

Covenant Membership



This covenant is birthed out of our love for the body of Christ and her individual members. It is our hope that as we covenant together to pursue after Christ we will experience the fullness of joy that is found only in the following hard after God.

The purpose of this Covenant is to serve as a teaching document that will fulfill three vital functions:

- ❖ To clarify the biblical obligations and expectations for both the elders of *The Crossroads* and her individual members.
- ❖ To establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for *The Crossroads*.
- ❖ 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 *Christ's Church at The Crossroads* would grow in the grace and truth of Jesus Christ.

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 Corinthians 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 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.

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The church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (Ephesians 2:19), the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2, 9), and the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).

Paul, in 1 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 Corinthians 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 (Romans 12:3-8). Contrary to the beliefs of our culture, we need each other. *{For a more detailed handling of this topic, visit: www.thecrossroadsaz.com/membershipmatters}.}*

Membership at *The Crossroads* 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 (Ephesians 4:1).

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE IN COVENANT:

To be "in covenant" at *The Crossroads* means that we promise to live in relationship with God and with each other as a biblically functioning community. Essentially, we commit to God and to each other our desire to do life together in submission to Christ and according to scriptural teaching. Think of "covenant" as a memorandum of understanding {MOU}. It is not legally binding, but merely a tool whereby godly people can make a good faith commitment to one another.

Such covenants abound in Scripture; some between God and people {Genesis 6, 9, 15; Ezekiel 20; Hosea 2; Jeremiah 31; Matthew 26} and others between people {1 Samuel 18, 2 Samuel 5}.

- ❖ Some covenants are unconditional in that the promises are not dependent upon the faithfulness of the other party.
- ❖ Other covenants are conditional, meaning that the commitments of one party are at least in part dependent upon the faithfulness of the other.

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While God's covenant with the church universal is unconditional, a local church covenant is [in part] conditioned upon the faithfulness of each party. If at any time one of the parties, the individual member or the corporate church, fails in its promised obligations, the other party is released from certain understandings of the covenant.

This Membership Covenant contains understandings that are commonly accepted Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, whether members of *The Crossroads* or elsewhere, are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward their resources, etc. Such requirements are universal obligations for any Christ-follower.

This Covenant is also dually focused. If at any time an individual member feels as though the corporate church body is not remaining faithful to the understandings 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 elders are unwilling to change and pursue covenant faithfulness then the member is freed from his or her membership covenant and is encouraged to seek membership elsewhere.

While focusing primarily in language on the responsibilities between the individual parties, the corporate church body, her elders and her individual members, this covenant is first and foremost a promise made to God as a commitment to His glory and the good of the body and bride of His Son.

STATEMENT OF BASIC BELIEF

The following beliefs represent the core of central orthodox beliefs from a biblical and historical perspective. While a full understanding and the ability to adequately articulate these beliefs is not required, the explicit rejection of any one of these particular beliefs disqualifies one from membership at *The Crossroads*.

❖ ...About God

We believe God is the loving Creator of all things, both seen and unseen. God is eternal and completely good, knowing all things, having all power and majesty. God exists as three distinct personalities with distinct roles, yet one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God passionately desires relationship with us and continually invites us into a relationship of faith, friendship,

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learning, and service. {See Genesis 1:1; John 14:6-9, 16:7-15; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 4:9-10}

❖ ...About Jesus Christ

We believe God expressed himself in human form through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified for the sins of us all, was buried and rose again from the dead. He has ascended to heaven and will return as our victorious Lord. {See Colossians 1:13-23, 2:8-14; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Matthew 22:36-40; John 14:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-3; Acts 10:42-43; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17}

❖ ...About the Holy Spirit

We believe the Holy Spirit, sent from God to live inside all who believe in Jesus Christ, teaches, comforts and empowers us, giving each follower diverse gifts, fostering unity, interdependence, productivity, Christ-like character and love among Christians. {See Romans 5:5, 8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 3:16, 4:3-4, 5:18; John 14:26, 16:7-14}

❖ ...About the Bible

We believe God speaks to us in the Bible, and it is our privilege to seek to understand God's message and apply it responsibly to our lives. The Bible is our standard in all we say and do, containing God's unchangeable truth for our lives, and is without error as originally transcribed. It is our guide. {See Matthew 5:17-19; 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:14-17; Hebrew 4:12; 2 Peter 1:16-21, 3:14-18; Psalm 19:7-11, 119:9-16; Joshua 1:7-8; Acts 17:11}

❖ ...About Salvation

We believe all people are created with dignity and value in the image of God, to live in a vital relationship with God. However, through our sin (failing to live by God's moral standards), we broke our intended relationship with God and experienced the destructive consequences of that broken relationship, spiritually and socially, in this life and beyond.

However, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us from those consequences and to restore our broken relationships with God

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and others, through Christ's death on the cross, a perfect act of redemption for each of us.

We believe Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and mankind, and salvation occurs when people place their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ as the complete and sufficient payment for their sin. {See I Peter 2:24, 3:18; Romans 3:9-28, 6:23, 10:9-10; John 3:16, 5:24; Ephesians 2:1-10; Titus 3:3-8; James 2:14-26}

❖ ...About the Church

We believe the church is the body of Christ, of which Jesus Christ is the head. The members of the church are those who have trusted by faith the finished work of Christ. The purpose of the church is to glorify God by loving Him and by making Him known to the lost world. {See Matthew 16:13-18 and Acts 2:14-47}

While the above doctrines are recognized as universal and primary within the universal church, there is a diversity among Christians in many nonessential areas. At *The Crossroads*, we do not press for uniformity in these areas, but rather encourage people to search the Scriptures, seeking balance, mutual understanding, humility and love. Additionally, we seek to respect one another's differences without a quarrelsome, arrogant or divisive spirit, and to return continually to the great commandment, to love God and one another. {See 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Romans 14:1-15:7, 16:17; 2 Timothy 2:14-17, 23-26; James 3:13-17; Philippians 2:1-5}

Additionally, *The Crossroads* also believes that no person nor group of persons will ever fully capture the complete revelation of God. Therefore, those who follow the Lord must follow Him with humility and an attitude of expectant discovery. We must also seek to find reasons to INCLUDE people, not EXCLUDE them. And when other equally sincere and Bible-believing followers disagree with our positions, we follow this simple, but powerful motto:

In essentials, unity;
In opinions, liberty;
And in all things, LOVE.

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THE CROSSROADS' ELDERS COMMITMENT TO ME

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 comprehensive overview of the requirements for elders as spelled out within the Scriptures.

The elders at *The Crossroads* covenant to...

- ❖ ...to 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).
- ❖ ...to 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 the Spirit (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- ❖ ...to 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).
- ❖ ...to 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).
- ❖ ...to equip the members of the church for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- ❖ ...to be on guard against false teachers and teachings (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 1 John 4:1).
- ❖ ...to 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).
- ❖ ...to 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).

MY COVENANT TO *THE CROSSROADS*

In affirming this membership covenant, an individual believer essentially makes these solemn commitments:

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As one who has experienced the grace of a changed life through Jesus Christ, I covenant to pursue the likeness of Christ and reflect the character of Christ by living according to the Spirit {Romans 8}. I understand that this membership covenant in no way seeks to add to or take away any biblical obligations of a growing disciple. Rather, the purpose of this covenant is to provide a grid of understanding {in an accessible, yet non-exhaustive manner} regarding what the Bible teaches regarding a maturing follower of Christ.

Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior and been baptized, and being in agreement with the published Pre-Covenant Class Materials, I feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with The Crossroads church family.

In doing so, I acknowledge that I:

- ❖ *...affirm the mission, purpose and values of The Crossroads.*
- ❖ *...agree with the Statement of Basic Belief.*
- ❖ *...embrace the philosophies and structure that undergird our ministry.*

In addition, I commit myself to:

- ❖ *...submit to the Bible as the final authority on all issues {Psalm 119, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21}.*
- ❖ *...pursue Christian maturity through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and the practice of spiritual disciplines {Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22}.*
- ❖ *...follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances assigned to His church by being obedient to Christ in Christian baptism and by regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through the Lord's Supper.*
- ❖ *...faithfully participate in the life of The Crossroads by attending weekly services, by engaging in biblical community, by serving those within and outside the church and by inviting others into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. {Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14}.*

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- ❖ *...steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, spiritual gifts and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in community that is sacrificial, cheerful, and voluntary {Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11}.*
- ❖ *...by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, walk in holiness in all areas of my life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ {1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:1-3}.*
- ❖ *...submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and will be diligent to strive for unity and peace within the Church {Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5}.*

Church membership is about more than attending church meetings. Members who enter into a covenant with us are called to a higher degree of responsibility, service and sacrifice.

By becoming a Covenant Member you are committing to be part of a spiritual family that will provide support and encouragement in your walk with Christ. Our elders and leadership pledge to assist our Covenant Members first and foremost, by providing care and counsel as well as pray, teach and guide as necessary.

We hope that as the Lord leads, you will covenant with us to be part of *The Crossroads* church family.