

AN  
ORIENTATION  
TO  
COVENANT MEMBERSHIP

## **First things first; *this is not a class!***

The purpose of this material is (1) to offer an overview of who we are as a church and (2) to present a case for church membership that will hopefully assist you as you prayerfully consider joining yourself to this church. Although our goal is to do everything possible to move you toward consideration of what we call covenant-membership with us, let us be clear that in no way should you feel pressured into joining. If anything, we hope this information will provide a healthy hesitation as you count the cost of covenant-membership with consideration of the rewards that accompany being a covenant-member.

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## who we are

Life Church was established in 2014, joining other local churches in Rowan county and Salisbury, North Carolina to bring glory to the name of Jesus Christ and to advance His gospel both locally and internationally. Life Church is an autonomous, self-governing church, formally affiliated denominationally with the Southern Baptist Convention. However, we could be best described as an *interdenominational church* made up of people from all walks of life with different church backgrounds and people with no church background.. We are a unique blend of ethnicities and cultures that serves to reflect the community we are part of and are called to serve, and perhaps most importantly, reflects the diversity that makes up the Kingdom of God.

Although Life Church was formally launched in 2014, its beginnings can be traced back much further. The church was initially birthed by a multi-campus church in 2009 of which it remained part of until 2014. Due to in part to difficulties facing the larger organization and its leadership, the decision was made, with overwhelming support of the local campus, to become independent, and in August 2014, the local campus legally became known as Life Church of Salisbury. A temporary, transitional leadership team was appointed to guide the church as it structured and organized itself under this new identity, and in January 2015, this temporary leadership team gave way to a permanent, plural-form of leadership through the appointment of the church's first Elders. This first Elder-team consisted of five men who were vetted, affirmed and ordained by the church, in addition to its first Lead Pastor, Chris Shelton, who would serve as an ex-officio member of the team.

From its beginning, Life Church has been committed to being a gospel-centered, generous, life-giving, collaborative church that exists for the good of the community and the world. We believe our missional focus is not something new but rather a continuation of what God has been doing throughout human history to redeem humanity back to Himself, which means, our roots go back much further than 2014 or 2009. We are far more interested in being church than doing church. We are a local church (*a little c*) that is ultimately part of something much bigger - the global, universal Church (*the BIG C*), made up of local churches all over the world - that exists to proclaim and make great the name of Jesus. And like local churches throughout history, we do not exist to survive and preserve ourselves, but to give life to others, which in turn, pours life back into us.

Our vision is to be a sending and equipping church in obedience to the commission given by Jesus to His disciples in Matthew 28:18-20:

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

**Matthew 28:18-20 NIV**

As we continue to obediently move into the future that God has positioned our church for, our fruit will be measured not only by the mature disciples we make, but also by the number of disciple-making disciples we are able to send out for the sake of spreading the Gospel - through local and international missions, church-planting, humanitarian relief, etc. - to every corner of the earth, and thus hastening the glorious return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus.

## our vision

- To be a *recognizable*, life-giving presence *in* our community existing for the good of the world.
- To be a *collaborative*, life-giving partner *with* other like-minded churches and organizations in our community and around the world to advance the Gospel.
- To be an *active*, life-giving participant in the work of the Gospel both locally and internationally with an emphasis on equipping and sending disciples into the world.

# The Church

EXISTS NOT TO

BRING OTHERS TO

# The Gospel

BUT TO BRING

# The Gospel

TO OTHERS

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# why membership?

*What's the big deal about becoming a member of the church? If you have never asked yourself this question, perhaps you should. There are lots of differing opinions and perceptions concerning what church membership actually is, what it should look like and how it should work, much of which is shaped by culture, previous church experiences and so forth. However, what does the bible actually say about membership? Is it even biblical? And if so, why is it important? These are a few of the questions we would like to answer before introducing you to what church-membership looks like with Life Church.*

## Is church membership *biblical*?

*Where in the Bible does it say that churches should have members? The answer may surprise you - NOWHERE. There is actually no explicit command or verse to be found in the Scriptures that says, *Thou shalt become a member of a church.**

However, although church membership is not explicitly commanded, it is **certainly IMPLIED**.

In other words, although you will not find one single verse that gives such a command, a careful survey of the Bible (and the New Testament in particular) certainly implies a form of membership that exists within the local church.

## Evidence of Church Membership in the Bible

Below are a few examples of evidence that implies the existence of church membership in the Bible:

- **Numerical records** *Acts 2:41; 4:4*
- **Activities of the local church** *Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-36*
- **Leadership in the local church** (structure) *Acts 6:1-7, 1 Timothy 3:1-13*
- **Conduct among the fellowship** *Romans 12*
- **Names of members** *Romans 16:1-15*
- **Its function as a body** *1 Corinthians 12*
- **A household made up of God's family** *Ephesians 2:19-22*
- **Unified in purpose and belief** *Ephesians 4:1-16*
- **Grounds for removal** *1 Corinthians 5*
- **Restoring a member caught up in sinful behavior** *Matthew 18:17-18*
- **Letters addressed specifically to local churches** *Epistles and Revelation*
- **The 59 'one another's' found in the New Testament**

It is, therefore, our belief that church membership IS biblical and is an expectation of every person who claims to be a Christian, necessary for spiritual growth, and is an essential to the accomplishment of our mission. We'll look at this in more detail in a moment, but first, let's talk about *what* we mean by *membership*.

## what is membership?

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

**Ephesians 2:19-22 NIV**

### What it ISN'T

Church Membership is something far more involved and dynamic than the weekly attendance of a worship service. So, before we describe *what church membership is*, it is important to understand what it IS NOT:

- **It is not an exclusive club of people with special privileges.** Different from most forms of membership we are accustomed to, church membership is not a way of defining who is IN and who is OUT.
- **It is not a necessary step to belong.** Life Church is made-up of members, regular-attenders and guests, and everyone belongs, regardless of which of these categories they fall into.
- **It is not a way to conform people into a system.** Our goal is not to make good members, but rather, to develop mature followers of Jesus. There is a big difference.
- **It is not a flippant commitment to be walked away from at any time we feel like.** We live in a culture where it is easy to go everywhere and yet belong nowhere, where the church is too often designed to suit an *a la carte* form of spirituality, where people claim to know Jesus but who don't see a need for His Church. And yet, to choose Jesus is to choose His Church. The two cannot be separated.
- **It is not a place to attend.** It is a people with whom to belong.

## What it IS

Here is how we would define what church membership in more technical terms:

Church Membership is a formal, exclusive relationship between a local church and a follower of Jesus (Christian) characterized by the church's affirmation and oversight of the Christian's discipleship and the Christian's submission to living-out his or her discipleship under the care of the church.

(Adapted from *Church Membership*, Jonathan Leeman)

*This definition can be broken down this way:*

### 1. Church Membership is a DECLARATION of citizenship in God's Kingdom

Citizenship into God's Kingdom is granted through a person's response to the Gospel and their confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, along with their belief in the purpose of His crucifixion and death and His victorious resurrection. (Romans 10:9-10) This is the primary condition of membership and the first step when it comes to identifying those who are part of God's *household* here on earth.

It is also important to understand that a person's citizenship is not and cannot be granted by a local church. Only God can do that. At the same time, although local churches in themselves do not make up God's Kingdom, the local church is most certainly the representation of God's Kingdom on earth, made up of its citizens (Christians). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the local church to affirm a person's citizenship before they should be declared a member.

### 2. Church Membership is a COVENANT-COMMUNITY here on earth

The predominant language used in the Bible to describe God's relationship with His people is what we would refer to as Covenantal language. A covenant, by definition, is an agreement between two parties to bind or to give themselves to something or someone. A covenant is quite different from a contract, where two parties agree on the exchange of goods along with a list of rules that must be followed; otherwise, the contract is void. However, a covenant is relational in nature and is far more binding. Perhaps the most familiar example we have is marriage, which is covenantal, NOT contractual.

It is this particular language that is used not only to describe God's relationship with His people but is also used to describe the relationship among God's people. As members of a family, we are bound to one another in love, and it is our relationships with one another that ultimately proves to the world who we are (followers of Jesus) and what God is like. (see John 13:34-35) Therefore, as members of God's family who together make up the Body of Christ (Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27), we are a COVENANT-COMMUNITY:

- a people who love one another in all circumstances because of the love that the Father has lavished on us as His children; (1 John 3:1)
- a people who refuse to quit on one another out of God's refusal to quit on us;
- a people who are not quick to push away at the first sign of disagreement or disappointment, but rather a people who are willing to stay at the table, compelled by love, and who are willing to fight *together* for unity at all costs. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

This is what should differentiate the church from everything else that exists in all of creation. As with any relationship in life, there will be conflict; however, what sets the church apart is not the absence of conflict but our willingness to stay together in the midst of it. And when this happens, not only do we get to experience something beautiful, we demonstrate to the world something that is far more attractive and compelling to be part of.

## so, why covenant-membership?

Before we answer this question, take a few moments to read Ephesians 2.

*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2** in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **3** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. **4** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. **6** And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, **7** in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. **8** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9** not by works, so that no one can boast. **10** For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

***11** Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— **12** remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

***14** For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, **15** by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, **16** and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. **17** He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. **18** For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

***19** Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. **21** In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **22** And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

**Ephesians 2:1-22 NIV**

# The importance and purpose of covenant-membership

So, here is how we could go about answering the question, *why covenant-membership*:

## 1. OBEDIENCE to Christ

*For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

**Romans 12:4 NIV**

If you are a follower of Jesus, according to Scripture, you are expected to be part of a local church. Or to say it this way, to not belong to a local church is an act of disobedience. You see, **the moment you choose Christ, you choose His Church.** The two are inseparable,

The members that make up the body of Christ **belong to one another**, which means, our growth in our relationship with Jesus is tied directly to our relationship with others. **We are responsible for one another.**

## 2. GROWTH and DEVELOPMENT

*So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, **12** to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **13** until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. **14** Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. **15** Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. **16** From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

**Ephesians 4:11-16 NIV**

The church is God's plan for your personal growth and development. It is where we are nurtured and cared for while we grow into the fullness of Christ. However, the church does not simply exist for our own benefit, but also for the benefit of one another. As members of one body, we each have different gifts, talents and abilities that God has distributed for the purpose of bringing Him glory and building up His body here on earth. Each member, alongside the leaders, has a part to play that impacts the growth and development of the other members.

### 3. ACCOMPLISHMENT of the mission

*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

*11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. 12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by[c] one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

*26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

**1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11-4, 26-27 NIV**

Just as our physical bodies are made healthy when each of the members is doing its part, so it is with the body of Christ. There will be plenty of times when the members are sick, injured and unable to play their part, and it is during those times that the other members are able to step up and compensate while the weaker members are strengthened and nursed back to health. However, when a member claims to be part of the body and yet refuses to do their part, that is simply a part of the body that is not functioning, which in turn makes the body weaker, less efficient and less productive. The goal of the church should always be to see each of its members healthy and contributing. And when that happens, the body of Christ is strengthened and the mission is advanced.

### 4. IDENTIFIES who the leaders are RESPONSIBLE to/for

*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*

**Acts 20:28 NIV**

*Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*

**1 Peter 5:2-4 NIV**

Pastors and leaders in a local church can't be responsible for every Christian in a given geographical area; however, they can be responsible to those who have willingly placed themselves under their care. Practically speaking, membership is how our leaders identify who we are responsible **for**, and also responsible **to**.

## 5. Displays UNITY among God's People

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

**Ephesians 4:2-3** NIV

Unity DOES NOT imply we cannot or will not disagree. However, there are some things we must agree on in order to have unity so that we can be effective in our mission. It's widely believed that the ancient theologian, Augustine, originally penned this quote which serves to guide us toward this goal of unity:

*In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In All Things Charity.*

There are some beliefs that are essential; that's where we have unity. There are also plenty of issues where the Bible isn't as clear, areas we might refer to as grey-areas, or matters that we would deem secondary. In these non-essential areas we have freedom to disagree, and yet, remain united in the essentials. However, regardless of what we do or don't agree on, we always demonstrate love, respecting and honoring those among us as well as those outside of our fellowship.

**[Please see Our Core Beliefs]**

## our mission

We exist to lead people to *life* in Jesus Christ

## our strategy

We accomplish this by **making disciples** who are engaging in *gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, and gospel-centered service.*

### *making disciples...*

In one of the most well-known passages in the New Testament (*The Great Commission*, Matthew 28:18-20), Jesus commands His disciples to go and make *more* disciples. When we add the words of Jesus found in another well-known passage in the New Testament, known as the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40), we can conclude that a disciple of Jesus is devoted to *loving God and loving others* by equipping and empowering others to do the same. We are called to *multiply* as we extend life to a dead world.

#### **Who is a Disciple?**

A disciple is a person who has been reconciled into relationship with God through trust in Jesus Christ, and who is subsequently empowered by the Holy Spirit to grow in love for God and love for others.

### **DISCIPLE-MAKING SIMPLY BEGINS WITH A WILLINGNESS TO INVITE OTHERS**

After having a life-altering encounter with Jesus in John 1:35-42, Andrew immediately brings his brother, Peter, to meet Jesus, who in turn changes the course of Peter's life. The same happens with Philip and Nathanael in John 1:43-51 and the woman at the well and the people of Samaria in John 4. These examples give us a picture of how we (as a people whose lives have been changed by Jesus) should go about inviting others to join us on this journey of following Jesus, so that one day they *too* might discover life in Him and become His follower (otherwise known as a *disciple*). Disciples invite others to follow Jesus as they follow Jesus. Disciples don't presume to have all the answers; they simply point to the One (Jesus) who does and are willing to come alongside others as they investigate for themselves what it means to be a Jesus-follower. *Disciple-making* involves opening our lives to people who are searching for life, who need to know that God has not given up on them, who are looking for a place and a people with whom they belong. It's offering friendship to people who need friends, even at the risk of rejection.

### **DEVELOPING PEOPLE IS THE FOUNDATION OF DISCIPLE-MAKING**

Discipleship is about developing people into their full, God-given potential. We believe every human being is *uniquely* created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27, 5:1-2), a *masterpiece*, designed for good works long ago (Ephesians 2:10), and is tremendously, unimaginably valuable to Him. Although many of our unique gifts, talents, strengths and abilities are evident regardless of whether or not we are disciples of Jesus, we believe our full-potential is waiting to be unleashed once we accept and live in the reality of the Gospel and God's redemptive plan for us in Jesus.

## through Gospel-Centered Worship

We are created to worship, and each of us worships something, whether it be our Creator or His creation. This means there are no neutral desires or deeds and that everything is an expression of worship. God created us to worship Him, who alone is worthy of our worship. And as we worship Him in spirit and in truth, we discover our true purpose as human beings - to be *worshippers* of God - and subsequently experience the satisfaction our souls desperately crave. (John 4:21-24)

Life consists of constant worship. Worship is so much more than a service we attend once or twice a week or a particular place we show up; it's a sacrificial life (Romans 12:1-2) lived every moment of every day of every week to the glory of God in all we do, whether we eat, drink, speak, think, work, or breathe. (1 Corinthians 10:31).

### WORSHIP IS THE FUEL FOR DISCIPLE-MAKING

Worship is nurtured through the weekly gathering of the church - primarily through **Weekend WORSHIP GATHERINGS** - where we proclaim and center our celebration around the Gospel of Jesus. Within these environments, we worship God together through musical and visual arts, preaching and teaching, prayer and giving, and through the celebrating of the ordinances of baptism and communion. These environments create an intentional place where everyone belongs, where there is always room for more, where there is room to remain anonymous, but where there is also the intent to move people to experience life in Christ alongside others. *God loves us where we are, but He loves us too much to leave us there!*

## through Gospel-Centered Community

We worship a relational God, who has eternally existed in a triune relationship with Himself - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore, as people created in the image of God, we are created for relationship with God and relationship with others. This means our individual relationship with God, though personal, is never intended to be private, and that the Christian faith is not intended to be lived in isolation but is meant to be lovingly and gracefully shared with others.

This is the essence of what it means to be *the church* - which is more than a place to attend but a people to whom we belong, a community of people growing in relationship with God as we grow in relationship with one another. As members of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31), we are called, not to be **observers**, but **participants** in the life of the church for the glory of God and for the good of His people. This involves a loving

### What is the Gospel?

*Euaggelion* (Greek) meaning, Good News. It's the Good News of God's redemptive plan, driven out of His relentless love, to rescue His creation (especially humanity, created in His image and likeness) from death, sin, brokenness, and hopelessness, and to restore them back to Himself and their original, intended purpose. At the center of this redemptive plan is Jesus Christ, God's One and Only Son, who stepped into creation to provide absolute forgiveness and ultimate peace with God through His substitutionary death for us on the cross and to provide the hope of abundant, everlasting life through His resurrection. Although Jesus is the only Way to salvation, He has made salvation available for all. Therefore, by putting our faith in Jesus and accepting His offer of forgiveness and life that has already been made available, we are declared right with God (justification) on the basis of *grace alone* and given the gift of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to live for Him and who begins the life-long process of producing in us a life of holiness (sanctification). The Holy Spirit also serves as our guarantee of eternal life, which begins now and is brought to completion at the time we enter into His presence (glorification).

commitment to others, an openness to accountability and vulnerability, and a willingness to remain consistent which goes beyond mere attendance and casual involvement. (See also Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:23-25) **We call this loving commitment to one another Gospel-Centered Community.**

## COMMUNITY IS THE CONTEXT FOR DISCIPLE-MAKING

As a church, our heart is set on building *community*, seeing each person intimately connected to God and others. It is in the context of *gospel-centered community* where growth and transformation happens best, where we invest relationally in one another to grow into our full, God-given potential. *Community* is essential to our growth and development as followers of Jesus.

There are a number of ways we go about creating *community* at Life Church. Just so you know, none of these approaches are perfect, and those participating in group-life will find things messy and frustrating at times, but we believe beautiful things can happen when we are willing to step into the messiness of life with others, devoted to one another in the unconditional love of Christ. This takes time, prayer, effort, patience, love, trust and hope.

## *through Gospel-Centered Service*

A life of fullness is found in a life of generosity and *cheerful* giving. As human beings, we are created in the image and likeness of a God who by His nature is a *giver* (John 3:16) which means we *too* are created to be givers. We are created out of God's love and, therefore, created to worship God and to express His love to others through our giving. This is the greatest expression of the life of God in us. While it is true that we can give without loving, it is virtually impossible to love without giving, and when we experience God's love through Gospel-Centered Worship and Gospel-Centered Community, the result is expressing that love through acts of giving and generosity. **We call these expressions of love Gospel-Centered Service.**

As human beings, we are each created *uniquely* in the image of God, given a *unique* set of gifts, talents, strengths and abilities, and when we offer these in service to others, it not only pours life into others, it also pours life back into us. (Proverbs 11:25). As members of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31), we come to serve, not to be served. We are called to move from being **consumers** to **contributors**, from **takers** to **givers**. This is also a radical shift in the midst of a culture, where service is often confused with volunteerism, something optional *if* we have time. However, as members of the Body of Christ, our contribution is critical to the function of the entire body, where others depend on us to do their own part effectively. When we choose passivity over action, ourselves over others, a part of the body simply isn't functioning.

Serving requires sacrifice and humility, and should always be motivated in love. In John 13:1-20, we read the account of Jesus washing His disciples' feet, which was a task reserved for a servant, inconceivable for someone referred to as *Teacher, Master* and *Lord*. But by doing so, Jesus gave an abiding example of a life best lived - a life of service - and

issued a command for us to follow in His steps. We are saved that we might now serve. We are set free to live into something bigger than ourselves.

## SERVICE IS THE OVERFLOW OF DISCIPLE-MAKING

Our desire is to lead each person whose life has been impacted by the Gospel to discover ways to creatively and practically give expression to their faith by being *giver* through Gospel-Centered Service. This is the mark of a mature disciple. There are two primary ways we encourage people to get involved in a life of service:

❖ **Serving *within* the church.** By serving within the church, we allows us to further develop these gifts and maximize our potential in a world where Jesus has called us to be His Light. The first followers of Jesus shared their possessions and talents with one another as a way of living in community and building up the church. (Acts 2:44-46; Eph. 4:11-16) As a growing church, there are numerous ways to contribute to the building-up of the Body of Christ by sharing our gifts, talents, abilities and passions to serve one another.

- Greeting Team
- LifeKids (Ages 0-Grade 5)
- EKO Students (Grade 6-12)
- Worship Arts Team
- Creative Team
- Production Team
- Hospitality Team
- Facilities Team
- Life Groups (Hosts & Leaders)
- Discipleship Team (First Responders)
- Local Ministries & Outreach

> **Get started by completing the *Volunteer Interest Form*** (Attached)

❖ **Serving *outside* the church.** We believe our hearts should be broken by the things that break God's heart and at the same time, encouraged by His ability to redeem that brokenness as we serve the vulnerable, those who are hurting, walking in darkness, including the oppressed, the poor, the orphans, the widows, the refugees, the marginalized, the broken, and the down-and-out. Therefore, as Christ's **ambassadors**, given the task of reconciling people to Him (2 Corinthians 18-20), we believe the church is called to be an **agent of grace** to our neighbors, both near and far - a compelling force of love in the world. We provide church-wide, group and individual opportunities which include local partnerships and distributions, short-term mission trips and various drives for food, clothing, toys, etc. However, every person is encouraged to go beyond and not be limited by these opportunities, but to find additional ways to advance the Gospel in the community and around the world according to their gifting.

> **Check out more opportunities on our website** (SERVE)

## our core values

Our core values bring clarity to the things that matter most to Life Church. They guide our mission, influence major decisions and direct everyday ministry plans. They also help navigate our staffing and budgeting issues.

**Jesus is at the center of all we are and all we do.** We believe in a church made-up of unapologetically passionate, fully-devoted followers of Jesus - who relentlessly pursues us.

**Everyone Belongs.** We believe that everyone belongs - regardless of backgrounds, differences or how close/far we may be from God. We are a 'safe' place, a *come as you are* church who believes in *keeping it real* through genuineness and authenticity.

**Love reigns supreme.** We believe in practicing the unconditional, transforming love of Jesus.

**Community is essential.** We believe in *community*, made-up of intentional relationships where we open ourselves to discipleship, vulnerability and genuine accountability. Furthermore, we believe transformation happens best when we are relationally-invested with others who are also pursuing Jesus. We believe *community* is the essence of who we are as a church.

**The Gospel is a verb.** We believe in missional, incarnational living, that as a church, we do not exist for ourselves but for the good of the world around us. As followers of Jesus, we have been commissioned to share the Good News of Jesus both in word and action. As we focus on meeting felt needs in our community and beyond, we earn the right to be heard.

**We are generous.** We believe in being an extravagantly generous church through acts of service and sacrificial financial giving. God's blessings have been given to us as tools for blessing others. We believe that a life of fullness is a life of generosity, and that as we are faithful to empty ourselves for His glory and the sake of others, God is faithful to fill us with life. Those who live open-handed are never empty-handed.

**We are next-generation focused.** We believe in investing the best of our time, energy and resources into our children and students, and in partnership with families, to lay strong foundations for the children/students in our community to grow into their full potential and to be equipped to be ambassador of the faith in their schools, community and the world.

**We take the Bible seriously.** We believe the Bible (the 66 books of the Old and New Testament) to be God's holy and inspired Word and the sole basis of our belief.

**We take unity seriously.** We believe in the power of *unity* in the church and will relentlessly protect this unity for the sake of the Gospel. The church is to be a community of people with linked arms, leaning forward in the same direction.

**We are globally-minded.** We believe in a globally-minded church with a mission to take the Gospel to our community, our region, our nation and to the ends of the earth. As a local-church (little 'c' church) we are also part of the Universal Church (big 'C' church), which is His redemptive agent in the world, made-up of believers in Christ spread across the globe. This means we are called to assist, participate and go in order to advance the Gospel of Jesus.

**We are collaborative.** We believe in working closely with other like-minded churches, ministries and organizations to bring hope and relief to our community and the world in the name of Jesus.

**We are transforming, not conforming.** We believe in a transforming (*not* conforming) church, with the responsibility to help people recognize their immeasurable value to God and to develop their full, God-given potential. We believe every individual is creative - created in the image and likeness of a creative God, uniquely designed and gifted with talents, gifts, strengths and abilities that are waiting to be unleashed for God's glory.

## our core beliefs:

- **Essential Beliefs:** In essential beliefs – we have unity  
*Acts 2:44; Ephesians 4:4-6; Philippians 2:1-5*
- **Non-Essential Beliefs:** In non-essential beliefs – we have freedom  
*Romans 14: 1, 4, 12, 22*
- **All Beliefs:** In all our beliefs – we show love  
*1 Corinthians 13:2*

## statement of faith:

- **About the Bible**

The Bible is God's written Word to all mankind. It was written by human authors, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is the truth without any mixture of error and completely relevant to our daily lives. (*Deuteronomy 4:1-2; Psalm 119:105; 160; 12:5; Isaiah 40:8; Proverbs. 30:5; 2 Timothy 1:13, 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:24-25*)

- **About God**

There is one God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in a triune relationship with Himself as one substance in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal, co-existent and co-eternal. (*Genesis 1:1, 26-27; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; John 5:21-23, 14:10; 2 Corinthians 13:14*)

- **About the Father**

God is our heavenly Father, full of greatness. He is all powerful, all knowing, ever present, unchanging, completely worthy of our trust, and above all, holy. He concerns Himself in the affairs of mankind, and intends for human beings to live in fellowship with Himself. He is good, compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love and is faithful, and He works all things together for good to those who love Him. In His unfathomable grace, He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, for mankind's redemption. It is in Him that we live, move and exist. (*Exodus 3:14; Numbers 23:19; Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; Psalm 11:4-6; Malachi 3:6; John 3:16; 4:24; 5:26; 14:1; Acts 17:28; Romans 3:3-4*)

- **About the Son (Jesus Christ)**

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father. He is the Word of God manifest in human form - completely human but, at the same time, completely God. In His incarnational form, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory and will return again someday to earth to reign as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. (*Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 9:6; Luke 4:18-19; John 1:1-5, 14:10-30; Hebrews 4:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5; Romans 1:3-4; Acts 1:9-11, Colossians 1:15-16*)

- **About the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son. He is present in the world to guide all believers in truth, to exalt Christ, to bring comfort, and to make mankind aware of their sin and their need for a Savior. He comes to abide in every Christian (by Christian, we mean *Christ-follower* or *disciple of Jesus*) from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, guidance in doing what is right, and ultimately makes us more like Christ. His presence assures us of our relationship with Christ. Furthermore, He gives spiritual gifts to the Christian for works of ministry and service. (*Genesis 1:2; 2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7-13; 14:16-17; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; 5:18; Galatians 5:22-25*)

- **About Mankind**

Man was made in the image of God, created to reflect and share in God's glory. But all of mankind is marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called "sin." This attitude separates people from God and causes them to be in rebellion against Him and His ways. Only the grace of God brings human beings into holy fellowship with Him. The sacredness of human life is evident in that God created mankind as the crown of His creation; therefore, every human being possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and love. (*Genesis 1:26-30; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6; 59:1-2; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 3:10-18, 23; Ephesians 2*)

- **About Salvation**

Salvation is God's free gift to us, but we must accept it. We can never make up for our sin by good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. When we turn from our self-ruled life and turn to and Christ-ruled life in faith, we are saved. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Christ by faith. (*Romans 5:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 14:6; 1:12; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26; Acts 2:21, 4:12; Romans 5:1, 10:9-10*)

- **About Eternal Security**

Because God gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, the true believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. If you have been saved, you cannot "lose" it. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self effort of the Christian (by Christian, we mean *Christ-follower* or *disciple of Jesus*). It is the grace and keeping power of God that gives us this security in Christ. (*John 6:39,10:28, 30; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25; 10:10; 14; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:3,5*)

- **About Eternity**

Mankind was created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. Those who are separated from God will ultimately spend eternity in Hell. Those that have received God's salvation will spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence. (*John 3:16; 1 John 2:25; Colossians 1:5; John 14:1-4; Luke 12:5; Luke 16:2-25; Revelation 20:15*)

## our beliefs on the church

It is our belief and desire that the church be a community of authentic, meaningful relationships and a movement of restoration and hope in the world. Therefore, our heart is to be church (not do church) through an atmosphere of love, relationships and service; and it is our hope that through our church-community, the love and acceptance of God would be experienced in a real, fresh and unique way. We value the teachings and the Way of Jesus, Whom we profess to be the Son of God. And though we may fail at times to live a life truly reflective of who Jesus is, we are committed to being a *community* on a spiritual journey together, learning what it means to live life as a Jesus-follower (disciple).

### ● ECCLESIOLOGY

The Church can be understood in two predominant and unique ways. First, the Universal Church is composed of all believers everywhere who acknowledge Jesus Christ as God, Savior and Lord. Second, the local church is anywhere followers of Jesus meet together regularly who are working together in love and unity – under the watch and support of its leaders – for the purpose of ultimately bringing glory and honor to Christ. Life Church is a *local church* part of this greater Church we know as the *universal church*.

The Greek word for church is “Ecclesia” or assembly. The church, therefore, is the *assembly* of believers who collectively have been called to be the physical manifestation (flesh and blood) of Jesus Christ and *agents* of His redemptive mission in the world today. The local church is not a building or a program, but rather a group of imperfect people who have been redeemed and are being restored who desperately want to know God and follow Him, and who are called into a community for the sake of His mission. (Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20; Acts 14:27)

In the Scriptures, the Church is often referred to as the *body of Christ* (I Corinthians 12:27) This comes from our understanding of the sacrifice of Jesus’ body, who paid the price for our sins and restored our relationship with God. Once we accept this sacrifice we are ushered into “His body.” We are made heirs and co-heirs of God’s kingdom, a royal-priesthood of believers. The *body of Christ*, therefore, refers to the universal group of people who have accepted this sacrifice and who follow Him – “*You are the body of Christ.*” Everyone who follows Jesus forms a community that is called the church. (Titus 3:7, Romans 8:17, 1 Peter 2:9)

### ● BAPTISM

Baptism is the Christian act of immersing a believer in water and then bringing him/her forth out of the water. It is a symbolic, practical representation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as the person being baptized is immersed beneath the waters and brought forth, symbolic of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection on their behalf for the forgiveness of their sins (Romans 6: 1 – 10; Col. 2:12). Baptism identifies a Christian with Jesus (Acts 10:48; Romans 6: 3; Gal. 3:27), the universal church (I Cor. 12:13), and the local church (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2: 41).

In ancient times, baptism was a purification ritual. To be submerged in water and then brought back up was a sign that you were washed clean. It was an act of repentance. When we are baptized today, it is also symbolic of repentance. We are saying that the work of Jesus to free humanity from sin has freed us as well. In actuality, we are being submerged with Jesus in His death and raised with Him in His life. Baptism is a symbolic act of the repentance that unites us with the death and resurrection of Christ. It is important to note that one's baptism does not "save" an individual nor secure eternal life. Baptism is an outward confession of our inward beliefs. It is a way to announce to the world that we are dedicated to God's will and to His ministry.

Jesus commanded that disciples should be baptized (Matthew 28:19). His apostles also commanded that all Christians be baptized (Acts 2:38). Therefore, Christians should be baptized because their God and His servants command it. (Matthew 3:13-17; Acts 8:12-13, 35-39)

### ● **LORD'S SUPPER**

Communion is an act of remembrance. We pause in the midst of our busy lives to reflect on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It reminds us of His death because of our sin. But it does not leave us there; it is also an act of celebration because Jesus was raised from the dead. We take communion on a regular basis to thank Jesus for His actions and remember the saving effect this sacrifice has on our lives. We also remember that just as Jesus' body was *broken* and *poured out* so that we might have life, we too as His followers and His Body (the Church) are called to be *broken* and *poured out* so that the world around us might know Jesus and claim life through Him. (Matthew 26:26-28; John 6:22-59; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29)

### ● **MEETING TOGETHER**

The early church gathered daily for prayer, worship, teaching, and communion. The Apostle Paul warned the future church not to forsake meeting together. Our times together are meant to lead followers of Christ into deeper walks with Christ and to lovingly draw people outside our community to Him. We live this out primarily through our home gatherings and our weekend worship celebrations, as well as other gatherings, whereby we recognize that meeting together is an essential practice of the church. (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25)

# our structure

...God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God's holy people... be sure that everything is done properly and in order. **\_1 Corinthians 14:33,40 (NLT)**

Our structure is designed to be simple, allowing the church to operate as an 'organism' rather than an 'organization.' Therefore, we stress relationships, unity and ministry over meetings, maintenance and voting. As an 'organism,' our structure is also designed to grow as we grow. Our church governing style is described as **elder-led**, not *congregational-rule* where the church-body, in submission to Christ, gives authority to the elders to care for and lead the church. This keeps our decision-making process efficient and focused on accomplishing the vision and mission of our church. Elders are nominated by the church body and examined by the Elder Selection Team (made up of Elders and Staff) for recommendation and final appointment. Furthermore, Life Church is self-regulating in how we handle matters of accountability and discipline.

## Leadership Structure

*Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 5:17-18; Titus 1:5-9*

- **Elders (Servant-Leaders)**
  - ➔ Lead under the authority of Christ
  - ➔ Shepherd the body of Christ
  - ➔ Teach God's Word
  - ➔ Model the character of Christ
  - ➔ Lead Pastor serves as an ex officio member of the Elders
  - ➔ In addition, Elders
    - Oversee budgetary and legal issues
    - Handle church discipline
    - Provide accountability of staff and personnel, including the annual evaluation of the Lead Pastor
  
- **Staff (Lead-Servants)**
  
- **Ministry Team Leaders (Deacons: Lead-Servants)**

Teams value relationships and working together to accomplish a task. Committees meet; teams play. We value a *team approach* to ministry, eliminating *lone-rangers* and *burnout*. Some (but not all) of our teams are listed below:

➔ Prayer Team	➔ Website Team
➔ Resource Center Team	➔ Creative Team
➔ LifeKids (children's)	➔ Office Team
➔ EKO Students (teens)	➔ Cleaning Team
➔ Collide (college & young adult)	➔ Hospitality Team
➔ Worship Arts Team	➔ Maintenance & Facilities Team
➔ Production & Tech	➔ Discipleship Team (First Responders)
➔ Greeting Team (First Impressions)	➔ Local Ministries & Outreach
➔ Safety & Security Team	
  
- **Covenant-Members**

# [APPENDIX]

# MEMBERSHIP COVENANT



A covenant is a voluntary agreement based on a meaningful relationship between two parties. The purpose of this covenant is a declaration that you have joined with others in membership with Life Church in order to fulfill God's purpose your life and to accomplish God's mission in the world...together.

## In becoming a member of Life Church, I affirm the following:

- I have put my faith in Jesus Christ, have surrendered my life to Him as Lord and trust in Him alone for my salvation.
- I have been baptized. (Please share date/location: \_\_\_\_\_ )
- I have not been baptized, but am willing and ready to be baptized.
- I am in agreement with the vision, mission, beliefs, strategy and structure of Life Church.

## As a member of Life Church, I commit myself to the following:

### I commit to pursue growth in my relationship with Jesus by:

- ✦ **Walking with Jesus Daily**, striving and learning how to spend time with Him regularly through prayer, Bible reading, worship, and other spiritual disciplines.
- ✦ **Seeking to grow into my full potential** by discovering my gifts and embracing my uniqueness.
- ✦ **Being an active part of His Church by regularly attending and actively participating** in the life of the church, as this is critically important to my spiritual growth.

### I commit to grow in relationships with others by:

- ✦ **Making myself available to others**, which includes proactively seeking others out and building relationships.
- ✦ **Involving myself in a Life Group and/or similar gatherings** where I can connect relationally, grow spiritually, find accountability, and experience Gospel Community alongside others.

### I commit to invest in the life of the church by:

- ✦ **Serving others at Life Church**, offering my time, talents, strengths, abilities, passions to serve and contribute to the overall growth, health and mission of the church. (i.e.: Ministry Teams)
- ✦ **Giving a portion/percentage of my income** (tithes, offerings, gifts) regularly, sacrificially and joyfully, as an act of worship to God and an eternal investment in His Kingdom.

### I commit to be a messenger of God's love by:

- ✦ **Reflecting Jesus** in my relationships, at work/school, in the community, etc.
- ✦ **Sharing my faith with others who may not know Him** by building relationships outside the church and inviting them to attend church with me.
- ✦ **Serving in the community and abroad**, regularly pursuing opportunities to be a light in the world both individually and alongside others at Life Church.

### I commit to protect the unity of the church by:

- ✦ **Supporting, praying for and following our leaders** (elders, pastors) as they follow Jesus.
- ✦ **Demonstrating and relentlessly upholding an atmosphere of love, acceptance and grace**, being a source of encouragement to others, avoiding gossip and inappropriate talk, quickly resolving conflicts and misunderstandings in a Biblical manner.

Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Last church you were a member of: \_\_\_\_\_

## Volunteer Interest Form

Please complete and return to the Resource Center, or by emailing to [info@lifechurchnc.com](mailto:info@lifechurchnc.com). Someone from our Connection Team will be in touch with you within a few days after your completed form has been received.

_____	_____	_____
First Name	Last Name	E-Mail Address
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	Phone Number
_____	_____	_____
Address	_____	Birthday

Family members in your household and their relation to you

**Which areas are you interested in serving?** Descriptions can be found on our website.

- Prayer Team
- Life Kids (children)
- EKO Students (youth)
- Collide (college)
- Worship Arts Team
- Production & Tech Team
- First Impressions
- First Responders
- Local/International Missions Team
- Hospitality Team
- Office Team
- Maintenance Team
- Cleaning Team
- Data Entry
- Creative Team
- Website Team
- Safety & Security Team
- Resource Center Team

Are you a member of Life Church?

- Yes
- No

Would you be willing to submit to a background check? (this is ministry specific)

- Yes
- No

How long have you attended Life Church?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently serving on any other ministry team with Life Church?

\_\_\_\_\_

Why are you interested in serving with Life Church?

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Do you have any previous volunteer experience?

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Describe 2-3 of your strengths.

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Describe 2-3 of your weaknesses.

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List any special talents, gifts or abilities you have.

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Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? If so, please list them below.  
*If not, we'd love to help you discover and develop these.*

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Please briefly share your Christian testimony.

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Please provide 1-2 references (relationship, telephone number and email) that we may contact.

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## Volunteer Expectations

As part of a ministry team with Life Church, we ask each volunteer to prayerfully consider the following expectations. By signing below, you are stating that you are in agreement with these expectations.

- I am committed to my own spiritual growth as well as the spiritual growth of others.
- I carry a positive attitude while I serve.
- I agree to protect the unity of Life Church.
- I commit to resolve any conflict I may have within the church in a healthy and respectful manner, and will seek help to do so when necessary.
- I will maintain a consistent level of commitment, dependability, and open communication.
- I am in agreement with the vision, mission, beliefs, values and leadership structure of Life Church.

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Signature

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Date