

How to Use This Handbook	3
Steps to Membership at Bethel	3
Next Steps	4
Introduction to Membership	6
What is Membership?	6
Is it Biblical?	6
Why Join a Local Church?	6
Bethel	6
History	6
Mission	7
Values	7
Live to Worship	7
Impact through Service	7
Thrive in Community	7
Equip for Life	8
Membership Prerequisites	8
What is Required?	8
Doctrine	11
Scriptures	11
The Trinity	11
God (the Father)	11
Jesus (God the Son)	11
Holy Spirit (God the Spirit)	12
Man	12
Salvation	12
The Church	14
Ordinances	15
Future, Last Things	15
Marriage & Family	16
Civil Government	17
Service Opportunities	18
Membership Covenant	19

Appendixes	22
Appendix 1: The Difference Between Gospel and Religion	22
Appendix 2: How to Leave a Church Well	23
Appendix 3: Recommended Reading	25

How to Use This Handbook

It's quite simple actually. We are asking you to read through — even study through — this handbook. You will see a number of passages from Scripture. Take the time to open your Bible and read these passages for yourself...don't just take our word for it. Our membership handbook was designed to help you digest important content about the church, in particular, our local church, and to help you truly grasp the excitement and responsibilities of membership at Bethel.

We are very grateful that you are pursuing the membership process. Please take a moment to pray as you begin reading and studying through this document and ask God to help you understand what membership means in the Bible and what it means in our context here at Bethel. This is lengthy. We don't expect you to read and study through this in one sitting. In fact, we encourage you to do this over the course of a few sittings and to do this with someone else such as your spouse, a friend, or another member of Bethel.

Bethel is God's church and He has built it over the years by using many, many people. His mission for the church is clear, and we hope God leads you to join us as we seek to fulfill that mission.

Steps to Membership at Bethel

1. Attend Next Steps (2 sessions)
 - a. If needed, attend baptism class (Sunday following Next Steps)
 - b. Participate in baptism service (to be scheduled upon completion of baptism class).
2. Complete membership application and Sign membership covenant.
3. Complete interview with two Shepherd's Council members.
4. Shepherd's Council approval at subsequent monthly meeting.
5. Introduction to church family on a Sunday morning.

Next Steps

Session 1: INTRODUCTIONS

- Staff
 - Pastor Brady — Senior Pastor (here since 2010)
brady@bethelonline.org
 - Pastor John — Discipleship Pastor (here since 2022)
jmunchel@bethelonline.org
 - Pastor Jakob — Pastor of Youth and Outreach (here since 2021)
jsiegel@bethelonline.org
 - Laura Camp — Worship Director (here since 2006)
lcamp@bethelonline.org
 - Lydia Churchelow — Director of Children's Ministry (here since 2017)
lchurchelow@bethelonline.org
 - Barbara Crankshaw — Administrator of Shining Lights (here since 1998)
bcrankshaw@bethelonline.org
 - Pam White — Director of Pastoral Administration (here since 2000)
pwhite@bethelonline.org
 - Cindy Walsemann — Director of Operations (here since 2007)
cwalsemann@bethelonline.org
- Next Steps attendees (introduce themselves)
 - Name
 - How long at Bethel
 - Vocation
 - 1 Interesting Fact
- Membership
 - What is it?
 - Why join a local church (is it biblical? is it logical?)
- Bethel
 - History of church
 - History of Bethel
- Membership Covenant
 - What to expect from Bethel leadership
 - What Bethel leadership expect from members

Session 2: FOUR MEMBERSHIP PREREQUISITES & TWO MEMBERSHIP EXPECTATIONS

- Prerequisite 1: Salvation
 - Salvation explained
 - Questions and answers
- Prerequisite 2: Baptism
 - Baptism explained
 - Question and answers
- Prerequisite 3: Doctrinal Agreement (majors, not minors)
 - Bethel's doctrinal statement
- Prerequisite 4: Mission and Values Agreement
 - Mission - We exist to glorify God by making **More and Better Disciples**
 - Values - Live to worship, Impact thru service, Thrive in community, Equip for life
- Two Expectations: Connect and Serve (participating in a group at Bethel and serving at Bethel are essential components to being a part of the church.)
 - Groups (EQUIP electives, Life Groups, Men's Bible Study, Ladies Bible Study, etc.)
 - Serve (Bethel Kids, Impact Student Ministry, Guest Connections Team, etc.)
- Spiritual Gifts
 - Assessment Discussed
 - Descriptions and Recommendations

Introduction to Membership

What is Membership?

- “Stop thinking of church as a voluntary association, we need to start with the idea of it as the people of a kingdom or nation.” (Leeman, *Church Membership*)
- Membership is a word associated with joining a club. We don't use it for citizenship in a nation.
- It's belonging to the church which exists to represent Jesus much like an embassy represents a nation inside another nation.
- Church member - “someone who is formally recognized as a Christian and a part of Christ's universal body; one who has been officially and publicly recognized as a Christian before the nations, as well as someone who shares in the same authority of officially affirming and overseeing other Christians in his/ her church”
- A commitment made by the member to the church AND by the church to the member (Driscoll, *Doctrine*)

Is it Biblical?

- Hebrews 13:17 - obey leaders and submit to them
- 1 Timothy 5:17 - let the elders rule...
- 1 Peter 5:1-5 - ...shepherding the flock of God that is among you...
- 1 Corinthians 5 - ...how is this to be handled if not “membership” within the church
- Acts 2:37-47 - ...added to “their” number day by day
- Acts 6:1-6 - a form of elections occurring within the body
- Romans 16:1-16 - specific names given of church members
- 1 Timothy 5:3-16 - directions on dealing with widows within the church - list of how to qualify for care

Why Join a Local Church?

- Less joining, more partnering and submitting

Bethel

History

Bethel Baptist Church began over fifty years ago, a small group of individuals gathered for prayer and studying God's Word with a vision for a new work in the rapidly growing community of Cherry Hill. The first service was held on Wednesday, September 9, 1964 with thirteen people and was called Bethel Baptist Fellowship (BBF). On January 10, 1965, BBF relocated to Barclay School where the entire body worked together to set up and tear down each week. Just six months later, Bethel Baptist Fellowship became Bethel Baptist Church, was incorporated and four acres of land was purchased on Springdale Road, where the church currently resides. Over the next 18 months, Bethel was able to purchase land and build the first church building (now the nursery wing). With continued growth a new auditorium was

constructed, additions made to house expanding ministries, and in 1993 the Family Life Center was purchased. God has done amazing things in the life of His church and we are excited to see what God has in store for Bethel. While a fifty year history is quite long, we believe God is just beginning to unfold what he has in store. We also believe you can play a very important role in this journey.

Mission

The Mission of Bethel is to glorify God by making **More and Better Disciples**.

Values

Live to Worship

The church together offering worship and praise **to** God and receiving **from** God through the exploration, study, and application of His Word. We hope to lead each person into a relationship with God that is wholly surrendered and obedient. A life of worship will be shown by consistent exploration in God's Word, faithful gathering with the church, and consistent, personal life application of Biblical truth for the sake of bringing glory to God.

Joshua 1:8; Psalm 19:1; 63:1-2; 95:6; 111:10; John 4:24; Romans 6:13; Philippians 3:10; James 1:25

Impact through Service

The church reaching out to the local and global community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and helping those in need. We want to develop heart attitudes where the needs of others come first. Through humble service, peoples' needs will be met, lives will be touched, and the uncommon grace of Christ shown.

Matthew 25:40; Mark 9:41; John 13:15-16; 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:13; Philippians 2:3-5

Thrive in Community

The church connecting with each other and sharing life together. God created us to live in community for friendship, support, care, accountability and real fellowship by loving, encouraging, serving, listening and responding to one another.

John 17:20-21; Acts 2:42; Romans 12:10; 15:7; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Equip for Life

The church equipping the saints or body for daily living in a lost and broken world by teaching the Bible and practical Christian living at all age levels. We provide solid, Biblical training for life together and influence of others.

Genesis 18:19; Proverbs 22:6; 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 5:14; Hebrews 13:20-21

Membership Prerequisites

What is Required?

At Bethel, a prior confession of faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ, active involvement in biblical community and baptism are all criteria which we believe to be strongly enough stressed in Scripture as to mandate our inclusion in the official process and policy of our body. These factors are not merely functional, but have grown out of our theological convictions, which therefore shape our philosophy and practice of ministry.

Salvation

A prior confession of faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

A. Sin

- Romans 3:10, As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one."
- Romans 3:23, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
- Jeremiah 17:9, The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

B. Separation – Our sin separates us from God

- Romans 6:23, For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

C. Savior – The only solution to our sin problem is Jesus Christ

- It is not our self-effort, not even religion, and most certainly not joining Bethel Baptist Church.
- John 14:6, Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
- John 3:3, Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."
- John 3:16, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Baptism

We believe the Bible clearly highlights the command to be baptized. For example, see the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, and Peter's command to be baptized in Acts 10:48. From these passages, the idea of a non-baptized "Christian" in the times of the epistles was completely foreign. In fact, in many of Paul's writings, he uses baptism into Christ as a euphemism for salvation (Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27). This serves to further reinforce that baptism, while not being necessary to obtain salvation, is the natural overflow and result of such redemption. In other words, we believe that all of God's people, at all times, and in all places should pursue baptism as an expression of obedience to Scripture and the God who authored it.

Baptism Defined:

Baptism by immersion is a visual and symbolic demonstration of an individual's union (relationship) with Christ. It is a sign that a person's former life has been put to death and it represents a release (resurrection) from the deathly grip of sin.

Baptism Is...

- A symbol of...
 - Jesus' Death and Resurrection (1 Corinthians 5:1-4)
 - What God has Accomplished (Romans 6:3-11, Colossians 2:9-14)
 - Washing and Cleansing from Sin (Titus 3:5, Acts 22:16)
 - Communion with Christ and the Church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)
- A public declaration and identification with Christ
 - Romans 6:12-13
- A privilege
 - Romans 1:16-17

Baptism Is Not...

- A washing away of sin
 - only the blood of Jesus purifies us from sin
 - 1 John 1:7
- A means of salvation
 - Ephesians 2:8-9
 - Romans 10:13
- Necessary for salvation

Why Should I Be Baptized?

- To Obey
 - Matthew 28:18-20
 - Acts 2:37-41
 - Matthew 3:13-17
- To give evidence of being a disciple of Christ

- Publicly declare and identify with Christ
- Romans 6:12-13
- To follow Jesus Christ's example
 - Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-23, John 1:32-34

Who Should Be Baptized?

- Believers - all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior
 - Acts 2:41, Acts 16:31-33

When Should I Be Baptized?

- As soon after salvation as possible. ▸ Acts 2:41, Acts 16:31-33
- PARENTS NOTE: It is important to understand the significance of baptism and, therefore, not rush into it. Since it is not a means to or an element of salvation, waiting in order that evidence of salvation can be clearly observed and demonstrated in your child(ren) is desired.

Doctrine

Scriptures

We believe the Bible to be the verbally inspired Word of God, consisting of the Old and New Testaments. It is inerrant in the original manuscripts and the sufficient and final authority for all matters of faith, practice and life. We believe the Bible to be God's complete written revelation of His will, and is upheld as the supreme and final authority in faith and life.

II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:19-21, Mark 13:31; John 8:31,32; John 20:31; Acts 20:32

The Trinity

We believe the one true and living God is one in essence, possessing three personal distinctions: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of creation, providence, and redemption. We believe in one God, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption. He is perfect in holiness, justice, truth, grace, wisdom, power, mercy, and love.

Genesis 1:1,26; Exodus 34:6; Deuteronomy 6:4; 2 Samuel 24:14; 1 Chronicles 29:11; Psalm 9:16; Psalm 31:5; Psalm 139:7-10; Isaiah 46:9; Isaiah 6:3; Jeremiah 33:11; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1,3, 3:16, 4:24; Romans 1:19,20, 11:33; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 5:7; Revelation 19:6

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 men, 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; I Timothy 1:1,2; 2:5,6; I Peter 1:3; Revelation 1:6

Jesus (God the Son)

We believe Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary that He paid the penalty for our sins on the cross and He rose from the dead three days later. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God, having been supernaturally conceived by the Holy

Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man. He was without sin. He died, was raised from the dead, ascended to heaven, and now intercedes for believers at the Father's right hand.

Matthew 1:23; Matthew 28:5, 7; Luke 1:35; Luke 23:33; John 1:1, 2; Acts 1:9, 10; Romans 8:34,45, 14:9; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 7:25, 9:24; 1 Peter 4:5

Holy Spirit (God the Spirit)

We believe in the deity of the Holy Spirit and that He indwells and enables the Christian to live a godly life. We believe that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person equal with the Father and Son and of the same substance and nature; that He was active in the creation; that in His relationship to the unbelieving world, He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment, bears witness to the truth, is the agent of the New Birth; and that He seals, guides, teaches, witnesses to, sanctifies and helps the believer, indwelling every true child of God in the Church age.

John 14:15-17, 16:7-11,13,14; Romans 8:14, 27; 2 Thessalonians 2:7

Man

We believe man, in the person of the first Adam, was created in God's image. We believe that God created the heavens and the earth, including all life, "each after its own kind," by direct act, according to the Genesis account; and not by the process of evolution, and that man was created in the image and likeness of God. We believe man was created in innocence but by voluntary transgression fell into sin, thus plunging the whole race into condemnation and total depravity. In consequence of which all men are born sinners and are directed by their sin natures to willful acts of sin. Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God as revealed in the entirety of Scripture, in action, attitude or character.

Genesis 1:2, 3; John 1:3, 3:16,18,36, 5:24; Acts 16:31; Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1,8-9; Colossians 1:16,17

Salvation

We believe the Triune God saves sinners by grace alone through faith in Christ's substitutionary atonement alone.

GRACE IN THE NEW CREATION:

We believe in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about

in a manner above our comprehension wholly and solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, thus securing our voluntary obedience to the Gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life.

John 3:3,6-7,18; Acts 16:30-33; 2 Corinthians 5:17,19; Ephesians 2:1,8-9; Colossians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 5:1

ATONEMENT FOR SIN:

We believe the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God, who, by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Himself our sin, yet was without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience and by His death made a full and vicarious substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust—Christ the Lord bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. Having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven, divinely perfect yet still able to be touched by our infirmities. He is in every way a compassionate and an all-sufficient Savior.

Isaiah 53:4-7; Matthew 8:11; John 3:16; Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24, 25; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 4:10

JUSTIFICATION:

We believe Christ secures the justification of all those who believe in Him: that justification includes the pardon of sin, (imputed to Christ on the cross) and the declaration of righteousness (imputed from Christ through faith). The righteousness of believers is solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood, and not bestowed due to any works of righteousness which we have done.

Isaiah 53:11; Acts 13:39; Romans 4:25, 5:1-9

REPENTANCE AND FAITH:

We believe repentance and faith are solemn obligations and inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God. Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ. It is being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger and helplessness, at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient Savior. We believe that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition for salvation. Saving faith is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God. It is not just a belief in facts, but a personal trust in Jesus to save from sin.

Psalms 51; Mark 1:15; Luke 18:13; John 3:16,18,36, 5:24; Acts 2:37-38, 16:31, 20:20-21; Romans 10:13; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5

SANCTIFICATION:

We believe the Scriptures teach that sanctification is a work of grace within the life of the individual believer. We believe sanctification has three aspects: the positional aspect whereby God sets apart those that are His; the progressive aspect whereby man separates himself from the defilement of sin and yields himself unto God; the ultimate aspect when the believer is in perfect likeness to His Redeemer not only in soul but in body.

We believe all who are saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon our Savior and Lord and that separation from unbiblical heresy and all sinful pleasures, practices and associations is commanded by God.

Romans 12:1,2, 16:17, 18; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Hebrews 10:9,10,14; James 1:14-17; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11

ETERNAL SECURITY:

We believe true believers are eternally secure; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto eternal salvation.

Matthew 6:30, 13:19,20; John 8:31-32; Romans 8:28-39; Colossians 1:21, 23; 1 John 5:11-13

BELIEVERS' TWO NATURES:

We believe every believer has two natures with provision made for victory of the new nature over the old through the indwelling Holy Spirit, and that all claims of eradication of the old nature in this life are unscriptural.

Romans 6:11-13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:10

The Church

UNIVERSAL CHURCH:

We believe the universal Church is the body of Christ, comprised of all true believers from the past, present, and those in the future until the Rapture. Jesus Christ is the sole head of the Church.

We believe the true spiritual Church is God bringing to fullness what He was pointing to in the Old Testament; established by God; led by Jesus Christ as its sole Head; revealed, empowered and perpetuated by the Holy Spirit; His body for service; and His bride for glory. It existed in seed form as true Israel in the Old Testament, and it grew until finally blossoming on the Day of Pentecost.

Matthew 16:18; Acts 1:8, 2:4-42, 3:24; Romans 11:11-24; 1 Corinthians 12:12-18; Ephesians 1:22, 23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

LOCAL CHURCH:

We believe a local church is a congregation of immersed believers, associated by covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His Word. The local church has leaders, with biblical authority, whose qualifications, claims and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures. We believe the true mission of the church is the faithful witnessing of Christ to all men as we have opportunity, free from the interferences of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and the one and only superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; it is Scriptural for the true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel; each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation on all matters of membership, of policy, of government, of discipline, and of benevolence.

Acts 2:41-42, 20:28; Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:11, 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 3:15

We believe the Scriptures give great importance to worship. Worship should include personal worship (the individual believer having consistent time alone in listening to God through His Word and in prayer), family worship (families coming together for prayer, instruction in the Word, and in praise and thanksgiving) and corporate worship (the local church body gathering to offer united praise and thanksgiving to God and to receive instruction from the Word of God).

Psalms 95:6, 96:9; John 4:24; Romans 12:1; Hebrews 12:18; Revelation 22:9

Ordinances

We believe there are two church ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water to show, in a solemn and beautiful emblem, the crucified, buried, risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; and that it is a prerequisite for church membership. We believe the Lord's Supper is the commemoration of His death until He comes and should be preceded always by solemn self-examination.

Matthew 3:16, 28:19; Luke 22:14-20; John 3:23; Acts 8:26-39; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28; Colossians 2:12

Future, Last Things

We believe there will be a rapture, tribulation period, kingdom, then eternity.

Matthew 16:27; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Philippians 3:20; I Thessalonians 4:15; II Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13; I Corinthians 4:5; I Corinthians 15; II Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15

THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST:

We believe in the Blessed Hope, the personal, imminent, pretribulation and premillennial coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His redeemed ones and in His return to earth after the tribulation with His saints to establish the Millennial Kingdom.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-12; Revelation 20:1-6, 12-14

JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST:

We believe every saved person will appear before the Judgment Seat to be judged by the Lord in regard to faithful service.

Matthew 6:21; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

THE ETERNAL STATE:

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment. The souls of the redeemed are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord where in conscious bliss they await the first resurrection, when spirit, soul and the body are reunited to be forever glorified with the Lord. The souls of the unbelievers after death remain in conscious misery until the second resurrection, when with spirit, soul and body reunited they shall appear before the Great White Throne Judgment and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, not to be annihilated but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment.

Matthew 25:46; Luke 16:19-26; John 5:28-29; 2 Corinthians 5:8, 10; Philippians 1:23

MILLENNIAL KINGDOM:

We believe the Millennial Kingdom on earth will be ruled from the throne of

David. Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:32; Acts 2:29-30

Marriage & Family

We believe God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church. Life begins at conception and children are a blessing and heritage from the Lord.

We believe the home was the first institution God provided for one man (from birth) and one woman (from birth), and that marriage is a sacred relationship and honorable for all. The marriage between a man and a woman is designed by God to be a lifelong relationship. "What therefore God has joined together let not man separate." Marriage is used as a symbol of the union of Christ and His Church. Sexual relationships outside the bonds of marriage of a man and woman are sin.

Genesis 2:18-24; Mark 10:7-9; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, 7:2-5; Ephesians 5:3-14, 22-33; Hebrews 13:4

Civil Government

We believe civil government is of divine appointment for the interest and good order of human society; the leaders are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed. The only exception are in matters opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-7; Revelation 19:16

Service Opportunities

Guest Connections (contact Pastor John)

- Greeter (once a month or more if you desire)
- Usher (once a month or more if you desire)
- Welcome Center (once a month or more if you desire)

Bethel Kids (contact Lydia Churchelow)

- Uptown (Nursery, birth - pre-K 5 years old)
 - Teacher (once a month or more if you desire)
 - Teacher assistant (once a month or more if you desire)
 - Infants (once a month or more if you desire)
- Downtown (Elementary, K - 4th grade)
 - Teacher (twice a month or more if you desire)
 - Teacher assistant (twice a month or more if you desire)
- KidZone (weekly, Wednesday nights during school year)
 - Teacher
 - Small Group Leaders

Music (contact Laura Camp)

- Vocalist
- Instrumentalist

Student Ministry (contact Pastor Jakob)

- Middle School Leader
- High School Leader

Behind the Scenes (contact Pam White)

- Audio Team (rotational, as needed)
- Video Team (rotational, as needed)

Membership Covenant

Bethel's Membership Covenant is born out of our love for Christ, the church body (His Bride) and its individual members. We hope Bethel's members will experience the fullness of joy and purpose found only in the presence of the Lord. The primary purpose of this covenant is to serve as a teaching document with three functions:

- to clarify the biblical responsibilities and expectations for both leaders and individual members of Bethel's church body.
- to establish teaching and doctrinal frameworks for the church body of Bethel.
- to serve as a tool for personal and corporate reflection and growth toward holiness.

What is a Covenant?

Webster's Dictionary defines *covenant* as "a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action". Covenants ranging from serious wedding vows to the often unread iTunes agreements are made on a regular basis. God's Word records a number of covenants, some are between God and man while others were made between individuals. In most of the covenants found in Scripture, both parties bound themselves to an obligation. If one of the covenant members failed to meet the conditions, the other was released from the obligation.

That is the nature of the following covenant:

We, the existing Bethel family, covenant with new members to fulfill certain responsibilities and, at the same time, new members promise to meet or comply with certain biblical imperatives. Together, our covenant serves as a tool for living out the transformational truth of the Gospel in a way that both honors Christ and makes Him known.

LEADERS COVENANT

The leadership of Bethel (both pastors and Shepherd's Council members) have been charged with the care and guidance of those people that God brings to Bethel. This charge includes protecting, leading, and caring for the individual and the whole church body. We take seriously the requirements God has assigned to us, and we have listed below an overview of those responsibilities.

We, the leaders, covenant to...

- prayerfully select and affirm Shepherd's Council members and staff according to the criteria set forth in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- prayerfully and humbly shepherd and oversee all God has given to our local church family
(1 Timothy 3:1-13, 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- prayerfully steward the resources God gives to the best of our abilities (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-4)

- pray for the growth of the Kingdom by making disciples by baptizing and teaching (Matthew 28:16-20, Ephesians 4:15-16, Colossians 1:28, James 5:14, 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- provide Biblical teaching and counsel (Acts 20:27-28, 1 Timothy 4:16, 2 Timothy 4:1-5, Titus 2:1)
- equip Bethel's members for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- diligently guard against false teaching and teachers (Matthew 7:15, Acts 20:28-31, 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 1 John 4:1).
- exercise discipline, when necessary, with redemptive purposes of glorifying God and restoring biblical fellowship to the individual and the church (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5, Galatians 6:1, James 5:19-20).
- be examples in conduct and daily living while carrying out the individual and corporate elements of the covenant between church and members (Philippians 3:17, 1 Timothy 4:12, Titus 2:7-8, 1 Peter 5:3).

As leaders we are also members. So we further agree to lead by example and adhere to the commitments listed in the Members Covenant.

MEMBERS COVENANT

Having been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and subsequently baptized, being in agreement with Bethel's doctrinal statement, mission, and values, I desire to unite myself to the local church family of Bethel. In this, I commit to God, Bethel's leadership, and the Bethel family in the following ways:

I covenant to build the church and myself...

- by participating in the ordinances prescribed to Christ's Church:
 - by being baptized after my conversion
 - by regularly remembering and celebrating the work of Christ through communion
- by submitting to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues
- by pursuing the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of spiritual disciplines
- Psalm 119, Luke 18:1, Acts 17:11, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Ephesians 5:1-21, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21

I covenant to strive for unity and peace...

- by acting in love toward other members of Bethel and her guests
- by refusing to gossip
- by submitting to the leaders of the church
- Romans 14:19, Ephesians 4:1-3, Ephesians 4:29, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:5

I covenant to share the responsibility...

- by praying for its growth (both depth and breadth)
- by inviting the unchurched to attend

- by warmly welcoming those who visit
- by engaging in biblical community outside of this church
- Luke 14:23-24, Acts 2:42-47, Romans 15:7, 1 Thessalonians 1:2, Hebrews 10:23-25

I covenant to serve...

- by discovering and using my spiritual gifts
- by prayerfully developing a servant's heart
- by contributing my time both cheerfully and sacrificially
- Matthew 25:14-30, Ephesians 4:11-12, Philippians 2:3-4, 1 Peter 4:10

I covenant to protect the testimony of Bethel...

- by attending and participating faithfully
- by living a godly life characterized by holiness, character and wisdom
 - pursuing purity and abstaining from sexually immoral practices such as, but not limited to adultery, premarital sex, pornography (Romans 13:11-14, 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, Ephesians 5:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, Hebrews 13:4)
 - preserving the sanctity of marriage by seeking biblical reconciliation before pursuing divorce (Matthew 19:1-9, Mark 10:1-12, Luke 16:18, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11)
- by understanding the responsibility of Christian freedom
 - by refraining from illegal drug use and drunkenness and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates (Romans 1:28-32, Romans 13:13, Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:18, James 3:3-18)
- by giving generously and joyfully (Leviticus 27:30, 1 Corinthians 16:2)
- Romans 12:1-2, Romans 14:14-23, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, Philippians 1:27, Hebrews 10:25, 1 Peter 1:13-16, 1 Peter 4:1-3

Appendixes

Appendix 1: The Difference Between Gospel and Religion¹

"People tend to think there are two ways to relate to God — to follow Him and do His will or to reject Him and do your own thing — but there are also two ways to reject God as Savior. One is the way already mentioned: by rejecting God's law and living as you see fit (irreligion). The other, however, is by obeying God's law, by being really righteous and really moral, so as to earn your own salvation (religion). It is not enough to simply think there are two ways to relate to God. There are three: religion, irreligion, and the gospel."

RELIGION	GOSPEL
"I obey, therefore, I'm accepted."	"I'm accepted, therefore, I obey."
Motivation is based on fear and insecurity. I	Motivation is based on grateful joy.
obey God in order to get things from God.	I obey God to get God – to delight in and resemble Him
When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or myself, since I believe that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.	When circumstances in my life go wrong I struggle, but I know all my punishment fell on Jesus and that while God may allow this for my training, he will exercise his fatherly love within my trial.
When I am criticized I am furious or devastated because it is critical that I think of myself as a "good person." Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.	When I am criticized I struggle, but it is not essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." My identity is not built on my record or performance, but on God's love for me in Christ.
My prayer life consists largely of petition, and it only heats up when I am in a time of need. My main purpose in prayer is control of the environment.	My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose in prayer is fellowship with God.
My self-view swings between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to failing people. If and when I am not living up to my standards, I feel humble but not confident; I feel like a failure.	My self-view is not based on my moral achievement. In Christ I am <i>simul iustus et peccator</i> – simultaneously sinful and lost, yet accepted in Christ. I am so bad that he had to die for me, and I am so loved that he was glad to die for me. This leads me to deep humility and confidence at the same time.
My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work or how moral I am, and so I must look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral.	My identity and self-worth are centered on the One who died for me. I am saved by sheer grace so that I can't look down on those who believe or practice something different from me. Only by grace I am what I am.

¹ Tim Keller's *Gospel in Life Curriculum*

Appendix 2: How to Leave a Church Well²

You may be joining Bethel from another church in which you were either a member or heavily involved. In addition, the time may come when it's necessary for you to leave Bethel to join a community elsewhere. Because we value commitment and investment in the church, we believe strongly that the transition from one church to another is a significant event. However, in our experience, few people really do this well, which often leads to hurt feelings, misunderstandings, unmet expectations, and a lack of unity in the overall body of Christ that dishonors Jesus.

We have compiled five steps in order to help you walk through the transition process well for the sake of your own health and the health of the body.

1. **Have a good reason for leaving.**

Before you go, evaluate whether your reasons are good, legitimate, and honoring to God. The reasons that people leave churches are many. Some are good, some are bad, and many are hard to discern. Check your pride in the decision. Ask yourself whether you are running from conflict or reacting to unrealistic expectations. If your reasons are good, go. If not, stay. If you are unsure, it would be wise to seek good counsel from godly friends or church leaders who can help you think through the process.

2. **Communicate your decision to leave with the appropriate leaders.**

As an active member of the church, leaders will need to know you're leaving. Communicate that you are leaving to your pastor(s). If you are serving, communicate it to your ministry team leader. If you are connected to a Life Group (or small group of some kind), communicate your decision to them. Personal communication is preferable to written communication, but make sure you communicate. We strongly encourage this order: pastor(s), ministry leaders, Life Group.

3. **Tell these leaders the truth about why you're leaving.**

If you have legitimate reasons to leave then you have nothing to hide or worry about. If the reasons for leaving have the potential of stinging church leadership, deliver your reasons to the church leadership in the spirit of Proverbs 27:6, "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." Scripture commands us to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), which means you shouldn't avoid the real, sometimes difficult reasons behind a bunch of spiritualized nonsense. God may use your reasons for leaving to help the church or its leaders. "Exit Interviews" can be immensely helpful to leadership, who are accountable to receive truth with humility. Whatever you do, don't just leave without telling your leaders.

² Taken from *5 Tips for Leaving Church* by Acts29Network

4. Appropriately transition or conclude your ministry commitments.

If you've been active in ministry, your role will need to be transitioned to others. Hopefully, you've been training and developing somebody to take your place, but if you haven't, give your leaders an appropriate time to find others to serve in your capacity. This period shouldn't drag on, but don't just "drop the ball" on the people you've been committed to.

5. Leave graciously.

Ray Pritchard put it best when he wrote:

"Leaving graciously means you refuse to speak evil of those who remain in the church. Look forward, not backward. Focus on your new church, not your old one. Think carefully before you speak about your former congregation. Don't say anything that could be remotely construed as criticism. Even casual comments could stir up needless controversy. Let the Golden Rule guide all your comments, public and private."

Conclusion:

If you've read this material and realize that you didn't leave a church well in the past, it might be wise to circle back to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. If you have gossiped or stirred up division, you should make it right, apologizing not only to the leaders of that church, but also to the people to whom you gossiped. In the end, remember that Jesus loves the church you're leaving and the one you're going to — his blood was shed for both. Both churches are part of his bride. Do his bride the honor of leaving well.

Appendix 3: Recommended Reading

Below are a few books that, as a member, we recommend you read because these play a significant role in shaping the church. We also believe they can and will help in shaping you to be a better disciple of Jesus Christ.

1. ***The Bible***

We want you to be reading the Bible always. Of course, we love this book and value this book! At Bethel, our leaders preach and teach from the ESV (English Standard Version) and the NLT (New Living Translation), but we recognize there are other versions you might prefer to read. We highly recommend the ESV Study Bible or the ESV Gospel Transformation Bible for going deeper in your personal study of God's Word.

2. ***Long Story Short*** and ***Old Story New***

These family devotional books allow parents to pass on valuable truths to their kids in a simple, enjoyable fashion. Each day focuses on the gospel through stories from the Old Testament (*Long Story Short*) and New Testament (*Old Story New*).

3. ***The Jesus Storybook Bible***

We have found this book to be a tremendous tool in giving an overview of the biblical story for people of all ages. Each story either points ahead to the Promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, or looks back at how Jesus is at the center of the redemption story...and how He is at the center of your story.

4. ***Spirituality for the Rest of Us***

At Bethel, we recognize the unique design that was so intentionally given to each one of us. God created us with different personalities, gifts, interests, and more. This book helps the reader understand there is no one-size-fits-all program or method for your relationship with Jesus Christ.

For additional resources or recommended reading, feel free to contact Pastor Brady.