



CHRIST COVENANT
— CHURCH —

Membership Class

Special thanks to the Session of Reformation Covenant Church in Oregon City who created the vast majority of this packet and graciously allowed us to use this material.



“Covenant is the divinely established relationship between God and His people in mutual love and faithfulness.”

As a desire to reflect God’s covenantal character, here at CCC, we covenant with one another, agreeing that our relationship is one of mutual respect, faith, and love and rooted in the family name of the Triune God that we received at our baptism.

Introductions

Name: _____

Date: _____

Please check below which statement best describes where you are in your spiritual journey:

- I am confident of my relationship with Christ, trusting him as Lord and Savior.
- I am not confident of my relationship with Christ, though in the past I think I have sought to trust him as Lord and Savior.
- I have never trusted Christ as my Lord and Savior but am presently investigating such a relationship.
- I now believe that Jesus is Lord and would like to follow Him, repent from my sin, and be baptized.

If you were to join Christ Covenant Church, by what means would you join?

- Profession of faith in Christ (I’ve never been a member of another church.)
- Reaffirmation of faith in Christ (I am not currently a member of a church.)
- By transfer of another church (I am a member in good standing with another church.)

Name of church: _____

Please indicate your status regarding baptism:

- I have never been baptized.
- I was baptized as an infant.
- I was baptized as an adult.



A Concept of Church Membership

People often ask, “Why do you emphasize membership? Where is that in the Bible?” The answer is simple: while the phrase “church membership” is not used explicitly in the Bible, the concept can be presupposed on every page. Real community takes real commitment. To be a member of a church is to make a public promise to live according to biblical teachings and to support the mission and ministry of the local church.

We believe that church membership is a biblical concept and an essential part of both demonstrating our commitment to one another and living out the truth that together we are members of Christ’s Body. If Christ Covenant Church is to be your home church, we hope that you will formalize your membership with us. However, if you decide not to join CCC as a member, you may continue to worship with us, but you will be missing out on all the benefits of membership.

How do I become a member of Christ Covenant Church?

All prospective members must go through a membership orientation prior to joining CCC. This provides an opportunity to learn more about who we are and what we believe of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Worship with us for a few weeks/months and get to know us.
2. Let one of the elders know that you desire to pursue membership.
3. Fill out the spiritual pilgrimage form that tells us basic info about your life with the Lord. This will help us get to know you better and discern ways you might best participate in the life of the church.
4. Participate in New Member Orientation.
5. Meet with the Session.
6. Take your vows before the Lord and His people.
7. Serve and be served by Christ and His church.

In a Presbyterian church it is the responsibility of the Session (a group of elders) to examine and receive all new members, and it is their responsibility to watch over the souls of all the members under their care. (In fact, the word *Presbyterian* comes from the Greek word for *elder*.)



After you express your desire to place membership and complete the spiritual pilgrimage form, you will meet with our elders to share your faith and express your affirmation of CCC's membership vows and any disagreements or questions you might have about our Confession.

The membership vows are designed to help you express your commitment to Christ and your commitment to His Church.

- 1. Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in need of salvation by Christ, and do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving and resting upon Him alone as He is offered in the gospel?**
- 2. Have you been baptized in accordance with His Word?**
- 3. Do you swear in the name of God, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live in a way that becomes followers of Christ?**
- 4. Do you swear in the name of God to support the ministry of this church in its worship and work, submitting to its government and discipline, while pursuing its purity and peace?**
- 5. Have you read the church constitution and statement of faith and are you in agreement with them?**



Membership Vows

In his book, *The Creed of Presbyterianism*, Dr. Egbert W. Smith writes of the Church: “Her door of entrance is as wide as the gates of heaven.” In a large sense, this statement is very true. The requirements for membership in the church are basic and biblical.

People not already members of CCC may become so in a few different ways:¹

- They may be received by the session (the elders) of a particular church on the basis of their transfer by letter from another evangelical church. (An evangelical church is one that requires a profession of faith in the historic Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for membership.) Members who are received from other churches are not baptized again and are not required to make another public profession of faith, though they will still be asked to covenant themselves to Jesus and the saints at CCC.
- They may unite with a church by making a restatement or reaffirmation of their faith before the session. Sometimes for reasons of time or circumstance, it is impossible for a person to secure a certificate of membership in order that he may move his/her membership to another church. Some evangelical churches will not grant certificates of transfer allowing their members to unite with churches of other denominations. In such situations, the person who desires to join is asked to re-affirm his/her faith before the session by answering the same questions asked of those who unite with the church on profession of faith. Such persons, however, are not re-baptized or required to make another profession of faith.
- A new Christian may also become a member of the church by making a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If a new believer gives evidence of faith in, and obedience to, Christ, the session votes to admit them to Church membership and the corresponding ordinances of the Church, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. They ordinarily then appear before the congregation to repeat their public profession of faith in Christ and their vows to CCC. At that time, they also receive Christian baptism, if they have not already been baptized.

¹ We believe that the children of one or more believing parents are included in the family of God by nature of His covenant promises. As a child of God, that child has a right to bear God’s name in baptism and eat at their Lord’s Table in Communion. He/she may choose to take formal membership vows at CCC upon adulthood, even though they are already a member, but we would not require a new profession of faith or the administration of Christian baptism.



Your Commitment to Christ: Vows 1-3

Christ's saving work is what unites you to Him, and therefore His people. Local church membership is a necessary consequence of who you have been saved by and to. Therefore, your obligation to the local church does not begin once you sign a church covenant, rather, you sign a church covenant because you are acknowledging your loyalty to Christ and His visible body, the Church.

Sin and Its Consequences

The ***first*** part of the first question asked of those who seek to become members of Christ Covenant Church is:

1. ***Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in need of salvation by Christ, and do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving and resting upon Him alone as He is offered in the gospel?***

This question points to the fact of sin and what sin does in the lives of people. For a person to become a member of the church, he should know what sin is, that he himself is a sinner, and that sin leads to spiritual death and separation from God. No one who thinks himself “good” is prepared to understand his need for a Savior or accept Jesus Christ as Lord in full, Christian sense.

What is sin?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism in Q&A #14 answers:

“Sin is any want (lack) of conformity unto, or actual transgression of, the law of God.”

In other words, sin is “self” going against the will and the way of God. God made known His will and His way in His Commandments. When we violate the laws of God, we are guilty of sin. “Whosoever committed sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 [John 3:4](#)).

There are two ways of breaking the law:

- (1) by failing to do what the law requires, and
- (2) by doing what the law forbids.

A man who fails to pay his taxes breaks the law by failing to do what it requires. A man who drives fifty miles an hour in a thirty-mile speed zone breaks the law by doing what it forbids. Men violate God’s law in the same ways. Paul wrote, “For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” ([Romans 7:19](#)).



Who does sin offend?

Whoever else may be harmed by it, sin is basically an offense against God. When David had committed a grievous evil against Uriah and his wife, Bathsheba, he prayed to God, “Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight” ([Psalm 51:4](#)). Sin is so offensive to God that He cannot look on it: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Habakkuk 1:13).

Who does sin affect?

Sin touches and damages the life of every person. All who ever lived have sinned except one, and that is Christ himself. The Bible states very clearly that all are sinners and that all have sinned. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” ([1 John 1:8](#); see also [Ecclesiastes 7:20](#) and [Romans 3:23](#)). Not only does the Bible tell us we are sinners, but when we are honest with ourselves, our consciences tell us the same thing.

Where does sin lead?

It always leads to death. Death came to our first parents, because of their sin. All of their descendants have been sinners and have deserved death because of their sins. “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” ([Romans 5:12](#); see also [Romans 6:23](#) and [Ezekiel 18:4](#)). Spiritual death means being separated from God forever ([Isaiah 59:2](#)).

In our own strength there is nothing we can do to overcome the evil effects of sin in our lives. We know what we ought to do, but we find ourselves unable to do it. Paul said, “For I know that in me [that is in my flesh] dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” ([Romans 7:18](#)).

If there is any help for us as sinners, it must come from someone else. Other people cannot help, because they are sinners too. Our help comes only from the Lord. There is nothing we can do about sin, but he has already done all that is necessary. We deserve death, but God takes away our sin and gives us eternal life in its place. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” ([Romans 6:23](#)).



Who Jesus Is and What He Does

The **second** half of the first question asked of those who would join Christ Covenant Church is:

1. ***Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in need of salvation by Christ, and do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving and resting upon Him alone as He is offered in the gospel?***

In order for a person to say, “yes” to this question, he/she must know who Jesus is and what He does.

Jesus is God

When the Bible refers to Jesus as the Son of God, it clearly means that he is equal with God, that he is God. He said, “I and my Father are one” ([John 10:30](#)). Again he said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” ([John 14:9](#)). The Bible ascribes to the Lord Jesus qualities, honors, and works that can belong to God alone. The clear estimate of the Scriptures is that Jesus Christ is God.

Jesus is Man

The Lord Jesus is also human. The Bible represents him as a human being who was born of a woman, who lived a truly human life, and who died a real death. The Scriptures leave no doubt as to the reality of his humanity. As to his nature, our Lord is both God and Man.

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (see [Luke 19:10](#) and [Mark 10:45](#)). He could save others because he had no sin of his own for which to answer (see [1 Peter 2:22](#)). He died in the place of sinners to answer for *their* sins ([Romans 5:6,8](#)). He, the Son of God, took the punishment of those who were guilty in order that the guilty might share the reward of the innocent ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)).

The Lord Jesus died our death that we might live His life.

When we say that Jesus Christ saves people, we mean that he delivers them from the death and punishment they were to receive because of their sin. Instead of death and punishment, he gives them life and joy. There is a great difference between being saved and being lost (see [John 3:36](#)).



Those who are saved by Christ have the hope of the resurrection and the hope of heaven (see [1 Thessalonians 4:16,17](#) and [John 14:2,3](#)). Those who have not found him do not have this hope.

When mealtime comes around, a healthy boy will know that he is hungry. He also knows that his mother loves him, and that she has prepared food for him and the rest of the family. He believes these things, but his belief must go one step more before his hunger can be satisfied and his body can be nourished. He must actually sit down and eat. Believing in Christ for salvation is very much like this. The sinner may believe that he is a lost sinner and that Christ can save him, but before he can be saved, he must accept Christ's salvation (see [Romans 10:9](#) and [John 1:12](#)).

It is so easy to be lost. All that is necessary is to neglect or refuse to accept Christ as Savior (see [John 3:18](#)). It is also easy to enter the door leading to salvation. All one must do is to receive deliberately God's free gift of life (See [Ephesians 2:8-9](#)).

We remember always one important fact which must never be overlooked: There is only one way to be saved, for there is none other Name given us but that of the Lord Jesus (see [Acts 4:12](#) and [John 14:6](#)).



How a Christian Should Live

The ***third*** & ***fourth*** question asked of those who desire unite with Christ Covenant Church are these:

2. *Have you been baptized in accordance with His Word?*
3. *Do you swear in the name of God, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live in a way that becomes followers of Christ?*

These question indicates that being a Christian makes a difference in the way a person lives. Before a person can faithfully make the promise that the question requires, he must know what the Christian life is and how he can go about living it.

The book of 1 John calls on Christians to “walk in the light” and “walk in love.” Walking in the light means knowing and following the will of God as it is revealed in the Bible and doing so in fellowship with His people (see [Psalm 119:111,130](#)). Walking in love means living a life of love toward God and others. Jesus said that love of God and love of our neighbors is the fulfillment of the law ([Matthew 22:36-40](#)).

This is not to suggest that we are saved *because* of the way we live but that we are free to *truly* live *because* we are saved!

We are saved by believing in what Christ did for our salvation and receiving Him ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)). But we certainly will live in a different and better way because we are saved. . . because we are Christians.

Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, but saving faith is never alone—we are saved into a community of God's people and salvation produces good works which God has prepared beforehand for us to walk in ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)).

A Christian is a changed person, and he ought to live a changed life ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). The same Christ who saves from sin will, by his Spirit, help believers live the kind of lives they ought to live: “As ye therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” ([Colossians 2:6](#)). We receive Christ by faith. We must live the Christian life in the same way--faith. This was Paul's secret of Christian living: “I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me” ([Philippians 4:13](#)).



Your Commitment to Christ's Church: Vows 4-5

[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4] There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—[5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. [7] But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Ephesians 4:1–7

The Church and Its Work

The ***fourth*** question asked of those who desire to unite with Christ Covenant Church is this:

- 4. Do you swear in the name of God to support the ministry of this church in its worship and work, submitting to its government and discipline, while pursuing its purity and peace?*

In order to answer this question honestly, a person must know several things about the government of the church.

Christ is the Head of the Church ([Colossians 1.18](#); [Ephesians 5.23](#)). Members of the church look to Him alone as the supreme authority. The task of the church, then, is to teach, explain, and enforce the law of Christ as we find it in the Scriptures.

CCC has a *confession*, a statement of what we believe the Bible teaches, and a *constitution*, a statement on how we will govern this particular body of Christ's Church. The confession is primarily doctrinal – the teaching of the Bible about *what* we are to believe and how we are to live. The constitution is primarily procedural – how we function in various matters related to the work and worship of our ministry here at CCC.

What does it mean when the church member promises to submit to the leadership, participate in the government, and pursue the unity and well-being of the church?

It means that he should know and obey the teaching(s) of the church, and that he should honor the officers of the church (elders and deacons) as they teach the Scriptures and enforce the constitution.

In regard to the confession, we know that various churches believe variations of the doctrines expressed in these statements. We want to uphold the principle set forth by Augustine,

“In essentials unity, in non-essentials diversity, and in all things charity.”

The ***fifth*** question asked by those who unite with Christ Covenant Church is this:

- 5. Have you read the church constitution and statement of faith and are you in agreement with them? (not read during membership vows)*