

A large, textured tree trunk stands vertically in the center of the frame, with its roots spreading out across the bottom. The background is a powerful waterfall with white, frothy water cascading down dark, wet rocks. The overall scene is natural and serene.

Church Membership

Table of Contents

I. Biblical Foundation.....	1
II. Implementation.....	16
III. Statement of Faith.....	17
IV. Church Covenant.....	26
V. Discipline.....	29
VI. Restoration.....	33
VII. Termination of Membership	34
VIII. Biblical Eldership	35
Appendix I: Baptism.....	37

I. Biblical Foundation

We've come to realize that living out the gospel is really a community project. It's a family affair. It's a group of people committed to Christ and committed to each other. In light of this conviction it is our desire to see Roots Community Church function as a vital means of grace in the lives of those who call our church home. Church membership, therefore, is an important step to achieving this end. That said, our conviction on this topic holds little to no weight unless there is sufficient biblical evidence to support it.

So where does our understanding of membership in the local church originate? The principle of God's people living together in community is found throughout the Bible and can be traced from Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, and into the New Testament in Christ, the Apostles and the Church they established. Of course, the externals that we associate with the modern church might make it difficult to see the connection, but the Church has always fundamentally been those united to God and one another by faith and living together under the authority of God's word. God has always saved for Himself a people made up of individuals and those individuals have always been called to live and worship in unity.

Perhaps the clearest picture of membership we have in scripture is from Paul in *1 Corinthians 12:12-14*

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many.”

It's true that the church is spiritual and universal (all times, all places), but the church is also visible and local. So when we're talking about church membership, we're talking about *the process of identifying those who are members of Christ's body in our local context*. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 is writing to a local church in Corinth where he is imploring the church to be connected and committed to each other. Just as the physical body must be connected and committed in order to function correctly, so too, the local church must consist of members connected and committed to one another.

In other words, Paul is calling the Corinthian believers to live according to their membership in Christ's body. Because the Christian is in Christ, we are members of one another. Therefore implementing some form of identifiable connectedness is our attempt to be faithful to the Scriptures. We are convinced that by implementing a more formal membership at Roots, we will be able to live and function in ways that are more faithful to the biblical reality of our union with Christ and therefore our life together as His Body.

What else does the Bible have to say about the vital role that membership in a local church plays in the life of a Christian? Let's look again to the Scriptures to give us a vision for membership in the local church under these four headings:

1. Saved to a People
2. Saved for a People
3. God's Instrument
4. Covenant Love

1. Saved to a People:

1 Peter 2:9-10:

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Christianity is not about how you have invited Jesus into your heart, but rather, Christianity is about how God through Christ has invited you into His family! The category of “lone-ranger” Christian simply does not exist in the pages of the New Testament. If you are a Christian, you have been united to a people, God’s people!

John Stott is helpful here:

“One of our chief evangelical blind spots has been to overlook the central importance of the church. We tend to proclaim individual salvation without moving on to the saved community. We emphasize that Christ died for us ‘to redeem us from all iniquity’ rather than ‘to purify for himself a people of his own’. We think of ourselves more as ‘Christians’ than as ‘churchmen’, and our message is more good news of a new life than of a new society.”

Listen to Paul illustrate this exact point with his overwhelming use of plural pronouns as he addresses a local church in Ephesus:



Artwork by: Jessica Chapman



Ephesians 1:3-6:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Although a believer's conversion to Christ is intensely personal, never do we see Christianity described in the Bible as an individual's journey with Jesus. From the birth of the Church we see a people committed to Christ and committed to each other. Listen to the first historian of the Christian church, Dr. Luke, describe the "togetherness" that was evident in the early stages of the New Testament church.

Acts 2:42-45 :

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need."

2. Saved for a People:

1 Corinthians 12:15-27 :

"If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body.

And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 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.' On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

According to Paul, the call to be faithful members of a local church is actually a God ordained means of grace! Through the Spirit of God that binds us, members of a





Artwork by: Alex and Chelsea Calkins

local church are sensitive to meet the needs of the body while (at the same time) in need of God's grace through the body.

Listen to Paul's opening remarks to the local church in Rome:

Romans 1:11-12:

"For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine."

Church membership is about giving and receiving. The reality is, humble people serve other people and humble people receive from other people. In Christ we belong to God and we belong to each other. We simply cannot have a high view of Christ without having a high view of the church because the church is "the body of Christ." In short, we are saved for a people.

3. God's Instrument

Romans 10:14-15,17

"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."

The church is God's instrument through which the gospel of Jesus Christ is delivered to the unbelieving world. For 2,000 years the church has operated as God's instrument

of proclamation to the unbelieving world. Whether it's preaching, publications, word of mouth, house to house, radio, television etc., it's the church and the church alone that has been tasked with the high privilege of proclaiming the Gospel to the ends of the earth (*Matt. 28:18-20*).

Furthermore, the church is God's instrument of soul care for those inside the church. First, with her leaders:

Hebrews 13:17

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."

God has tasked the under shepherds (elders/pastors) of the local church to "keep watch" over the souls of its members. This is done through prayer, preaching, teaching, encouragement, discipline, confrontation, affirmation, and so on. Therefore, a big part of why church membership matters is that elders in a local community have to determine who they will give an account for.

Peter commands elders/pastors to shepherd the flock of God that is "among you":





1 Peter 5:1-3

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”

So then, the process of church membership at Roots Community Church will help elders determine who the flock is among them.

Finally, God uses the whole body of Christ as His divine instrument of grace to care for His people:

Hebrews 3:12-14

“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.”

James 5:19-20

“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

Galatians 6:2,10

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ... So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

These texts underscore the point that sanctification is a community project in the sense that the Lord uses the body of Christ (in a local/visible context) as His instrument to exhort, encourage, correct, restore and sustain one another so that no one through the deceitfulness of sin will “fall away from the living God!”

4. Covenant Love

John 13:34-35:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Simply put, if we are going to be serious about being a Christ-centered church, then we have to be serious about what Jesus wants for His church. And He wants a people who are bound together by covenantal love. “Just as I have loved you...” That’s committed love. That’s sacrificial love. That’s covenantal love.

Again, the Apostle John gives the best commentary on this:

1 John 4:7-12

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we

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also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.”

So then, the process of church membership is, in part, discovering who the “one another’s” are in our local context.

A church member then is someone who has entered into covenant with a local church community, bound together in Christ’s love, for the good of the church, for the advancement of the gospel, and the for the glory of God. The New Testament is replete with teaching regarding the necessity of local/visible church membership. And although this document is far from exhaustive, we hope to have shed some light on the topic as well as form a biblical basis for church membership in our local context.

II. Implementation

In the previous section we’ve laid out a biblical case for membership in a local church. But the question remains, what is the process at Roots Community Church by which we *identify* those who desire to officially partner in the Gospel in our local context? The process is threefold:

1. Affirm the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant
2. A membership interview with a pastor
3. Public recognition during a Sunday service

III. Statement of Faith

The purpose of this statement of faith is to clarify the essential doctrines we hold to as a church in order to unify the body and glorify the One who has revealed Himself to us in Holy Scripture.

It is impossible to mention all of the shoulders we stand on in our Protestant heritage that have helped to clarify the convictions listed below. Some of the language below is not our own but has been adopted and revised from various creeds, councils, and confessions that have gone before us. Holy Scripture is the final authority for every theological conviction we have at Roots Community Church, but we would be remiss if we didn't mention the early church fathers and reformers whom God used to ensure Christian theology is born out of the pages of scripture and never imposed on them. We thank God for those who have died to give us 'sola scriptura' (scripture alone)!

For those pursuing formal membership at Roots Community Church, we expect covenant members to affirm these basic doctrines. Also listed below are some theological distinctives that members are not required to affirm, but should understand are integral to our biblical understanding of the Gospel and should therefore expect these doctrines to be taught by leadership at Roots Community Church and to permeate our ministries.



The Word of God

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, infallible, authoritative, and inerrant Word of God. We believe the scriptures are sufficient in all matters of faith and conduct.

2 Timothy 3:15-20; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Mark 13:31; John 8:31,32; John 20:31; Acts 20:32

The Trinity

We believe there is one God, eternally existing in three persons; that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.

Genesis 1:1-2; John 1:1,3; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19, John 10:30; Ephesians 4:5-6; Romans 1:19-20

God the Father

We believe in God the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He infallibly foreknows all that shall come to pass, that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of mankind, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

Luke 10:21,22; Matthew 23:9; John 3:16; 6:27; Romans 1:7; 1 Timothy 1:1,2 & 2:5,6; 1 Peter 1:3; Revelation 1:6

Jesus Christ

We believe in the deity of Christ; His virgin birth; His sinless life; His miracles; His substitutionary atoning death; His resurrection; His ascension to the right hand of the

Father; and His personal return to earth in power and glory.

John 10:33; Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:34-35; Hebrews 4:15, 7:26; John 2:11; I Corinthians 15:3, Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 2:9; John 11:25, I Corinthians 15:4; Mark 16:19; Acts 1:11, Revelation 19:11-13, Revelation 19:14-16

The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe the Holy Spirit leads us to repentance, indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide.

John 14:16,17,26 & 15:26,27; John 16:8-14; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19; Galatians 5:22-26

DISTINCTIVE: We believe the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we see on display in the New Testament continue in the church today. We do not believe these gifts ended when scripture was canonized and/or the Apostles died. (*1 Corinthians 12:1-11*).

The Fall

We believe that Man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint but choice; being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.



Genesis 1:27, 31; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 2:16-17; Genesis 3; Romans 5:12; Isaiah 53:6; Genesis 6:12; Romans 3:9-18; Romans 3:9-20; Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 1:18, 32; 2:1-16; Galatians 3:10)

Salvation

We believe salvation belongs to the Lord and is granted by His grace alone, through faith alone, in the sufficient work of Christ alone.

Psalm 37:39; Jonah 2:9; Ephesians 2:8-9; Rom 3:21-22; Hebrews 7:22-25, 10:12-14

We believe in the sufficiency of Christ's work for salvation. All who are saved have the perfect righteousness of Christ accounted to them as the sole basis of their right-standing before a holy God, and have been forgiven all of their sin through the atoning death of Christ on their behalf.

Hebrews 7:22-25, 10:12-14; Ephesians 2:8-9, Rom 3:23-25; Gal 3:13, Ephesians 1:7

We believe faith is the sole instrument by which we lay hold of the righteousness of Christ. This faith alone, apart from any works of the believer, is the means by which all of Christ's righteousness is imputed for salvation.

Rom 3:21-22; Phil 3:9, Gal 2:16; 2 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 15:3-6, Titus 1:1-3; Gal 3:10-11

DISTINCTIVE: We believe that God is sovereign in the salvation of human souls. Before the foundation of the world, God elected His people, setting His affection and grace upon them (*Romans 8:29-30*). In love God predestined His

people for adoption (*Ephesians 1:4-6*). We believe without the effectual quickening work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, apart from any action or work on our part (*Titus 3:4-7; Ephesians 2:4-5*), no one would come to Christ (*Ephesians 2:1-3*). Apart from the divine intervention of God (*Mat. 11:25-27*), humanity cannot choose to follow Christ or worship God (*Rom.3; Eph.2:1-3*). Furthermore, the sovereignty of God in salvation is pervasive and comprehensive. God begins the good work, sustains the good work, and He will complete the good work (*Philippians 1:6; 1 Thes. 5:23*).

The Church

We believe in one holy, universal Church made up of all who trust Jesus Christ as Savior, Lord and supreme Treasure of their lives. We believe that God calls us to unite with other believers in local churches to help each other to value Christ above all, to praise Him together, to grow in our love and knowledge of Him, and to ultimately celebrate the glory of God through lives transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:10; Ephesians 2:19-22; Ephesians 4:11-16 Acts 1:8; Ephesians 5:19-21; Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:23-25

We believe that Christians should be baptized and regularly eat the Lord's Supper.

Ephesians 1:22-23; Acts 15:36, 41; 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 1:1-3; Revelations 1:4,10,11; Hebrews 10:24-25; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

DISTINCTIVE: We affirm and practice believer baptism by full immersion. The evidence from Scripture seems clear to us that this was the normal mode of baptism throughout

the early church in keeping with the imagery that Paul articulates in *Romans 6:1-4*. For more information on baptism, see Appendix I on page 37.

Return of Christ

We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body and the final judgment of all people, leading to the eternal happiness of the righteous in the Lord's presence, and the eternal separation of the wicked from the presence of the Lord.

Matthew 16:27; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; 2 Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 15:1-58; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 20: 11-15; Revelation 21:1-7



IV. Church Covenant

What is a covenant? A covenant is generally defined as “a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action.” [1] If a statement of faith is a summary of right doctrine, the church covenant summarizes right living. Paul told Timothy, “watch your life and doctrine closely” (*1 Tim 4:16*). The covenant aids church leaders and members by describing what a Christian life looks like. Proper use of a church covenant encourages members to take responsibility for each other’s holiness. (*Heb. 3:12-14*) As we’ve said before, the Christian faith is a community project. Together we have the profound privilege to celebrate the glory of God through lives transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul the Apostle refers to this as “living by the Spirit” in Romans chapter 8. This church covenant in no way seeks to add additional obligations to the believer but instead exists to highlight from the scriptures the kind of fruit produced by a truly changed life.

Covenant:

Having been brought by God’s grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ I now, in full dependence upon His grace, resolve to live by faith, and so establish this covenant with my church. I understand that in all of these resolutions, I am aware of my utter dependence upon the Spirit of God to work in me to will and to work for His good pleasure (*Phil. 2:13*). [2]

I will, in the strength of His grace, work and pray for the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (*Ephesian 4:3*)

I will, in the strength of His grace, heed the Scripture's command to obey and be subject to the leaders in a spirit of humility, love and respect, mindful that they have been called to serve and keep watch over my soul and will have to give an account. I will strive to allow them to fulfill their ministry with joy, which is to my advantage. (*Heb. 13:17, 1Thess. 5:12-13, 1 Peter 5:5*)

I promise, in the strength of His grace, to bring up our children and youth in the training and instruction of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends. (*Eph. 6:4; 1 Pet. 3:1*)

I will, in the strength of His grace, rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, helping to carry each other's burdens. (*Rom. 12:15*)

I will, in the strength of His grace, seek, by God's help, to live carefully in this world, denying ungodliness and worldly passions. I will strive to live a self-controlled, upright, and godly life in this present age, as I wait for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. (*Titus 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:14*)

I will, in the strength of His grace, defend and maintain gospel ministry in this church by supporting and upholding:

- The preaching of the Word of God (*2 Tim 4:2*)
- The administration of the Gospel Sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper) (*Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 11:26*)
- The exercise of church discipline (*Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor 5:13*)

I will, in the strength of His grace, seek to contribute cheerfully, generously and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel to all nations. (*Matt. 28:19; Luke 12:33; 2 Cor. 9:7*)

I will, in the strength of His grace, practice complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Complete chastity and fidelity means, among other things, that regardless of my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, homosexuality, premarital sex and pornography.

(Rom. 13:11-14; 1 Cor. 6:15-20, 10:8; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4). [3]

I will, in the strength of His grace, seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation at Roots Community Church before pursuing divorce from my spouse *(Matt.19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10-11; for the role of the church in the process of divorce, see Paul's concern for the resolution of legal matters within the assembly of the church in 1 Cor. 6).*

I will, in the strength of His grace, refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates *(Rom. 1:28-32, 13:13; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:18; James 3:3-18).*

I will, in the strength of His grace, if/when I move from this place, as soon as possible unite with some other church where I can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. -Romans 15:5-6

V. Discipline

*“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” **Galatians 6:1***

*“My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.” **Proverbs 3:11-12***

The purpose of church discipline is to effect a return to a biblical standard of conduct and doctrine in a member who errs, so as to maintain purity in the local church (1 Cor. 5:6-13) and to deter sin (1 Tim. 5:20). Church discipline is an act of love for the brother or sister in error. How would we feel about a doctor who repeatedly overlooked cancerous cells in your body for fear of offending you? No one should want that kind of doctor and likewise no one should want to be a part of a church where discipline isn’t practiced.

Church discipline as we see it exists in two primary categories. The first is formative discipline. This is the kind of discipline that should function on a regular basis between members of a local church. Gracious and humble discipleship (same root as discipline) will include at times loving confrontation when a member acts in a way that is not in concert with the faith we profess as Christ followers. This is an integral part of healthy discipleship in a local church. This is the best kind of church discipline.

The second category of church discipline is corrective discipline. This is the kind of discipline we hope to avoid through the process of healthy formative discipline. But when formative discipline doesn’t deter the erring saint,

then in some cases, corrective discipline will be our course of action. Corrective church discipline as prescribed in Matt 18 and 1 Cor. 5 exists to protect the saint as much as it serves to protect the church. It protects the church by preserving the integrity of the gospel by calling sin what it is. Corrective discipline protects the church member by allowing due process when accusations are being made.

That said, any member of Roots Community Church who teaches or insists on holding false doctrine, and/or persistently conducts himself or herself in a manner inconsistent with biblical teaching, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church will be dealt with as follows, according to *Matt. 18:15-18 and 1 Cor. 5:11-13*:

1. If a sin problem can be resolved between the two people by themselves, then the case is closed.
2. If it cannot be resolved, then the offended brother should bring two or three others so “that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses” (Matt.18:16). Jesus takes this phrase from Deuteronomy 19, which in context is meant to protect people against false accusations. Deuteronomy in fact calls for a “thorough investigation” whenever there’s any doubt about the offense (Deut. 19:18). The two or three witnesses need to be able to confirm that, indeed, there is a serious and outward offense and, indeed, the offender is unrepentant. Hopefully, involving other people will either bring the offender to his senses or help the offended see that he should not be so offended. Both this step and the prior step may occur over several meetings; whatever the parties think is prudent.

3. If the intervention of the two or three witnesses does not bring about a solution, the offended party is then instructed to tell it to the church (*Matt. 18:17a*). At Roots Community Church this is done through the elders, since the Lord has given the church elders to provide oversight in all the church's affairs (*1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2*). The elders will announce the name of the party charged with outward, serious, and unrepentant sin. They will provide a very brief description of the sin, a description that will not cause others to stumble or to bring undue embarrassment on any family members. And, in a typical case, the elders will then give the congregation three to six months to seek out the erring member and call him or her to repentance.

4. The final step of church discipline is exclusion from the fellowship or membership of the church, which essentially means exclusion from the Lord's Table: "And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (*Matt. 18:17b*). He is to be treated as someone outside of God's covenant people, someone who should not partake of Christ's covenant meal (though he/she will probably be encouraged to continue attending the church's gatherings). Led by the elders, the church will take this step once the two months have expired and the individual has refused to let go of the sin. In any given situation, the elders might deem it necessary to speed up that timeline, or slow it down. [4]

It is clearly understood that the discipline process will continue to conclusion whether the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership.



VI. Restoration

2 Corinthians 2:5-11

5 Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. 6 For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, 7 so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him .9 For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. 10 Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, 11 so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

The restoration of a dismissed member back into fellowship is the aim of all disciplinary action. The members of the church will continue to pray for the repentance and restoration of a dismissed member. The elders will periodically contact the dismissed member to encourage repentance and to stir up faith in the gospel. Should a dismissed member seek reinstatement, the elders will meet with the individual to hear evidence of repentance. Upon satisfactory testimony, the elders will put the matter before the church for the purpose of hearing both supporting and contradictory testimonies.

If sufficient evidence is presented to contradict the dismissed member's testimony, the member will remain excommunicated. If sufficient evidence is presented to support the testimony of the dismissed member, they will be restored to full membership.

VII. Termination of Membership

Membership may be terminated in one of four ways:

1. By physical death

2. By transfer: When it is requested, the elders may grant to a departing member in good standing, a letter of dismissal to the fellowship of another church. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The elders may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church which is in their judgment disloyal to the gospel (Jude 3).

3. By exclusion: If a member is habitually absent from the stated meetings of the church without valid reason, or if due to relocation he/she ceases to maintain a vital contact with the church, he/she may be excluded from membership. If an excluded member applies again for membership, the procedures set forth will again be followed.

4. By dismissal as a final step of church discipline. The elders shall only apply the above-mentioned dismissal in strict accordance with Matthew 18. ^[5]

VIII. Biblical Eldership

It's seems appropriate that in a document concerning the biblical roles and responsibilities of a member at Roots Community Church that we take this opportunity to make a biblical case for what's expected of the leadership in our church. The pastors that are tasked with being undershepherds in this community are held to the same biblical standards as every other member in our community. All of the church (by design) remains dependent on our Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ to whom all glory is due.

We believe the Bible is clear in its teaching regarding the role of a pastor/elder. The biblical terms elder, overseer, bishop and the contemporary terms shepherd-elder and pastor-elder all refer to the same individuals.

We believe the Bible teaches that a team of biblically qualified elders is to lead the local church, men who are equal in authority, serving as under-shepherds to the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. ^[6]

Plurality

God's word speaks of elders exclusively in the plural who share in the overall governance of the church.
(Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; Titus 1:5)

Shared

Although elders may function differently according to their gifting, all are needed to provide overall responsibility and authority to lead the church.

Biblically Qualified

Scripture lays out explicit teaching on elder qualification (or characteristics) for those who shepherd the local church. (*1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9*)

Male Leadership

While women serve in many vital roles in the church, God has ordained that men are to serve in the overall governing and teaching roles (*1 Tim. 2:12*). Elders are to be males, as taught in Scripture. Paul's instruction to this end has nothing to do with competency or potential but rather his instruction is rooted in design as he appeals to creation.

In short, our elder team is expected to live out the their calling to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” (*1 Peter 5:2-4*)

Appendix I: Baptism

Roots Community Church affirms and practices as a regular ordinance what is commonly referred to as “believer baptism” also known as credo-baptism. That is to say, we believe the Scriptures are clear that the sacrament of baptism should be a public declaration from a believer (through their local church) that they are now, as a result of sheer grace, followers of Jesus Christ. We do not affirm what is referred to as “baptismal regeneration” whereby the sacrament of baptism is the cause or catalyst for the Spirit’s work in regeneration. Instead, we believe baptism should be the response of the believer to the Spirit’s regenerating work in their lives and not for the Spirit’s regenerating work in their lives. (*Acts 2:38, Acts 8:26-39*). Some of the final words Jesus spoke to His disciples were to make disciples, baptize those who believe, and teach them His commands (*Matt. 28:19-20*).

We also affirm and practice baptism by full immersion. The evidence from Scripture seems clear to us that this was the normal mode of baptism throughout the early church in keeping with the imagery that Paul articulates in *Romans 6:1-4*:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

With that said, we understand that there are some factors that could prohibit someone from being baptized by full immersion (health or otherwise) and in those unique cases we would gladly choose a different mode of baptism to accommodate these brothers and sisters in Christ.

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

[2] Certain language here has been adopted and revised from our friends at 9marks.org

[3] Adopted and revised from The Village Church Membership Covenant.

[4] Portion adapted and revised from 9marks.org/article/church-discipline-primer/

*[5] Portion adapted and revised from
<http://www.parksidechurch.com/visit/what-we-believe/constitution/>*

[6] Alexander Strauch, Biblical Eldership

