be used. This may include teaching Sunday school, visiting the sick, leading youth groups, singing in the choir, and working on committees.

* **Learning.** Anyone who helps others must first develop a growing faith and be able to articulate it. Participating in Bible study groups and developing the habit of daily Bible study are ways to continue learning about the character of God.

* **Giving.** You are expected to do your fair share in supporting the budget of your church's ministry. You should give freely and cheerfully without any thought of reward. Your giving should be systematic and proportionate to your income, not giving what you can spare, but according to what God has entrusted to you. Give to the best of your ability, for giving is a way you can take part in spreading the Gospel.

* **Witnessing.** "You will be my witnesses," said Jesus, "in Jerusalem [that is, at home], in all Judea and Samaria [the surrounding areas], and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). At the same time that Jesus commissioned His disciples He set forth your responsibility to spread the gospel everywhere. This does not mean you have to stand on street corners reading scripture, but you can be an effective witness to friends, co-workers, and family members.

* **Praying.** The highest and deepest benefit you can receive from prayer is strength and courage to live triumphantly each day. Start the practice of daily prayer at a time that is best for you. The worth of a prayer is not determined by its grammatical correctness, but by its sincerity. The main thing is to speak with God about the things that trouble, delight, or confuse you. Be persistent in your requests, turning your petitions to align with God's will.

* **Worshipping.** Worship keeps your soul, and the soul of your church, alive. Your church is set in your community to shine as a lighthouse for Jesus Christ and will shine as long as its members remain faithful in the matter of public worship. When people of God begin to forsake the house of God on the Lord's Day, God's work begins to languish and the light begins to fail. When conflicts arise on Sunday morning, ask yourself, Does this have to keep me from church?

A MEMBER'S UNDERSTANDING

The Church is NOT...

* ...a loose affiliation of people who hold roughly the same religious beliefs, no matter what those beliefs might be. I'm not joining a religious club when I join a church.

* ...a building. A building is simply a place to meet. I'm not going to an exclusive clubhouse when I go to church.

* ...a non-profit organization with a clear vision statement and lucid objectives. I'm not joining a benevolent or charitable society when I join a church.

The Church IS...

* ...a regular assembly of people who profess and give evidence that they have been saved by God's grace alone, for His glory alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

* ...a local, living, and loving collection of people who are committed to Christ and committed to each other.

* ...a display of God's wisdom and glory. (Eph 3:10).

* ...a display of counter-cultural, Christ-like love. (John 13:35).

Church membership is thus for believers only. It is not for those who simply give cognitive assent to the gospel. It is for those whose lives evidence an increasing application of the principles of the gospel to the situations of their everyday lives, and whose character increasingly reflects the holiness of God.