

**WHEN YOU**

**JOIN**

**A SHORT GUIDE  
FOR NEW MEMBERS**



# INTRODUCTION

## WELCOME TO THE FAMILY!

We are so grateful you joined what God is doing in our community and around the world through this church. It's no accident that God brought you here. You are a critical part of what God wants to do through this church.

Jesus promised that nothing could stand in the way of his church doing his work around the world. He said, **"I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it"** (Matthew 16:18).

Together we're going to make a difference in our neighborhood and globally.

But first, let's explore what the church is and why it matters in our day.

# WHAT IS A CHURCH MEMBER?

**YOU'RE LIKELY TO JOIN MANY DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS IN YOUR LIFE—** civic, business, political, educational, etc.

But you'll never join anything like the church, where the "extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels!" (Ephesians 3:10b MSG). While the Church is far from perfect, it is God's Plan A to do Jesus' work around the world.

Because your relationship to the local church is so important to what God is doing in the world, the Bible describes it in several different ways so we can understand its full impact upon our lives.

As a member of this church, the Bible says you are:

# 1

## A PART OF JESUS' BODY

None of your body parts can function effectively on its own. Your eyes don't work without your brain. Your heart won't function without veins and arteries. Body parts are interdependent.

You've joined an interdependent body at this church, as well. The Bible tells us, **"For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ"** (1 Corinthians 12:12). At our church, we need one another to do what God has called us to do. Without you, we're less than what God wants us to be.

# 2

## A PIECE OF THE TEMPLE

After King Solomon built the temple in the book of 1 Kings, he called it: "a place for [God's] dwelling forever" (8:13). In Old Testament times, God dwelt with his people first in the tabernacle and then in the temple.

But in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul tells us: **"In [Christ] the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit"** (Ephesians 2:21-22).

This church, and all our brothers and sisters around the world, together are God's presence on earth.

We live in a world where it's easy to feel disconnected. We're divided by politics, race, ethnicity—and seemingly everything else under the sun.

Not here though. When you join our church, you don't just become a member of an organization. You become a family member. Those aren't simply nice words we tell people when they join the church. It's a biblical reality. The Bible says, **“So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household”** (Ephesians 2:19).

We're members of God's household, which is why the dominant theme for how the Bible tells us to engage with one another is as family members. We're brothers and sisters, fathers and sons, and mothers and daughters (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

**NO MATTER WHAT YOUR BACKGROUND—  
YOU'RE IN THIS FAMILY!**

# WHY MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

**YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN A LOCAL CHURCH LIKE OURS IS NO SMALL ENDEAVOR.** It's one of the most important steps you can take on your spiritual journey.

Why is it so critical?

1

**YOU CAN'T  
FOLLOW JESUS  
BY YOURSELF**

2

**YOUR  
COMMITMENT  
TO A CHURCH  
IS A WITNESS  
TO THE WORLD**

3

**WE NEED THE  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
OF OTHER  
CHRISTIANS**

## 1. YOU CAN'T FOLLOW JESUS BY YOURSELF.

In our individualistic culture, many people see their spiritual journey as a solo endeavor. That's not how the Bible describes it. Repeatedly in the New Testament, God tells Jesus-followers to do something "with, for, and to one another." Those are commands we can't follow outside of our relationships with other Christians.

**God created you to love others.** It's one of the most important reasons he put you on this planet. Because of that purpose, you simply can't obey Jesus in all areas of your life without relationships with other people. Relationships are the canvas that God paints the Christian life upon. Your membership in a church family is an important step in your lifelong journey to become like Jesus.

## 2. YOUR COMMITMENT TO A CHURCH IS A WITNESS TO THE WORLD.

Most people have little context for a community of people devoted to the support and care of one another. A community of people from diverse backgrounds and with a joint commitment to one another isn't just rare in today's world; it's virtually non-existent outside of the church.

**Your commitment to a church family shows the world God's power to unite people.** Jesus said it like this, "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)



### 3. WE NEED THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF OTHER CHRISTIANS.

**We grow spiritually best in context of relationships.** Left on our own, we'll drift from the habits that help us become more like Jesus.

That's why the Bible tells us to "stimulate one another to love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24). Without the support of other believers, we'll get tired as we try to do what God has called us to do. We need other people to pray for us, speak truth to us, and challenge us.



**RELATIONSHIPS ARE THE CANVAS THAT  
GOD PAINTS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE UPON.**

# WHAT ARE THE FAMILY EXPECTATIONS?

## **EVERY HEALTHY FAMILY HAS EXPECTATIONS.**

Sometimes they're clearly stated; often they are not. A clear set of expectations at our church helps to ensure unity in our family of faith. Because new family members know up front what we expect from one another, we're free from the confusion and resentment that can cloud other relationships.

Don't think of these expectations as rules.

No one will come to your door and question you about the ones you aren't meeting. Instead think of these expectations, clearly described in the Bible, as descriptions of what a healthy relationship with your church body looks like.

So what are these expectations?

## WE LOVE AND CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER.

Love isn't just a word we throw around. It means something very specific. Our family acts on behalf of one another. The Bible is very specific about the nature of love in 1 John 3:18: "Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth." **You can't love without action.**

The "one another" passages of the New Testament help us fill out the picture of what those loving actions are. For example, the Bible tells us to:

- Pray for one another. (James 5:16)
- Bear one another's burdens. (Galatians 6:2)
- Comfort one another. (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- Honor one another above ourselves. (Romans 12:10)
- Encourage one another. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

When you're joining our church family, you're making a commitment to love and care about others in our fellowship in an active and consistent way. Yes, you could simply slip into your seat each weekend and then slip out at the end of the service. Maybe no one would notice. If you do that, we're glad you came. But joining our family means making a commitment to love and care for the rest of the family. You can't do that by slipping in and out each week. You do it by getting actively involved in the lives of others.

## 2

# WE USE OUR TALENTS AND GIFTS FOR THE GOOD OF ALL.

God doesn't make any duplicates. You are unique. God gave you a one-of-a-kind mix of talents, gifts, experiences, and passions. He never gives us anything just for our own benefit. He wired us to use what he has given us for the benefit of others.

The Bible describes in Ephesians 4:11-12 the reason God established church leaders and gave them the abilities needed in ministry was "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ." The principle is the same for other skills and abilities God gives to believers; God gives them to us to strengthen the church and expand its ministry.

Jesus tells a story in Matthew 25 that puts the importance of using the talents God gives us into perspective. Before a wealthy man left on a trip, he gave money (called talents in the text) to three servants. Two of those servants invested the money and made a profit for their boss. The third servant buried his money and simply returned the same amount to the boss. Jesus commended the two servants who used what they were given and rebuked the other one.

The message is simple. **When God gives you a gift, he wants you to use it.** We want to help you do that. We'll train you. We'll give you opportunities to put your gifts to use. We'll serve beside you. We'll pray for you. We can't wait to see how God will use you as part of our church family.

## WE GIVE GENEROUSLY.

Our church family gives because God has given so much to us. That may sound like a cliché, but it's at the core of the good news that Jesus commissioned the church to share.

Jesus said in the Bible's most famous verse: **"For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life"** (John 3:16). God loved the world so much that he gave. God didn't give food or money; he gave us His Son to pay the penalty of our sin.

Because of God's generosity, we have eternal life. When we truly understand what Jesus did for us, generosity is natural in our lives (1 John 3:17).

Part of what it means to be in our church family is to give of our resources to support the collective ministry of our church. God is at work through this church in our community and around the world.

When you give generously to the work of this church, you get to play a part in the work. Every time a child learns about Jesus, a hungry belly gets filled, and a marriage is put back together, it is because people like you give.

# 4

## WE PROTECT THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

Families stick together. To fulfill their goals, families need to have healthy relationships. The same is true for our church. We can't wait to see what God will do through our church in the coming years. But we realize the number one issue that could derail our mission is disunity.

Jesus thought the unity of the church was so important that just hours before his arrest and crucifixion, he prayed that later generations of Christians "would be one" (John 17:21). Our unity, he went on to say, would show the world the truth about who He is.

We all must carry the responsibility of protecting our church's unity. The truth is, we'll never agree on everything, but our unity as a church doesn't depend upon our uniformity.

The Apostle Paul gives us a number of insights in how to walk in unity in Philippians 2:1-4. Maybe the most difficult verse in the passage during our polarizing times is this: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves." (v. 3)

**To protect the unity of our church, we need to constantly put others in front of ourselves.** As we serve others selflessly, we'll find divisive actions such as gossip, unwarranted criticism, and bickering fade away.

**TOGETHER,**

**WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

We're thrilled that you've chosen to be a part of our church family.

We believe the best days are ahead of us as we seek to serve Jesus in this community and around the world.

We can't wait to see what God will do!

**SO LET'S GET STARTED!**

