

Christ Fellowship Church Constitution

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CONSTITUTION

Article 1 – Name

The name of this church is Christ Fellowship Church.

Article 2 – Purpose

2.1 – The Church

Christ Fellowship Church exists to make faithful disciples of Christ by spreading the knowledge of God's grace for the sake of His name.

Christ Fellowship Church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God. Christ Fellowship seeks to glorify God by loving Him and obeying His commands through: proclaiming the gospel, administering the ordinances of baptism and communion, equipping the saints through Bible study and instruction, worshiping God, supporting evangelism and missions, encouraging fellowship among believers, and serving one another practically and spiritually.

2.2 – Organization, Dissolution, and Government

Organization

This organization is organized exclusively for charitable purpose within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code. Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the organization shall not carry out any other activities not permitted to be carried out by an organization exempt from federal income tax as an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code (or corresponding section of any future federal tax code).

Dissolution

Upon the dissolution of this organization all remaining assets of the church shall be distributed by members to other churches or organizations who exist for the same purposes as listed in Article 2.1.

Government

This church shall be an independent, self-governing body.

Article 3 – Church Membership

3.1 – Prerequisites

As a prerequisite for membership in this church, a person: must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, has been baptized by immersion in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration, and wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must agree to affirm, submit to, and support the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the Core Beliefs and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant.

The elders shall be responsible for evaluating each person's eligibility for membership and then making recommendation to the congregation. In making this evaluation, the elders will rely on a member

candidate's profession of faith, current life testimony, previous membership record, and other evidence, as the elders deem appropriate.

3.2 – Admission of Members

To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission and accepted by vote of the members at any church service, regular meeting, or special meeting of the members, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in other churches.

3.3 – Duties and Privileges of Membership

All members are expected to obey the moral precepts and principles taught in God's Word and to support the church through attendance, giving, prayer, and faithful service.

Only members shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the church; non-members may serve with the prior approval of the elders. The church may utilize non-members for purposes of administration and professional consultation. Under Christ this congregation is governed by its members. Therefore, it is the privilege and duty of members to attend member meetings. Only members age 18 and older will vote on any matter submitted to a vote.

A member will be considered "not in good standing" when 1) he or she has not attended at least four services in the previous eight weeks excluding services associated with a member meeting, 2) is being considered for excommunication in the process of formal church discipline, 3) or is in clear violation of the church covenant.

3.4 – Other Memberships

Students and others temporarily residing in the area may apply for associate membership. Qualifications are identical to those for full membership as set out above, except that home church membership (if applicable) will be retained. A letter of recommendation will be sought from the applicant's home church. Duties and privileges of associate members are the same as for other members except that: (a) when absent from the area for extended periods of time they are released from the responsibility to attend our church services; (b) while they will be encouraged to participate in member meetings they will not be eligible to hold any office or to vote. Termination of associate membership as a disciplinary measure will be as it is for other members, except that the elders shall notify the pastor or elders of the home church of that termination. Associate membership will normally terminate immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in the area and their home church shall be notified.

Members under the age of eighteen will be considered junior members. They will not be able to hold any office or vote. Upon turning 18 they will automatically become regular members.

Associate members and junior members will not be included in quorum counts nor be eligible to vote.

3.5 – Church Discipline

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her membership responsibilities, or persistent in unrepentant sin, and so opposing the welfare of the church, will be subject to the admonition of the pastors (Heb. 13:17), and, if necessary, the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord (Matt. 18:15-17) and the example of Scripture (1 Cor. 5:1-13).

Removal of a member from the church's membership, then, will be pursued after attempts for private admonition have failed to bring about repentance and reconciliation. After attempts for individual, private admonition, the process of church discipline shall occur under the oversight of elders. The process of discipline should establish the truthfulness of the accusation through the presentation of evidence or witnesses which establish the truth (Matt. 18:16).

The church has the authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation of membership, either for the purpose of proceeding with an ongoing process of church discipline or for any other biblical reason.

The purpose of church discipline should be for the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (1 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 6:1-5; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15); for the purity of the church as a whole (1 Cor. 5:6-7); for the good of our corporate witness to the world (Matt. 5:13-16; 1 Cor. 5:1); as a warning to those tempted by sin (1 Tim. 5:20); and supremely for the glory of God, by reflecting His holy character (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Eph. 1:4; 5:27; 1 Pet. 2:12).

3.6 - Termination of Membership

The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death.

Termination shall also be recognized after he or she has voluntarily resigned and joined with another gospel-preaching church. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline upon the vote of at least two-thirds of the voting members present at any regular or special meeting of the members. In cases of pending church discipline, the church shall not recognize a member's voluntary resignation until the issue is resolved.

3.7 - Church Membership Record

The church shall maintain an updated record of church membership subject to annual review. Persons terminated from membership will immediately be listed as such.

Article 4 - Meetings

4.1 - Worship Meetings

Corporate worship services shall be held each Sunday, and may be held throughout the week as recommended by the elders. The observance of the ordinances (baptism and communion) will only take place at corporate gatherings.

4.2 - Member Meetings

4.2.1 - Member Meetings

Four regular meetings of members shall be held at the church facility in each calendar year (once per quarter), for the purposes of encouraging the church body, electing leadership, adopting the annual budget, reporting on the activities and financial condition of the church, and/or transacting any business consistent with the notice.

4.2.2 - Meeting Notice

A notice of member meetings shall be made at least two weeks prior to the meeting unless stated otherwise in this Constitution.

Notification of a member meeting shall be provided by the following means: (1) One of the following on two consecutive Sundays: a church bulletin notice or a verbal announcement at a regularly scheduled Sunday worship meeting; (2) Written or electronic correspondence to members; (3) or notice at a member meeting. The notice shall include the date, time, place, and the agenda of the meeting.

Only matters described in the meeting notice may be voted upon, unless the meeting notice specifies otherwise or at least two-thirds of the total membership eligible to vote are present at the meeting.

4.2.3 - Special Meetings

A special meeting of members may be called by a majority of the elders, a majority of the deacons after informing the elders in a personal meeting, or upon the written request of thirty percent of the total membership eligible to vote. If the meeting is requested by the members, the written request must include the agenda for the meeting.

4.2.4 - Rules for Transaction of Business at Member meeting

Church action at all meetings shall be determined by a majority of members present and voting, except as otherwise specified in this Constitution. Each member in good standing, eighteen years of age or older, and not an associate member who is present at a business meeting shall have one vote on a matter under consideration.

No corporate actions shall be determined by mailed ballot, remote communications, or by unanimous action without a meeting. No voting by proxy or absentee ballot is permitted. Voting agreements are not permitted. Secret ballots may be used upon the request of thirty percent of present voting members or recommendation by the elders.

In special circumstances wherein the congregation is providentially prevented from gathering in person for a period exceeding two Sunday services, the elders may call and establish special guidelines for an emergency remote meeting. Such meetings must be announced at least two weeks before the scheduled meeting. In such meetings, remote voting is permitted within the guidelines established by the elders.

Thirty percent of voting members shall constitute a quorum for any member meeting at which church action is required. This quorum shall not apply to the admission of members.

The elders will choose a moderator to preside at all meetings of the members. If the business to be transacted entails the moderator's personal interest in any way, the elders shall choose another moderator to preside over that item of business.

All meetings will be opened with prayer and conducted decently and in good order.

4.2.5 - Matters Requiring Member Approval

The following is a complete list of church matters that require the approval of the members:

- Admission of new members
- Removal of disciplined members, following completion of the process described in Article 3.5
- Election of an elder, deacon, or clerk
- Removal of a deacon or clerk
- Commission and sending of missionaries recommended by the elders

- Approval of an annual budget, including incurring of secured debt, the sale or transfer of church real estate, and the sale or transfer of church assets valued over 10% of the total annual budget
- Amendment or repeal of the Constitution, Covenant, and Confession of Faith

Article 5 – Church Officers

5.1 – Summary

The Biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons. In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under this Constitution of clerk and treasurer. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

5.2 – Pastors (Elders)

The pastors shall be comprised of men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The active eldership should include, if possible, at least one elder who is not in the regular pay of the church. The church shall recognize men gifted and desiring to serve in this office, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders. No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure.

The pastors shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Pet. 5:1-4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word, and shepherding God's flock. Elders shall have the oversight of all worship services as well as any ministries that are directly related to or sponsored by the church.

The pastors shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct worship services, oversee the ordinances of baptism and communion, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

The pastors may establish non-elder ministry positions to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders may also propose funding for new paid staff positions. The scope and approval of job descriptions for said staff position shall be the responsibility of the elders.

The pastors shall have responsibility for the employment, supervision, evaluation, and if need be, dismissal of non-elder staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to another staff member.

Each year the pastors shall present to the church an itemized budget. This budget shall be presented two weeks prior to a member meeting where it will be voted upon by the congregation. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders. The elders may approve to spend funds on a non-budget item up to five percent of the annual budget without seeking church approval.

From time to time the church, in the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. Contributors may suggest uses for their contributions, but all suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions made to specific funds or otherwise designated shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the elders. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution made to the church.

Any elder may call an elders' meeting when such need arises, giving sufficient notice to all and providing as much scheduling flexibility as reasonably possible. Two-thirds of the elders shall constitute a quorum unless waived in writing by absent elders. The elders shall elect a chairman of elders' meetings. Decisions of the elders should generally be by consensus, but if unanimity is not reached, the elders may decide matters by majority vote. Unanimous consent must be achieved among the elders when:

- Recommending a member to the congregation
- Recommending an elder to the congregation
- Recommending a deacon to the congregation
- Recommending a missionary for support
- Recommending financial debt to the congregation

An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two or more members of the congregation with verifiable evidence that an elder should be dismissed must submit such evidence to the other elders first, and when necessary, the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matt. 18:15-17 and 1 Tim. 5:17-21. Any of the elders may be dismissed from membership and consequently removed from office by a three-fourths vote of a quorum of the voting church membership.

In cases where church discipline does not apply, a two-thirds majority of the elders may recommend to the congregation that an elder be removed from office and/or employment.

5.3 – The Lead Pastor

The church shall have one elder who shall serve as lead pastor possessing the ability to preach the Word with accuracy and conviction. His primary responsibilities shall be to teach the Word (including the delegation of teaching and preaching to gifted members) and to pray.

The lead pastor is an overseer of the church, a shepherd of the flock, an administrator of the ordinances, and performer of other duties as usually pertain to his office. The lead pastor shall provide vision for the church's short-term and long-term ministry plans. The lead pastor shall serve as the head of the elders, functioning as a "first among equals."

He will be responsible for pastoral job descriptions, evaluate pastoral performance, and make recommendations relating to the number of pastoral staff. He shall oversee the weekly ministry labors of the pastoral team and take the leadership in the process of determining respective ministry focuses.

The lead pastor shall constitute the "President" as required by California law. The elders may appoint other corporate officers as required by law.

5.4 – Associate Pastors

Associate pastors are elders who function with the same spiritual authority as the lead pastor, but their particular responsibilities are defined by the lead pastor.

A pastor is an overseer of the church, recognized by the church as possessing the ability to teach the Word of God and to shepherd His people. Some pastoral team members may receive full compensation from the church, allowing their schedule to be completely dedicated to the task of shepherding. Other pastoral team members may receive partial or no compensation from the church, but will serve the church out of their available time and within the parameters established by the lead pastor.

5.5 – Pastoral Assistants

The pastors may hire additional staff to assist with pastoral ministry, designated as pastoral assistants. The pastors shall assign the responsibilities of the pastoral assistant(s). They shall serve at the will of the pastors.

5.6 – Deacons

The office of deacon is described in 1 Tim. 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. The church shall recognize and nominate qualified men who shall be examined and recommended by the elders, and elected in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. They shall be elected to one term lasting three years. A deacon may only serve six consecutive years.

Deacons are to serve the church in an official capacity and in such a manner as to free the pastors for the ministry of the Word and prayer. The deacons shall fulfill responsibilities assigned to them by the pastors according to their respective skills and giftedness including, service of the Lord's Supper, oversight of the Grace Fund, participation in the proper handling of offerings, care of the church property, and other matters deemed appropriate by the pastors. The deacon fellowship will meet on a regular basis with the lead pastor or his designee serving as the chairman of the meeting. On matters calling for a vote, the deacon fellowship shall act by at least a majority vote.

A deacon's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by three-quarters vote of the voting members upon recommendation of the elders. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matt. 18:15-17.

5.7 – Clerk

It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special member meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the pastor, the elders, the deacons, or the church. The clerk shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve until he or she resigns or is removed by congregational vote. The Clerk shall also obtain a record of all minutes of Elder's meetings and Deacon's meetings.

In the absence or incapacity of the clerk the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk.

The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this Constitution and of all minutes of member meetings shall be available for all church members.

5.8 – Treasurer

The treasurer, who shall be elected by the deacons from within their number, shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer shall also be responsible for working with the elders to present regular reports of the account balances, revenues and expenses of the church at each member meeting. The responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the elders.

The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church.

5.9 – Insurance and Indemnification

5.9.1 – Insurance

Christ Fellowship Church will purchase and maintain liability insurance on behalf of any and all persons who are or were an officer, employee, or volunteer of Christ Fellowship Church (while serving in their capacity as such). Such insurance will be purchased for the purpose of protecting such persons from covered loss resulting in liability asserted against the above individuals in connection with their activities on behalf of the Ministry.

5.9.2 – Indemnification Requests

Should any officer, employee, or volunteer of Christ Fellowship Church incur any liability as a result of their affiliation with or service to Christ Fellowship Church that is not covered by Christ Fellowship Church's insurance policy, and should such liability result in any out-of-pocket cost to such individual, then such individual may request indemnification from Christ Fellowship Church. The granting of full or partial indemnification shall be at the discretion of the elders of Christ Fellowship Church.

5.9.3 – Indemnification Decisions

If the indemnification request is being made by a person who is currently serving as an elder, then the indemnification decision (whether to indemnify the requesting party, and the dollar amount of such indemnification), will be made by the remaining disinterested elders. A decision on the indemnification request by a majority of disinterested elders will be final.

Article 6 – Elections

6.1 – Principles

The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

- The authority of God's Word: all nominees are subject to biblical qualifications for the desired office. These qualifications are further delineated in our Core Beliefs and Church Distinctives;
- Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the nomination and election process;
- Nominations must proceed with the support of the elders;
- All candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members;
- The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

6.2 – Selection of Officers

The election of officers shall be held at a regular member meeting. Names of nominees to serve as elders, deacons, or clerk shall be presented to the congregation no less than two weeks before the meeting in which the election will be held. The elections shall proceed as directed by the moderator.

The elders shall be responsible for nominating candidates to serve as officers of the church, but will be open to seeking recommendations and involvement from the membership in the nomination process. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern privately to the elders as far in advance as possible of the relevant church member meeting.

The moderator shall declare elected all candidates receiving a three-quarters majority of all votes cast for the office of elder. For all other offices, the moderator shall declare elected all persons receiving a simple majority of all votes cast; abstentions will not be considered as votes cast. The officers elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

6.3 – Calling of Elders

The church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the biblical qualifications and teaching gifts of any potential elder and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are convinced of his wholehearted assent to the Core Beliefs and Church Covenant along with his willing support of the Pastoral Distinctives. Calling an elder will satisfy the requirements of election to membership if the elder is not already a member. Members of an elder's family will be subject to regular membership requirements.

A man affirmed by the congregation by vote and hired to serve as a vocational pastor shall seek formal appointment to the office by the church within a year. Upon appointment, he shall assume the role.

Article 7 – Amendments

The Constitution, Core Beliefs, Theological Distinctives and Covenant may be amended by a three-quarters vote of the members present and voting at a member meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous member meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

Article 8 – Adoption

Upon adoption this Constitution abolishes, supersedes, and takes the place of any Constitution, rules, bylaws, and amendments that preceded it.

CORE BELIEFS

Our Core Beliefs are a summary of what we believe as a Church and are therefore prerequisite to membership. They are based on and anchored to the Scriptures, our all-sufficient and sole authority. This statement protects us from error, unifies us in truth, and keeps us tethered to the Scriptures.

In addition to these core beliefs, Christ Fellowship believes that the Nicene Creed (381), the Second London Baptist Confession (1689), and the New Hampshire Confession (1853) are helpful statements of faith from saints who have gone before.

Section 1 – The Scriptures

We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament canon which, being inerrant in the original manuscripts is the sole authority on all matters of faith and practice.

(Ps. 12:6; 19:7-12; 119:160; John 17:17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)

Section 2 – The Godhead

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one God, having precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections and worthy of precisely the same worship and obedience.

(Ex. 20:2; Deut. 6:4; Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16-17; Rev. 4:11)

Section 3 – God the Father

We believe in God the Father, who reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the counsel of His will. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

(Gen. 50:20; 1 Chron. 29:10-13; Job 12:13, 28:20-28; Ps. 104:14, 147:5; Prov. 21:1; Isa. 55:8-9, 64:8; Dan. 2:20-21; Matt. 6:9; Mark 1:9-11; John 1:12-13, 3:35, 6:37; Acts 2:23, 4:27-28, 17:24-25; Rom. 11:33, 16:27; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 4:6, 13:14; Gal. 3:26, 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5, 11; 1 John 4:8-10; 1 John 3:1, 20, 4:8; Rev. 4:11)

Section 4 – Jesus Christ

We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ who was begotten by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and is truly God and truly Man, one person with two natures, divine and human

(Matt. 1:18-20; John 1:1, 2, 14)

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ died as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin according to the Scriptures, and all who receive Him are justified on the grounds of His shed blood

(2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:21-26; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2)

We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord Jesus Christ; in His bodily ascension into Heaven; and in his present life there as High Priest for all believers

(Matt. 28:1-10; Acts 1:9; Heb. 7:25-28)

We believe in the coming return of Christ, at which time all Christians will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and will thereafter always be with the Lord

(1 Thess. 4:14-17; 5:6, 9; 1 Cor. 15:51-53; Rom. 5:9)

Section 5 – The Holy Spirit

We believe the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration, He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

(Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4; Zech. 7:12; Matt. 3:16; John 3:5-6, 15:26, 16:7-14; Rom. 5:5, 8:9, 13, 16, 30; 1 Cor. 1:23-24, 2:14, 12:4-7, 12-13, 15:10; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Gal. 5:22-25; Col. 1:9; Phil. 2:13; Eph. 1:13-14, 4:12-13; 2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Pet. 4:10; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 1 John 2:20, 4:1-3)

Section 6 – Salvation

We believe salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

(John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 8:29-30; 1 Tim. 2:5)

Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers receive new life in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

(Eph. 2:4-5; John 1:13; 3:3; Rom. 6:17; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2 Cor. 5:17)

Repentance is an immediate, genuine turning from sin toward God. It includes the recognition, regret, and forsaking of sin. Faith is the knowledge of and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ and the commitment of the entire personality to him as Lord and Savior.

(Ps. 51:3-4; Mark 1:15; Luke 5:31-32; Acts 3:19, 5:31, 26:20; 1 Thess. 1:9; John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9-10; Phil. 3:9; Col. 2:5; Heb. 11:1)

Justification is the act of God whereby he declares the believing sinner to be righteous based on Jesus' righteous life and his atoning death. It is a righteousness imputed to the believer by God.

(2 Cor. 5:21; Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 3:24-26; 4:3-5; 5:9)

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power

of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in this grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

(2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 2:12-13; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; Rom. 6:22; 1 Thess. 4:3)

Glorification is the work of God whereby he will completely eliminate sin from the experience of the believer. It is the culmination of salvation and is the permanent and final state of the redeemed.

(Rom. 8:23; 1 Thess. 3:13; 1 John 3:2; Jude 24)

Section 7 - The Church

We believe that a visible church is a congregation of baptized believers, bound together by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. It observes the ordinances of Christ, submits to his commands, and exercises the gifts given by the Holy Spirit for mutual edification. The local church is governed by the Word of God, which teaches that Jesus alone is its king and head; that pastors are qualified men given to shepherd the church; that deacons are qualified men given to serve the church; and that the congregation has the responsibility to affirm members, defend doctrine, hold its leaders accountable, and carry out discipline when Scripture requires. Church members are commanded to assemble regularly, love one another, promote gospel unity, seek the good of their neighbors, make disciples of the nations, and live for the glory of God.

(Matt. 5:16, 16:13-19, 18:15-20, 28:18-20; John 13:34-35, 17:20-24; Acts 2:41-42, 47, 5:14, 6:1-6, 11:26, 14:23, 20:28; Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:2, 5:1-13, 11:25-26, 14:1-40; 2 Cor. 2:6-8; Eph.3:10, 4:1-2, 11-12, 5:22-23; 1 Tim. 2:12, 3:1-13, 15, 4:13, 5:17, 20; Titus 1:5-9; Heb. 10:19-25, 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; Rev. 5:9)

Section 8 - The Ordinances

We believe there are two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water and is properly identified as a believer's baptism. It sets forth our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection with the resultant expectation to "walk in the newness of life." Baptism is a prerequisite to church membership. The Lord's Supper is the commemoration of the Lord's death for the church until He comes; it is a reminder of our continual fellowship with Him.

(Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12-13, 8:35-39, 10:47-48; 16:14-15; 18:8; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:26-27; Eph. 4:4-6; Col. 2:11-12; 1 Cor. 10:16-17, 11:23-32; Luke 22:14-23)

Section 9 - The Great Commission

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ has commissioned us to take the Gospel to the world. Since the church is the agent of baptism and the instruction of believers, evangelism and church-planting at home and abroad should be primary in the program of the local church.

(Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Rom. 10:9-17)

Section 10 - Creation

We believe the creation account is a historical account of God's work of creation. We believe that God created the earth in six days, culminating in his creation of Adam and Eve in His own image. Adam and Eve are our first parents from whom all of creation, including humanity, were subjected to sin and death.

(Gen. 1-3; Ex. 20:11, 31:17; Rom. 5:12)

Section 11 – Last Things

We believe that God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned bodily to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in the New Heavens and the New Earth with the Lord.

(Isa. 65:17-25; Zech. 14; Matt. 13:40-42, 47-50; 16:27; 24:36; 25:31-32, 41-46; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:22-24; 1 Thess. 4:14-18; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 1:7; 3:11; 20:1-22:13)

Section 12 – Practical Matters

Human Sexuality & Gender Distinctions

We believe that God has commanded there to be no sexual activity outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, masturbation, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance.

(Gen. 2:24; 19:5, 13; 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1: 26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4)

We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman.

(Gen. 2:24; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23)

We believe Scripture teaches that while both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder, as well as teaching and exercising authority over men is limited to qualified men.

(1 Tim. 2:9-14; 3:1-7)

Abortion

We believe that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion is unjustified taking of human life. We reject any teaching that abortion in cases of rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the mental well-being of the mother is acceptable.

(Job 3:16; Ps. 51:5; 139:14-16; Isa. 44:24; 49:1, 5; Jer. 1:5; 20:15-18; Luke 1:44)

COVENANT

Preamble

The church covenant is equal parts promise, summary of expectations, ethical statement, and biblical standard. We summarize how we promise to live together as members in the covenant. It forms the ethics, or the moral principles, of our worldview and holds out a biblical standard by which we live. Church membership is not like joining a club for its benefits or services; it is committing oneself to the good of a local body, even as that body commits itself to your own good.

We use our covenant in two key ways today. We require all new members to sign it before joining the church. Additionally, we regularly recite our covenant corporately. By featuring the covenant in our life together, we strive to protect ourselves from individual and corporate sin. Of equal importance, we spur one another on to live in light of a greater covenant, one initiated by love, sealed by sacrifice, and kept for eternity by our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Church Covenant

By God's grace, we have been brought to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Having been joined to Him by His Spirit and baptized upon our profession of faith, we solemnly and joyfully reaffirm our covenant with each other.

(John 6:63; 16:7-11; 1:12; 1 Thess. 2:13; Acts 2:41; 8:38; Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Acts 2:42)

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

(Eph. 4:1-3)

We will walk together in love, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

(Rom. 12:10, 16:17-18; Gal. 6:1-2; Matt. 18:15-17; Jam. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16; Heb. 3:12-13; 1 Thess. 5:11; 1 Cor. 5)

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

(Heb. 10:23-25; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:17, 25)

We will work to raise up those under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

(Deut. 6:1-12; 11:18-20; Matt. 5:16, 6:6; Mark 5:19; Luke 5:19; Eph. 5:15, 6:4; 1 Tim. 5:8)

We will rejoice at each others' happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

(Rom. 12:15; Gal. 6:2)

We will seek to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

(Eph. 5:15; Titus 2:12; Rom. 6:4; 1 Thess. 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:13-25)

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful gospel ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

(Eph. 2:21-22; Heb. 10:25; Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:24-34; Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Cor. 5; Acts 2:42; 2 John 1:9-11; Matt. 10:10; Gal. 6:6; Mal. 3:8-10; Acts 11:29; 2 Cor. 8:1-5, Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8)

We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

(Acts 18:27-28; Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:58; Col. 3:23; Heb. 10:24-25)

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

(2 Cor. 13:14)

PRIORITIES

The most important thing about Christ Fellowship is not what makes us distinct—it's what we share in common with every other true church. Still, it's inevitable that each congregation will have its own voice and cultural feel. The following priorities are not mere formalities, meant to look cool on our website. We pray they will be the very heartbeat of our church life together.

1. Clear Gospel

If we get this wrong, we should quit and go home. Why is the gospel first on our list? Because it was first on Paul's: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

We never want to outgrow the wonder of God's rescuing grace. The way to grow as Christians, after all, is not to move beyond the gospel; it is to move deeper into it. And what is this gospel? It is the thrilling news of what God has accomplished—through the life, death, and resurrection of his Son—to redeem and restore lost sinners to himself. And the most amazing part is that anyone can get in on this. The gospel is the pulsing center of our life as a church, and its transforming power the basis of everything we do. As such, we strive to make the gospel clear in every ministry of our church.

2. Biblical Preaching

There is a place for "topical" sermons, but the preaching at Christ Fellowship will primarily be "expository." This ancient approach seeks to expose God's people to God's Word, one passage at a time. Our commitment to expository sermons is more than a preference—it is a conviction. Why? Because we are convinced that it is the words of God, not the cool ideas or ingenuity of man, that truly transform lives. We don't want to get in the way of God's very words revealed in the Bible.

Whether they realize it or not, every human needs to hear the full range of what God has to say—from Genesis to Revelation, each part understood in context and applied to the heart. God's Word, after all, is what brings spiritual life and growth to God's people. Given that even inspired apostles felt constrained to preach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), we won't try to improve on that.

3. Affectionate Worship

Worship isn't just the warm sensation one gets from music on a Sunday morning—it's meant to characterize every aspect of our lives. At Christ Fellowship, then, we will aim to worship King Jesus not only as we gather on Sundays, but as we scatter throughout the week.

Corporate worship is not limited to the lyrics we sing and the music that accompanies it. Biblically speaking, the preaching of God's Word, prayer, sacrificial giving, the ordinances, and singing are all facets of true corporate worship. What about our music style though? It will be neither wholly "traditional" nor solely "contemporary"—it will be blended, featuring both time-tested hymns and modern praise songs. We are committed to "congregational singing", where the primary instrument is the church's collective voice. The whole church, then, is the worship team. (We do have musicians, but their role is more to accompany than to perform.) This style is not rooted in a denominational tradition or a mere preference; it's simply our

attempt to obey the command to sing not just upward to God, but also outward to one another (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

So we will prioritize songs that are biblically true, theologically rich, musically beautiful, and “congregation-singable.” No matter what song we’re singing—whether it was penned a millennium ago or a year ago, whether it gives us “all the feels” or not—we want to worship passionately, full of affection, singing with gusto as if Christ’s tomb really is vacant. (Because it is.)

4. Devoted Discipleship

Following Jesus is not a solo endeavor; it is a community effort. Nor is it confined to a weekly event; it is a lifestyle. At Christ Fellowship we don’t want our growth in Christ to be haphazard and thin, but deliberate and deep. We want our members to flourish in their knowledge of Scripture and theology so that the roots of their faith grow deep and strong. None of this can be manufactured or microwaved. Only God’s Word, reverberating through the life of the covenant community, can bring forth the growth we desire.

Our discipleship infrastructure is designed to facilitate such growth and entails four “ranked” priorities for each member: (1) corporate worship; (2) corporate prayer; (3) home groups; and (4) other opportunities (e.g., men’s and women’s groups, events and retreats, one-on-one discipling relationships, equipping hour, etc.).

5. Deliberate Simplicity

If you are looking for a church with state-of-the-art production and a long menu of customized programs, Christ Fellowship may disappoint you. While we deeply value excellence, we will channel our best energies toward fostering an ecosystem of church cultures—evangelism, discipling, hospitality, encouragement—rather than an array of programs.

Church programs can be helpful, and we will benefit from some, but we believe they must be downstream from our primary priorities. We don’t want our church to turn into a spiritual drive-thru, a mere purveyor of religious goods and services. Nor do we want to endlessly subdivide the congregation along demographic lines. Our collective central identity, after all, is the whole gathering and not the small groupings. Because spiritual growth cannot be manufactured, we will orient congregational life around the ordinary means of grace, emphasizing personal initiative and life-on-life relationships—with corporate worship as both centerpiece and springboard for all we are and do.

6. Meaningful Membership

Church membership isn’t just having your name on a roll; it’s a living-and-breathing web of relationships. It’s an eagerness to say, “I am my brothers’ and sisters’ keeper—and they are mine.” It’s a commitment to intentionally serve and help others, to take responsibility for their well-being. It’s a willingness to submit to the oversight of church leaders and to the care and accountability of fellow members.

Pastors at Christ Fellowship are not “professional Christians,” like some kind of varsity team towering over JV believers. Nor is their job to do everything themselves. Scripture makes clear that elders are to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12). The members are responsible for the mission. If pastors are the supply line, members are the front line.

7. Compassionate Care

Though the mission of the local church is not to cure poverty or rehabilitate neighborhoods, we will encourage and equip our members to be salt and light in our broken and hurting world. The Gospels clearly reveal Jesus acting with compassion to those in need on numerous occasions, and we are called to walk in his steps. In light of his undeserved love, we delight to meet tangible needs in his name. With our words we speak the gospel; with our lives we show its grace.

8. Diverse Unity

The world has no trouble understanding unity among people who are the same. And they have no trouble understanding diversity among people who are different. But what the world can neither understand nor explain is unity among those who have no natural reason to be unified. The diversity valued at Christ Fellowship includes ethnicity, but also encompasses age, class, personality, and background. We long to be a multicultural, multigenerational church that gives Bakersfieldians a glimpse of the age to come (Rev. 7:9).

Diversity is not something we can manufacture; it's something we prayerfully and humbly pursue. The goal is not to meet a quota; it's to reflect the Bakersfield community around us and the heavenly community ahead of us.

9. Bold Prayer

There are few things more important that a church can do together than pray. In the New Testament, we see the priority not only of personal prayer, but also of corporate prayer. As the body gathers regularly to pray, we will have increasing ways to praise God for answers to prayer, to see him at work in our midst, to express care for each other, and to cry out for his help as we seek to be faithful gospel ministers in Bakersfield and around the world. To that end, we seek to fill our gatherings with time of prayer.

10. Urgent Mission

We want Christ Fellowship to be a launching pad—both to our neighborhoods and to the nations. We believe that the central mission of the church is found in the Lord's "Great Commission": to make disciples among the nations. We serve a missionary God who is gathering a people for his glory from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Our missions philosophy at Christ Fellowship is to support strategic gospel workers with finances, prayers, encouragement, and care. Our hope is that many will be established in our midst to then go out from our body to proclaim the gospel and even help establish other healthy churches—heavenly outposts on earthly soil.

PASTORAL DISTINCTIVES

The pastors of Christ Fellowship Church hold to important theological distinctives that are not essential for membership in the church. These distinctives exist to unify the pastors in secondary and tertiary matters of doctrine for the health and unity of the congregation as a whole. These distinctives are to be upheld and not contradicted in any teaching ministry of the church.

Biblical Covenantalism

The pastors of Christ Fellowship believe the Biblical covenants are essential for a right understanding of the Bible's framework. We see a distinction between Israel and the Church, believe the nation of Israel awaits the future fulfillment of God's promises, and that the Scriptures must be read with an emphasis on the intent of the original author to his original audience. We believe Christ's return will precede his future thousand year reign as a literal, earthly fulfillment of Davidic Kingdom promises.

God's Sovereignty

The pastors of Christ Fellowship believe salvation is entirely the work of God. Election is God's eternal choice of some persons to everlasting life—not because of foreseen merit in them, but because of his mercy in Christ—in consequence of which choice they believe and are saved. God uses means to accomplish His purposes therefore the sovereignty of God does not undo the responsibility of man to believe nor to evangelize.

Cessationism

The pastors of Christ Fellowship believe that God the Holy Spirit sovereignly gives to each believer gifts for the purpose of building up Christ's church. We believe that the miraculous sign gifts such as speaking in tongues and prophecy in the early church were for the purpose of authenticating the ministry of the apostles and were therefore never intended to be characteristic of the life of the believer.