



**Basic Beliefs and Membership Covenant Explanation**

The Ocean View Church Membership Covenant is birthed out of our love for the church body and its individual members, whom we hope will experience the fullness of joy, which is found in the presence of the Lord. The primary purpose of this document and the covenant is to serve as a teaching document with three functions:

- To clarify the biblical obligations and expectations for both the elders of Ocean View Church and the individual members of the Ocean View Church body.
- To establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for the Ocean View Church body.
- To serve as a tool for reflection and growth toward holiness.

Each of these functions is in accordance with the document's overall vision to provide an accessible explanation of the Scriptures in hopes that Ocean View Church would grow in the grace and truth of Jesus Christ. This document seeks to clarify the biblical foundations on which the Ocean View Church Membership Covenant is built upon, comprised of a section on the Church, the nature of covenants, the Statement of Basic Beliefs, the Statement of Theological Distinctives and the explanation of each line of the Membership Covenant.

## What is the Church?

The church exists for the display of the glory of God because all things exist for His glory. Those of us who trust in and follow Jesus are caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. We have graciously been invited into God's redemptive purposes in the world.

Since the beginning, God has been creating and calling forth His people for the display of His glory in a grand narrative of redemption and reconciliation. Though creation now suffers the curse of Genesis 3, the gospel is the means by which the world is being made right. The gospel also carries with it the promise of ultimate renewal, a restoration even more glorious than Eden, and thus believers eagerly anticipate the return of Christ. The Church universal (i.e., all believers, everywhere) is the means by which God is fulfilling His purposes in the world (2 Cor. 5:17-20). The Church universal is being used to write God's beautiful and dramatic story of redemption and reconciliation. In light of this reality, the opportunity to join a local church body (i.e., a particular group of believers in a particular locale) is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in community. It is also a sacred call to be involved in the redemptive work of our sovereign

God to push back the darkness of a fallen world through the power of the Holy Spirit with the light of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (Eph. 2:19), the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2,9) and the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31). First Corinthians 12 speaks of many members within the same body. Just as a human body relies upon mutual dependence of individual members for proper functioning, so the body of Christ requires sacrificial and responsible service by its individual members. As the Scriptures say, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Cor. 12:21). Likewise, a member of the church cannot say to another member that he or she is unnecessary. We all have gifts that differ according to the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:3-8). Contrary to the beliefs of our culture, we need each other.

Membership at [OV]Church is participation in a family, a microcosm of the universal household of God. All members are united to Christ and thus to each other. Unity within the church is expressed in love for God and a love for others, both those within the family and those who are not. Because of the identification of Christ with His Church, Christians are expected to display His gospel in a manner which is worthy of Him (Eph.4:1).

## What is a Covenant?

A covenant is generally defined as "a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action."<sup>1</sup> Within the Scriptures, we find a number of examples of covenants, some between God and man (Gen. 6, 9, 15; Ezek. 20; Hos. 2; Jer. 31; Matt. 26), while others are solely between men (1 Sam. 18; 2 Sam. 5). In some covenants, one party binds his or herself to fulfill the obligations of both sides of the agreement. In others, the parties are reciprocally bound to adhere to the obligations. While God's covenant with the Church universal is an example of the former, the local church covenant represents the latter. If at any time one of the parties of this church covenant continues in a state of unfaithfulness to its provisions, the other is released from certain obligations.

The covenant of [OV]Church contains many conditions that are merely general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, whether members of [OV]Church or elsewhere, are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue

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<sup>1</sup> Inc Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Includes Index., 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993).

holiness, steward resources, etc. Such requirements are universal obligations for the Christ follower, regardless of any failure on the part of local church to live up to her covenant obligations.

If at any time an individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the requirements of the covenant, it is the responsibility of the individual member to lovingly and humbly express concerns to the leadership of the church. If the church elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness, then the member is freed from his or her membership obligations and encouraged to seek membership elsewhere given the church's disobedience. In addition, certain circumstances may provide sufficient and righteous grounds to transfer membership elsewhere.

While focusing primarily in language on the responsibilities between the individual parties, the corporate church body, her elders and her individual members, the covenant is first and foremost an acknowledgement of general Christian obligations and an agreement to enter into those duties for God's glory and the good of the body and bride of His Son.

## Statement of Basic Beliefs

The gospel is the hope of the world. As we read the Scriptures, we see the overarching themes of God's providence, power and provision to reconcile mankind and the created world to Himself through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. In light of this, we aim to be gospel-centered in all that we preach, teach and practice.

### *We believe...*

- the Scriptures are true, authoritative and sufficient (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
- there is only one true God, Creator of heaven and earth, who eternally exists in three distinct Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-6, 46:9-10; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Genesis 1:26; Psalm 45:6-7, 110:1; Matthew 3:13-17, 28:17-20; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6).
- all things exist for the glory of God (Psalm 148; Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 61:3; Romans 11:33-36; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Ephesians 1:3-14).
- all humanity, Christ excluded, is sinful by both birth

and action<sup>2</sup> (Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23, 5:8, 5:12-21, 7:18; Ephesians 2:1-3).

- the deserved penalty for sin is physical and spiritual death (Genesis 2:15-17, 3:19; Romans 5:12, 6:23; James 1:14-15).
- Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, was born of a virgin and is both fully God and fully human (Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:52; John 1:1-4, 14; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3).
- Jesus Christ died as the sacrificial substitute to pay the penalty for sin (John 1:29, 10:1-18; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 3:18).
- Jesus Christ physically rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and will one day physically return (Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-53; John 1:20-21:25, 14:3; 1 Corinthians 15:12-34; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7).
- there will be a future physical resurrection of the dead. Only those who turn from sin and to Jesus in faith and repentance will be raised to eternal reward.<sup>3</sup> Those who do not turn from sin and to Jesus will be raised to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).
- only through faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ and repentance from sin can one be reconciled to God and experience true life and joy<sup>4</sup> (John 3:18, 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:21-26; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).

## Statement of Theological Distinctives

While the doctrines expressed in the Statement of Basic Beliefs are recognized to be universal and primary within the Church, there are a number of secondary beliefs that we are passionate to proclaim. Not all Christians hold these beliefs, but they are nonetheless important and true as we understand the Scriptures. Complete agreement is not required for the sake of membership, but it should be known that we will preach, teach and counsel in accordance with these convictions.

These distinctives represent five areas of doctrine and

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<sup>2</sup> We recognize that Adam and Eve were not "born" and were not created sinful; rather, they became sinful through their action.

<sup>3</sup> This is not intended to deny the salvation of Old Testament saints but is instead a recognition that they were saved through faith in Jesus Christ, though the content of that faith was less clear than it is for us on this side of the cross and resurrection.

<sup>4</sup> See previous footnote.

practice:

- Divine sovereignty
- The gifts of the Holy Spirit
- The complementary roles of men and women
- Believer's baptism by immersion
- The relationship of God's glory to man's joy

## Biblical Obligations of Ocean View Church

### Elders to the Ocean View Church Body

As shepherds and overseers of a local church, elders are entrusted with protecting, leading, equipping and caring for the corporate church body and her individual members. The following is a rather extensive overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures.

*The elders will...*

- appoint elders and deacons, including staff members who serve in these offices, according to the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures *1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4.*
- prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability based on our study of the Scriptures and following of the Spirit *Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4.*
- care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth and love *Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 1:28; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4.*
- provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture *Acts 20:27-28; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:1.*
- equip the members of the church for the work of ministry *Ephesians 4:11-16.*
- be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).
- lovingly exercise discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined and the health of the church as a whole (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).

- set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership stated below (Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:3).

### Biblical Obligations of the Members to the Ocean View Church Body

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this reality as "living by the Spirit" (Rom. 8). The requirements of the Membership Covenant are in no way intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this document functions primarily as an accessible yet non-exhaustive explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces.

## Membership Covenant and Explanation

Explanation follows each point in paragraph form

### As a believer in Christ Jesus and a member of Ocean View Church I covenant...

- to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues. *Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21*

We believe the Bible is God's inerrant and infallible Word. Inerrant means without error and infallible means never failing, effective or faultless. Belief in the Scriptures as the Word of God is essential to growth in communion with Him and with each other. There must be a standard for life and truth; the Bible is that standard. If we cannot affirm Scripture as authoritative, we cannot define what is sinful and brings displeasure to God. Therefore, accountability to the commands of Christ in the Scriptures cannot be upheld. For this reason, we agree the Scriptures are true, authoritative and sufficient.

- to pursue the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of spiritual disciplines. *Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Ephesians 5:1-21*

Our faith is personal, but it is not private. Being that it is personal, it takes discipline to read the Bible regularly; talk to God in adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication; investing in relationships; and working out the *spiritual* disciplines of worship, evangelism, service, stewardship, fasting, solitude, journaling, and learning more about our faith as it relates to self. All of these practices of the personal walk of faith are to grow us and move us to a deeper and closer walk with Jesus.

- to steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts and finances. This includes service and regular financial giving that is sacrificial, cheerful and voluntary. *Malachi 3:10, Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11*

All we have been given is from God. Because God is sovereign, we are merely stewards (managers) of what God has given us. From the clothes on our backs, to the cars we drive, to our jobs, to our families; *all* we have are gifts from Him. If this change in thinking would permeate the Church, the mission of God on earth could be accomplished much faster. Missionaries could be funded. Neighborhoods could be reached through radical acts of mercy, opening hearts to hear the gospel. People would no longer go hungry or unclothed in the world; and it all comes down the word “sacrifice”. If serving and giving were sacrificial, the needs of ministry and mission could be more readily met. A sacrifice of time, talent and treasure must be voluntary, a matter of the heart; and God loves the cheerful giver. Sacrifice in these areas for the Christian only makes sense if he or she does not own these resources in the first place. Do we really believe the old adage, “God will provide”? He does care more for His Church than we do, to be sure.

- to attend and participate in corporate worship, small groups, disciple making relationships and serving those inside and outside the church unless hindered by something that is beyond my control. *Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14*

Going back to the question, “What is the Church?” we must agree that as Christians we are saved into community; with each other and with God. We come together in corporate worship to celebrate with the saints all that God has done in our lives during the week. We attend small groups to deepen relationships and challenge one another through deeper Bible study and teaching. We engage in 1 on 1 or 1 on 2 disciple making relationships (micro-groups) to really dig into each other’s lives, exposing sin, confessing and repenting to one another. *All* of these areas (personal growth included) are essential for the believer’s growth in faith. If any of these areas are missing in a person’s discipleship, not only will the person’s spiritual growth suffer, but the health of church as a whole will also suffer. What makes a healthy church, but a group of healthy people empowered by the Spirit. Through this health and growth, we are compelled and propelled into action (service). Serving those inside the church *and* those outside is important. Choosing one or the other is not following the example of Christ who came to encourage and build His church, but at the same time seek and save those who are lost.

- to walk in holiness in all areas of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ by God’s grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, putting to death certain attitudes and actions, while encouraging the body to love and good deeds by the Spirit. *1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:1-3; Hebrews 10:24*

Only by the power of the Holy Spirit can we identify sin in our lives. However, the practice of identifying sin and eradicating it

from our lives is a learned behavior. If we never try learn what sin is and how to remove it from our lives, 1 John 1:8 says, “*If we say we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.*” Only by the power of the Spirit can we encourage one another on to love and good deeds. Romans 3:10 says, “*no one is righteous, no not even one.*” Because no one is righteous, we have no power within ourselves to encourage or lift up what is good for reasons that do not serve our own selfish purposes. When we flee from sin and encourage good, we are acting in the power of the Spirit.

Below are examples of such actions, as addressed in Scripture:

- I will practice complete chastity unless married and if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity means that regardless of marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, homosexuality, premarital sex and pornography. *Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4*
- I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation before pursuing divorce from my spouse. *Matthew 19:1-12; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11*
- I will refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates. *Romans 1:28-32; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18*

Admittedly, a huge assumption is being made about these actions: that they are indeed sinful. The Scriptures condemn such actions as sinful (*see references for each*). Therefore we affirm that chastity and fidelity (*explained above*) are to be practiced in the context of sexual purity; reconciliation should be pursued in potentially broken marriages; and abstention from illegal drug use, drunkenness and gossip should be practiced at all times. Does that mean that if you have been guilty of any of these actions in the past that you cannot sign the membership covenant? No. Forgiveness of sin in Christ is immediate completed action for past, present and future sin. Does that mean if you are continuing in these patterns of behavior that you cannot sign the membership covenant? Maybe. If you recognize the above behaviors as sinful, yet you continue in them, you are walking in disobedience to the Scriptures that we uphold as authoritative. 1 John 5:3 says, “*For this is what love for God is: to keep His commands.*” Our resolve to love God, that is, the very evidence of our hearts having been changed by the gospel is obedience to Christ. The other half of 1 John 5:3 says, “*Now His commands are not a burden.*” They are not a burden because in Him (which means His way of life for us) we have joy. We cannot fill the void in our hearts with sinful desires and behaviors that will never bring us true joy. Only truth in Christ will set us free.

If you are having trouble with where to go next or what to do with the above stance against these behaviors we urge you to go to a pastor or elder for clarity. The following questions should be considered for those struggling with any of the previously

mentioned behaviors: 1) Do you agree that the behavior is sinful? 2) What will you do to flee from that behavior? 3) How can we help? The third question should reveal our desire to help you and our church be the healthiest it can be on the way to spiritual maturity. We understand that some of the trouble with being stuck in a sinful pattern of behavior is not knowing *how* to get out of it. This is where the church is so important to a person's spiritual growth. People who have dealt with the same struggles you have are probably sitting right next to you in church and have seen the grace of God pull them through the most difficult of addictions or impurities. Religion says you *should* not partake in these things, the gospel says, you *need* not partake in these patterns and behaviors. This is what it means to do life together. Calling each other to life and joy only found in Christ. If a person commits to getting out of his or her pattern of behavior that the Scriptures call sinful, then he or she should sign the membership covenant.

- to refrain from such activities that the Scriptures would deem foolish. *Romans 14:14-23; Ephesians 5:4-21; Colossians 3:1-17*

Christ as the personification of wisdom desires that we walk in Him. Walk in wisdom. The Proverbs consistently condemn the fool and point us to wisdom. Because we believe the Bible is God's Word, we are declaring that it is the way of wisdom. Therefore, walk as the Scriptures direct you to walk.

- to follow the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another (the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration); and to receive righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers. *Psalms 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11*

Typically the dreaded topic of "church discipline" will not get past the first step as laid out in Matthew 18; this step being the loving confrontation of "calling out sin" in a brother or sister in Christ. The person who is offended simply has a conversation with the person who offends, a discussion is had and the two newly restored parties part company in love and peace. Believe it or not, this is church discipline. When an offended party brings a witness into the mix, the conversation can get a little more tense, but loving discipline still must take place as laid out in Matthew

18. If this step does not work, then the two parties should come before the elders as the spiritual guides representing the church. This is the pattern, or levels of church discipline as laid out in Scripture. But here is the point of church discipline: restoration. The point is *not* to affirm who is right and who is wrong. The point is *not* to "make someone pay." The point is always restorative in nature. Rest assured, the elders will seek to restore brothers and sisters in conflict. A restorative attitude towards loving church discipline makes for a healthy church who can talk openly to others who have offended them, without repercussions or fear of rejection, creating a culture of forgiveness and restoration.

- to submit to the elders and other appointed leaders in the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church. *Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5*

Believers are to be mutually submissive to each other, including the elders; but there are those who are set apart as godly men with the gift of leadership in the church. These leaders, including the deacons and staff, strive for unity and peace, seeking to lead the church in the direction God has pointed us. Submission to leadership does not mean that no one has a voice in the church but the leaders. Leaders are appointed in the church, by the church and for the church. (See section on biblical obligations of the elders at Ocean View Church)

- to do the following when I sin: 1) confess my sin to God and fellow believers; 2) repent and seek help to put my sin to death. *Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:6-10*

Sin is dealt with in community. These explanations have spoke at length to this process. Again, the church is here to help.

- to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, ready always to tell someone what the Lord has done in my life and how He will do the same for them. *Matthew 28:19-20*

Once again, our faith is personal, but not private. One of the spiritual disciplines that the Christian must exercise is evangelism (sharing your faith). This is how the message is heralded to the nations!