



# GRACE COMMUNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Presbyterian Church in American (PCA)

## **MEMBERSHIP CLASS**

### **I. Why is Church Membership Important?**

“C.S Lewis once wrote an essay on church membership, reminding us that the word *membership* is of Christian origin, but it has been taken over by the world and emptied of all its original meaning. Today, most people associate the term *membership* with paying dues, meaningless rituals, silly rules and handshakes, and having your name on some dusty roll. Paul however had a very different image of membership. To him, being a member of the church did not refer to some cold induction into an institution, but rather **it meant becoming a vital organ of a living body** (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 6:15; 1 Cor. 12:12-27). We need to reclaim this image. Any organ that is detached from the body will not only miss what it was created to be, it will shrivel and die quickly. The same is true for Christians that are uncommitted to any specific congregation.” (*Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church, p. 310*).

If you are a believer, you should be part of a local church body. God has not called you to be a “lone ranger Christian” but has provided the church as a spiritual family to help you grow toward maturity and effective service. Being part of a church means that you participate in the **life and ministry** of that church -- **to grow and to serve** together in Christ.

**Membership makes visible the spiritual family bond between believers through:**

**A**ffirming a common faith statement

**B**eing accountable to the leadership of the church

**C**ovenanting together to love and encourage one another, and to work and serve together in ministry.

We hope you will become part of our church family.

## II. What are the Formal Membership Promises?

Grace Community Presbyterian Church belongs to a wider family – the Presbyterian Church in America (“PCA”), a denomination with roots in the Reformation tradition. Membership at Grace Community means that you have committed yourself to our family of believers – that you have agreed to participate as fully as you are able in the life, ministry and government of our church. Therefore, Grace Community members must affirm the following as vows unto the Lord:

### Doctrinal Promises

*You must believe the Gospel*

- 1. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope of salvation except in His sovereign mercy?**
- 2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?**

### Character Promise

*You must seek to grow into the likeness of Christ, not through proud self-reliance, but through constant repentance and reliance on the Holy Spirit.*

- 3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live in a manner becoming of a follower of Christ?**

### Community Promise

*You must seek to be regularly involved in the life and ministry of the congregation*

- 4. Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?**

### Accountability Promise

*You hold yourself accountable to the leadership and one another to live up to the above promises and seek to be a Biblical peacemaker in your relationships.*

- 5. Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to study its purity and peace?**

### III. What are the “Expectations” of Active Membership?

## GRACE COMMUNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Being convinced that I have been spiritually born into a relationship with God by means of faith in Christ and repentance from sin, and being in agreement with Grace Community Presbyterian Church's ministry philosophy and standards, I feel led by God to become part of the Grace Community church family. I hereby place myself under the spiritual leadership of this church. In doing so I am saying the following:

*I will seek to grow as a believer in Christ.  
I will protect the peace and purity of my church.  
I will support the worship and work of my church*

I understand that the above standards cannot be maintained without relying on the Holy Spirit to work in my life and without specific commitment on my part.

*In order to grow as a believer I will strive to:*

- spend regular time alone with God in prayer and the Scriptures
- obey the teachings of Scripture and submit to its authority
- regularly partake of communion, and
- regularly fellowship with other believers.

*In order to protect the peace and purity of my church I will strive to:*

- act in love toward other members, and
- refuse to engage in or encourage gossip.

*In order to support the worship and work of my church I will strive to:*

- attend faithfully
- give regularly
- discover and use my spiritual gifts
- willingly serve others within the church
- pray for the church's health and growth
- share with unbelievers and invite the unchurched to attend, and
- warmly welcome those who visit.

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Signature

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Date

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Interviewing Pastor/Elder Signature

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Date

## IV. Do I Have To Be A Presbyterian To Join?

In a sense, no! (It's been said, "you don't have to be a Presbyterian to be a Presbyterian.") Actually, for church membership all that's required is a credible understanding and commitment to the gospel. Church members are genuine Christian believers. It is important, however, for members who have different beliefs to be able to peacefully exist with a church body that holds to certain standards.

Officers in the church (elders and deacons) have to take a vow to subscribe to the full doctrinal positions of the PCA. Other leaders in the church (such as small group leaders or ministry leaders) don't have to commit themselves to all the PCA distinctives in the same way; but they do have to *understand* and *not undermine* those key positions.

## V. How Do I Become a Member?

1. Your first step is attendance at the **Membership Class**. Attendance at the Membership Class obligates you in no way to become a member.
2. Second, when you have decided you want to belong to the Grace Community church family and have taken the Membership Class, you need to complete and submit the **Membership Application**.
3. When you submit your application, you will be schedule for a **Membership Interview** with one or more of our Pastors/Elders. The Membership Interview is designed for several purposes. First, it gives our leaders a chance to get to know you better, to hear your experience in coming to know God in Christ and what is happening presently in your spiritual life. Second, you have an opportunity to ask any questions you might have – about the church, its position on certain issues and how the church operates.

The pastor/elder should read to you the public promises you will attest to before the congregation to make sure you are clear about what you are attesting to in front of other believers and to determine whether you can affirm these promises.

4. After the approval by the pastors/elders, a date will be set for the **public promises** during a service of worship. If you have never been baptized, you can make arrangements with the pastor to be baptized on that date as well.

## VI. What If I Choose To Not Become a Formal Member?

If you have decided to stay involved with Grace Community Presbyterian Church **without** membership, you will still be able to fully participate in most of our church life and activities. You will not be excluded. However, we believe membership is a privilege and we encourage you to join our covenant family, if not now, then at a future time.