
MEMBERSHIP IN *THE NEW CHURCH* IS BY COVENANT

There is no such thing as a relationship without a covenant. And in our world, covenants must constantly be remembered, maintained, reworked, renewed.... Here at this church, we want renewal and the excitement of a more dynamic relationship with God. Renewal and growth seem appropriate to real life in Christ Jesus. God may have more plans for us than we know. Instead of everything locked up and tied down, we want a church willing and able to respond, to pray, to obey – and to change our commitments and covenants to match where the Spirit is trying to lead us. So we have moved into patterns as old as the Bible itself, and the Bible is about covenants with God from one end to the other.

– Bruce Van Blair, *A COVENANT PEOPLE*

The New Church is a Covenant-based community, and submitting a Covenant is the only basis for membership. We are comprised of people (13 years of age or older) who have each expressed through our written Covenant a desire to join in the faith, work, and/or fellowship of *The New Church*, and who share the understanding that it is the purpose of *The New Church* to be a community of intentional, committed Christian seekers and believers, each of whom has covenanted in the way we believe is best for us and consistent with our relationship with God.

To be a member of *The New Church*, a Covenant must be submitted in writing. **Email is an acceptable way to submit a written Covenant.** If writing is a hardship, a person may dictate his or her Covenant to another member. While there is no set format for our written Covenants, the PDF fill-in form at the end of this Covenant Package may be helpful.

Below are excerpts about Covenants from our Bylaws, followed by a list of the various positions, boards and committees of *The New Church*.

TNC BYLAW EXCERPTS – COVENANTS

THE COVENANT

Each member's Covenant shall be a statement of their desire to be a member of this Church, expressed in written form. Each member, each year, shall prayerfully consider his or her part in the life of this Church and renew or rewrite their Covenant. A Covenant may be as long or as short as a member desires. In their Covenant, a member may write declarations of intention concerning participation, service, financial contributions, exclusionary clauses, faith concerns, spiritual disciplines, areas of special interest, and anything else they wish to note and remember. No person need write in their Covenant anything they do not wish to write in their Covenant. Any member may revise or amend their Covenant at any time.

No person shall have the right to challenge or discredit another member's Covenant. Each person submitting a Covenant shall instantly be a member of this Church in full standing on the basis of their Covenant. Each person shall review, renew, or revise their Covenant in November of each year, to take effect at the Annual Meeting in January the following year.

Any person making a Covenant request to serve on any standing board or committee shall automatically become a member of that board or committee. They shall remain a member of that board or committee for as long as they wish to serve there. A person may additionally express in their Covenant a willingness to serve as chairperson of a board or committee

or to serve as an officer of this Church, and the Church Council shall give the request careful consideration.

It is the intention of these bylaws to make it easy for our people to get to where they *want* to serve.

SUBMITTING THE COVENANT

Members shall submit their Covenants on or before Stewardship Sunday in October or November of each year. Stewardship Sunday shall be designated by the Diaconate and announced no later than four weeks before such designated date. Covenants are “the life blood” of the Congregation and shall be celebrated and honored as such. It shall be the responsibility of a designated Deacon to read all of the Covenants and to share the appropriate information from the Covenants with the Treasurer (or Financial Secretary) and the Church Council.

MEMBERSHIP ROLLS

All persons who have covenanted to be members for the coming year shall have their names placed on the membership roll as it is constituted on January 1 of each year.

NEW MEMBERS

Whenever a new member submits a Covenant, their name shall be added immediately to the membership roll of this Church.

WHY WE WRITE COVENANTS
AND WHY COVENANTS ARE THE ONLY BASIS FOR OUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH
Some thoughts from Bruce Van Blair

“It is for freedom that Christ set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and refuse to submit again to the yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1)

Our freedom in Jesus the Christ is never an invitation into anarchy, lethargy, or self-serving dissipation. True freedom means we get to choose who and what we will serve, live for, devote our lives to.

Nearly all churches, Christian structures, and organizations tell their members what they must believe; how they are to think and behave; what they are to contribute, give, produce – in order to be and remain acceptable to the church (and to God).

This can be clarifying and helpful for many people. The problem for us is that this steps between the individual and the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit – who we maintain is supposed to be the light of our lives at every turn and on every level of our existence. The Holy Spirit (of our Risen Christ) is the center and essence of our understanding of being Christ’s Followers – and of our participation in the *ecclesia*, the gathering, the family of Christ’s body on earth.

Hence we each write our own covenant. Our church does not tell anyone what to believe or how to be faithful. We tell our church as honestly as we can the content of our faith and commitment and devotion at this point in our pilgrimage. If we are feeling so called, it might even make sense to covenant to more than one faith community. We then pool our covenants and live with what and who we really are at this point in time.

Life keeps changing and we keep growing, and indeed we are free to change our covenants at any time that seems appropriate to us. But at least once a year it seems important for us to review and renew our covenants in prayerful consideration of our current circumstances.

Of course, we take our covenants very seriously, even though we rejoice in the freedom and grace we receive from Christ. Covenants, after all, are the promises we make to God – in the light of the promises God makes to us.

COVENANT WORKSHEET
Some thoughts from Bruce Van Blair

My favorite concept of covenant writing is a blank sheet of paper, a pen, and some time to pray. That might not yield as smooth and polished a result, but I suspect that simple and honest and heartfelt count more with The Spirit than deathless prose or even better-organized thinking.

Nevertheless, I have been asked to put on paper a few categories for consideration and a few questions under each category – to prime the pump, so to speak. So here we go:

I.) WHAT ABOUT MY SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN THE COMING YEAR?

How is my prayer life? An obvious question, but one we probably all need to ask regularly – and certainly when we are writing a covenant with God. Do I have a reasonable discipline for daily prayer? Do I carve sufficient time out of each day to talk things over with the Holy Spirit? Renewal and recommitment of our prayer lives is a very appropriate matter to go into our covenants. If this is not attended to, what else in our covenants can really matter?

Do I “study some portion of the Scriptures each day, seeking in grace and praise to discover God’s will for my own life on a daily basis”?

Am I a regular and conscientious part of a Disciple Band? It was a high priority for Jesus. Is that good enough for me?

How am I doing with pruning? Sometimes we cannot grow any further unless we make more room.

II.) HAVE I GOT SOME WAYS TO “BUILD UP THE BODY,” AS PAUL WOULD HAVE SAID?

Consistent attendance is one of the primary ways we bear witness or show our loyalty – to anything. If we are present when possible whenever the faith community gathers for worship, that ends up having a huge impact on the health and life of the church. Do I gather when my faith family gathers?

If I have special interests or abilities in some area of the church’s life, have I written that into my covenant? There are many areas of special responsibility and support in the life of any organization. Most churches want us to wait to be asked. Our covenant system is far more efficient than that: if you are willing, write it in your covenant and “you’re on.”

New Testament letters make it clear that church members prayed for each other – a lot. Do I have people on my prayer list?

III.) DO I PLAN TO INVITE SOMEBODY INTO THE LIFE OF MY CHURCH THIS YEAR?

Such things do not often happen by accident. If we are grateful to be part of this faith family, are there not others who would be grateful too – if they knew, and got a fair taste of it? Of all the ways we know to help somebody, is there any way to help more than to help someone find a faith family? Do I know any “widows or orphans” in the spiritual sense?

Before, during, or after, do I want to invite somebody into my Disciple Band?

IV.) DO I HAVE A MENTOR?

Am I too shy to ask someone to be my Mentor?

Am I too mature to need a Mentor?

V.) HOW DO I FEEL ABOUT MONEY?

Does any of my money belong to God?

Do I want to spend any of my money to support and enhance the life of my church?

TNC BYLAW EXCERPTS – OFFICERS, BOARDS & COMMITTEES

CHURCH OFFICERS AND CHAIRS OF BOARDS & COMMITTEES

MODERATOR – The Moderator shall:

- Preside at all meetings of the Church Council and at all duly called meetings of the Congregation.
- Be an *ex officio* member of all boards, committees, and task forces of this Church.
- Coordinate the efforts of boards and committees.
- Meet regularly with the Minister to share common concerns.

CHURCH CLERK (SECRETARY) – The Church Clerk shall:

- Keep a record of the proceedings of this Church and of the Church Council.
- Keep on file all communications and written official reports.
- Notify all persons elected to Church offices.
- Give legal notices of all meetings when such notices are necessary.
- Conduct all correspondence when such is not otherwise provided.
- Summarize the decisions and activities of the Church Council for inclusion in the Church newsletter, if one exists.
- Maintain the records of this Church, recording additions and deletions to the membership, baptisms, confirmations, and weddings.

TREASURER – The Treasurer shall:

- Be responsible for all expenditures of this Church, including payment of bills on order of the Church Council or its properly appointed agents.
- Maintain an accurate accounting system for all matters pertaining to Church income and disbursements.
- Make a detailed financial report annually to this Church and at other times as deemed necessary.
- Have custody of all records relating to the real and personal property of this Church.
- Receive and be responsible for all payments to this Church for whatever reason.
- Maintain an accurate record of all pledges, and provide each pledgor with at least a once-yearly statement of account.
- Deposit all moneys received by this Church in a banking institution as designated by the Board of Trustees, recording all such deposits with the Treasurer.
- Be an *ex officio* member of the Board of Trustees.

SEER – The Seer shall:

- Be responsible for maintaining and adding to the Church archives.
- Arrange for written, photographic, or taped records of special celebrations and significant events in the life of this Church, if appropriate.

BOARDS & COMMITTEES

THE DIACONATE (DEACONS)

The Diaconate, in cooperation with the Minister, shall have responsibility for the spiritual life of this Church, and for the nurture of those within the Congregation. The Diaconate's duties shall include evangelism; developing and maintaining ways to enhance and increase caring and communication between the members of this Church; developing and maintaining ways of integrating new and existing members into the life and mission of this Church; and planning and coordinating the Annual Retreat and any additional retreats.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees shall have the responsibility for the finances of this Church. It shall tend to all matters pertaining to insurance, liability, and legal issues that may arise. It shall have responsibility for website pages, video conferencing, and any other ways and means for keeping the Congregation in communication at worship services, classes, study groups, coffee hours, meetings, and any other connections deemed helpful or necessary.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

In cooperation with the Minister, the Worship Committee shall be responsible for the worship services of this Church. Its duties shall include assisting the Minister with planning and producing the worship services of this Church, including selecting hymns and other appropriate licensed music for the worship services and designing any liturgical portions of the worship service when desired or inspired; being watchful for and helping to design special worship services for special occasions beyond Sunday morning; and finding ways to enhance congregational singing and any other worshipful music in our services, keeping in mind copyright licensing requirements for using and streaming music.

BOARD OF DISCIPLE BANDS

The Board of Disciple Bands shall have responsibility for encouraging every member of this Church to participate in a small group with other members for the purpose of studying the Bible, sharing what is going on with each other, and caring for one another in Christian love.

BOARD OF VOCATIO

The Board of Vocatio shall be responsible for encouraging every member to find, train for, and live out their vocatio. Its duties shall include coordinating the Congregation's efforts to support one another in finding, training for, and/or implementing each member's vocatio; and encouraging and awakening young people to seek a "calling" instead of simply a job or way to make money. (Colossians 3:23-24)



The New Church

2024-2025

Looking for ways to support The New Church – its growth and its mission? Consider one or more of the following:

Ways You Can Support The New Church

- Tithe or support The New Church financially
- Lead our Sunday Worship Service and Discussion, either discussing a sermon from Bruce Van Blair's archives or presenting a new sermon of your own
- Join an existing Disciple Band
- Organize a Disciple Band
- Participate in our Sunday Worship Service and Discussion
- Join the Diaconate, Board of Trustees, or other TNC Board or Committee (all meet once a month in a combined meeting)
- Attend the monthly TNC Business Meeting
- Attend the annual TNC Retreat
- Hold The New Church in your prayers

On behalf of the Diaconate for The New Church, thank you.

Barbara Anderson

To complete this form, save this PDF to your phone or desktop (away from the website or the email it came with), then open that saved PDF and fill in the fields as indicated (instructions appear when you hover over a field). Once you have filled everything in, save and close the PDF, then email the PDF as an attachment to TNC at info@thenewchurch.org.

2024 Covenant for *The New Church*

(This form is offered as a convenience. Your covenant can be written in any form that you choose.)

Date: _____

I, _____, want to join *The New Church* for the year 2024.

• I would like to serve in this way:

• My financial commitment for the year is:

• My commitment to prayer and to study of the Scriptures:

• Other:

Signed: _____

Print name: _____

Address, including city, state and zip code:

Phone number: _____

Cell phone number: _____

Other phone number: _____

Email address: _____

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