



COMBINED SESSION

The Meaning of Membership

Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.

Greetings Covenant Friends:

The purpose of *The Meaning of Membership: Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.* is to explore what it means to become a member of an Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC). In the ECC, our very reason for being is to go deeper in Christ and further in mission, together. Membership signifies the commitment to be mission friends together in the context of a local church community.

Ever since Swedish immigrants founded the Covenant more than 125 years ago, we have been known as “mission friends.” Mission is at the core of our identity and is deeply rooted within Pietism. August Hermann Francke, a founding figure of Pietism, said that Christians live for “God’s glory and neighbor’s good.” When it comes to advancing the mission of God, we are truly better together.

Today the ECC is one of the fastest growing and most diverse denominations. As our missional movement continues to diversify and flourish, we are grateful to provide this formational resource to help strengthen our Covenant identity together as mission friends.

***The Meaning of Membership* is the ECC’s refreshed and fully updated membership curriculum resource from Make and Deepen Disciples which covers:**

- The Mission of God
- The Mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church
- The Mission of Our Church
- The Mission of a Member

It is our sincere hope that *The Meaning of Membership* will empower every ECC church to grow deeper in Christ and further in mission together in fresh and exciting ways.

Thank you for taking the time to explore what it means to be a part of the Evangelical Covenant Church family.

In Grateful Partnership,



Michelle Sanchez
EXECUTIVE MINISTER OF MAKE AND DEEPEN DISCIPLES
EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH



THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP

session one

The Mission of God

Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.



ECC THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP — SESSION ONE

**Membership is a commitment
to grow deeper in Christ
and go further in mission
together as the church.**

Gather

THE PURPOSE OF THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP: DEEPER IN CHRIST. FURTHER IN MISSION. TOGETHER. IS TO:

- Take an in-depth look at our congregation
- Underscore our commitment to God's mission in the world
- Introduce our denominational family
- Build and deepen friendships
- Explore what it means to be a member
- Outline the process to become a member

Format of *The Meaning of Membership*

Four topics:

- The mission of God
- The mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church
- The mission of our church
- The mission of a member

Objectives for this Session

- Provide an overview of the work of God in the world
- Introduce, build, and deepen relationships
- Explore the story of God's mission to you and God's mission through you
- Begin the process of discovering membership at our church

ONE-ON-ONE INTRODUCTIONS

1. How did you begin attending our church?
2. What is one question you would like to see answered during our time together?

GOD'S STORY: GOD'S MISSION TO YOU

The four chapters of God's story reveal God's mission to us:

1. Creation (GENESIS 1-2).

- "God is love" (1 JOHN 4:16).
- "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (GENESIS 1:31).

2. Fall (GENESIS 3).

- "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (ROMANS 3:23).
- "For the wages of sin is death" (ROMANS 6:23).

3. Redemption (GENESIS 3 - REVELATION 20).

- "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (JOHN 3:16).
- "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 JOHN 4:10).
- "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (MATTHEW 28:19).

4. New Creation (REVELATION 21-22). "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death" or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away"' (REVELATION 21:3-4).

REFLECTION

1. How have you experienced the goodness of creation and the brokenness of creation?
2. How have you already experienced God's redeeming love through the church?
3. How does God's mission of restoration give you hope for people and our planet?
4. How might God be calling you to respond to his story?

THE X-FACTOR



God's mission extends to you, but it extends beyond you as well. God's mission has a ripple effect! **Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 and Matthew 28:16-20.**

GOING DEEPER IN CHRIST AND FURTHER IN MISSION TOGETHER

In the Evangelical Covenant Church, we are characterized by four commitments by which we go deeper in Christ and further in mission together. As a denominational family, we are **biblical, devotional, connectional,** and **missional.** These four commitments outline how we participate in God's mission to us and through us.

Consider how you will deepen your commitments in the following areas, so that we might grow deeper in Christ and further in mission together.

- **Biblical**—Growing in our knowledge of God through our engagement with Scripture. *How is God's word influencing your life?*
- **Devotional**—When we open God's word it isn't just to learn about God, but rather to be in relationship with God through the work of the Spirit. *What spiritual practices help you go deeper in Christ in this season of your life?*
- **Connectional**—We are created for relationship with God and one another. We are connectional people. We are all the church together—children, youth, adults, women and men, persons of all ethnicities, nationalities, social standing and ability. All are invited and called by God to be the church. *How will you embrace being better together within your local church? How will you go deeper in Christ and further in mission together?*
- **Missional**—The church exists for God's mission. As missional people we are called to be about God's priorities in the world in both word and deed, reaching the lost and helping the hurting. We are called to share the love of God and to grow the family of God by becoming disciples who make disciples. *What is your next step in going further in mission with God?*



THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP

session two

The Mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church

Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.



ECC THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP — SESSION TWO

**Membership is a commitment
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and go further in mission
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Gather

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SESSION

Acquaint the group with the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC)

- History
- Distinctives and theology
- Structure and resources

Explore how the ethos of the ECC finds expression in your local church.

Family Name Discussion

What do you know about your family name?

Interact

MISSION OF THE ECC: INTRODUCTION

A Denomination

The Ethos of the ECC—"Mission Friends"

The term "mission friends" was an early nickname given to Covenant people. From the beginning Covenanters have sought to build a culture of friendship in Christ, pursuing the mission of God together. We hope to embody that same spirit today in this congregation.

We know that we can accomplish far more by joining a missional movement with others than we could ever accomplish on our own. We are a people who are "in it together," joining God and each other to fulfill God's mission in the world.

The Covenant Describes Itself

“The Covenant is not a church organization in the ordinary sense, but a mission society having churches as its members. These churches have consolidated together because of the missionary spirit which led them to missionary enterprises too large for any single church to undertake”
 —The Covenant’s description of itself from the 1893 World’s Fair

The Mission of the ECC

From our inception the Evangelical Covenant Church has been in it together to see

- ...more disciples,
- ...among more populations,
- ...in a more caring and just world.

Physical Description—Quick Facts

- 885
- 11
- Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East North Africa
- More than 850
- 33%
- Growth
- Chicago

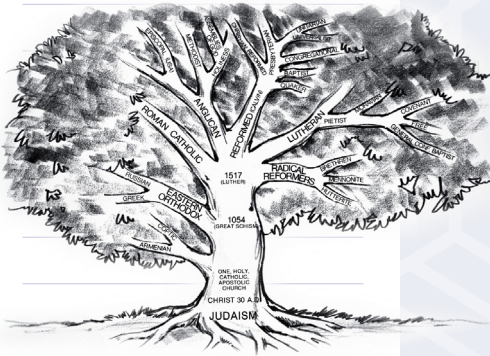
MISSION OF THE ECC: OUR ROOTS

Character Description: The Identity Question

What is at the heart of the ECC? What makes the Covenant the Covenant?

The Enduring Commitments of the Covenant

	COMMITMENT	HISTORICAL INFLUENCE	SENTIMENT	COMMITMENT SUMMARY
1)	The Authority of Scripture	Protestant Reformation	Where is it written?	Biblical
2)	New/Deeper Life in Christ	Pietism	How goes your walk?	Devotional
3)	Evangelism/Compassion	Moravian Mission	Lost/found; hurting/helped	Missional
4)	The Body of Christ	Founding Rationale	“I am a companion to all who fear thee” (PSALM 119:63, KJV)	Connectional



WESTERN DENOMINATIONAL ROOTS

Historical influences

- The Protestant Reformation
- Pietism
- Moravian mission
- Founding rationale

Continuing influences of the Evangelical Covenant Church today:

- The Evangelical Movement
- The Global and Multiethnic Kingdom of God

MISSION OF THE ECC: COVENANT AFFIRMATIONS

The Covenant’s essential beliefs are summed up in six affirmations.

- We affirm the centrality of the word of God.
- We affirm the necessity of the new birth.
- We affirm a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- We affirm a commitment to the whole mission of the church.
- We affirm the church as a fellowship of believers.
- We affirm the reality of freedom in Christ.

Affirmation #1: The Centrality of the Word of God

We are people of the Book. Our first affirmation is the centrality of the word of God.

As we read in the brochure *What Does the Covenant Church Believe? A Brief Look at Covenant Affirmations*:

We affirm the centrality of the word of God. We believe the Bible is the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. The dynamic, transforming power of the word of God directs the church in the life of each Christian. This reliance on the Bible leads us to affirm both men and women as ordained ministers and at every level of leadership. It is the reason we pursue ethnic diversity in our church and is the inspiration for every act of compassion, mercy, and justice.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 TIMOTHY 3:16).

See also PSALM 19:7-11; HEBREWS 4:12; ISAIAH 55:11.

Reflection:

- 1) How have you seen this belief in the centrality of Scripture lived out in our church?
- 2) How does God's word influence your life?

Affirmation #2: The Necessity of New Birth

We believe that God desires a personal relationship with us. This is expressed in the affirmation of the necessity of the new birth.

We affirm the necessity of the new birth. The apostle Paul wrote, "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV). New birth in Christ means committing ourselves to Christ and receiving forgiveness, acceptance, and eternal life. It means being alive in Christ, and this life has the qualities of love and righteousness joy and peace. New birth is only the beginning. Growing to maturity in Christ is a lifelong process for both individual and community believers. God forms and transforms us, and it is through people transformed by Christ that God transforms the world. —*What Does the Covenant Church Believe?*

Affirmation #3: A Conscious Dependence on the Holy Spirit**The Holy Spirit animates us to go deeper in Christ.**

We affirm a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit. The Covenant Church affirms the Trinitarian understanding of one God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The New Testament tells us that the Holy Spirit works both within individuals and among them. We believe it is the Holy Spirit who instills in our hearts a desire to turn to Christ, and who assures us that Christ dwells within us. It is the Holy Spirit who enables our obedience to Christ and conforms us to his image, and it is this Spirit in us that enables us to continue Christ's mission in the world. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to us as individuals and binds us together as Christ's body. —*What Does the Covenant Church Believe?*

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."—EPHESIANS 3:16-19, NIV

See also JOHN 15:5; MATTHEW 21:13.

Reflection:

- 1) How have you seen our beliefs in the necessity of new birth and our conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit lived out at our church?
- 2) How are you going deeper in Christ in your own life?

Affirmation #4: A Commitment to the Whole Mission of the Church

We have always been a missional people. From the very beginning, we have recognized God's gracious invitation to join in the mission. As a result, we affirm our commitment to the whole mission of the church.

We affirm a commitment to the whole mission of the church. The early Covenanters were known as "mission friends," people of shared faith who came together to carry out God's mission both far and near. Mission for them and for us includes evangelism, Christian formation, and ministries of compassion, mercy, and justice. We follow Christ's two central calls: the Great Commission sends us out into all the world to make disciples, and the Great Commandment calls us to love the Lord our God and our neighbors as ourselves. —*What Does the Covenant Church Believe?*

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." —ACTS 1:8

"He has shown all you people what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." —MICAH 6:8

SEE ALSO: COLOSSIANS 1:28; MATTHEW 10:39.

Reflection:

- 1) How have you seen us being missional at our church?
- 2) How do you see the church helping you to reach the lost, help the hurting, and address the causes of that hurt?

Affirmation #5: The Church as a Fellowship of Believers

We are people who go deeper in Christ and further in God's mission together.

We affirm the church as a fellowship of believers. Membership in the Covenant Church is by confession of personal faith in Jesus Christ and

is open to all believers. We observe baptism and Holy Communion as sacraments commanded by Jesus. We practice both infant and believer baptism. We believe in the priesthood of all believers, that is, we all share in the ministry of the church. We also affirm that God calls some men and women into professional, full-time ministry. The church is not an institution, organization, or building. It is a grace-filled fellowship of believers who participate in the life and mission of Jesus Christ. It is a family of equals: as the New Testament teaches that within Christian community there is to be neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus (GALATIANS 3:28). —*What Does the Covenant Church Believe?*

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” —ACTS 2:42-47

SEE ALSO EPHESIANS 4:11-16; HEBREWS 10:24-25.

Affirmation #6: The Reality of Freedom in Christ

We affirm the reality of freedom in Christ. The apostle Paul wrote, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1, NIV). This freedom is a gift of God in Christ, and it manifests itself in a right relationship with God and others. It is not a private gift to be used selfishly but is given to serve the community and the world. For Paul, this freedom means that we are set free from the power of those things that on their own tend to divide. United in Christ, we offer freedom to one another to differ on issues of belief or practice where the biblical and historical record seems to allow for a variety of interpretations of the will and purposes of God. We in the Covenant Church seek to focus on what unites us as followers of Christ, rather than on what divides us. —*What Does the Covenant Church Believe?*

Reflection:

- 1) How have you seen us being connectional at our church?
- 2) What does it mean to you to become part of a community of faith?

COVENANT MISSION PRIORITIES

ECC churches partner together through five mission priorities. Each of these mission priorities is strengthened by ministry leadership from Covenant Offices (Chicago, IL):

- Start and Strengthen Churches
- Make and Deepen Disciples
- Love Mercy Do Justice
- Develop Leaders
- Serve Globally

Our Conference

COVENANT DISTINCTIVES

Our Covenant affirmations make clear the values and principles that have guided us from generation to generation, shaping over time a set of key distinctives that set us apart from other church movements:

- 1) We are evangelical but not exclusive.
- 2) We are biblical but not doctrinaire.
- 3) We are congregational but not independent.
- 4) We are traditional but not rigid.

Learn more about the Covenant distinctives in the resource *What Does It Mean to Be a Covenant Church? A Look at Covenant Distinctives*.

CovChurch.org/Distinctives

COVENANT PRACTICES

Some additional practices that shape our life together in the Evangelical Covenant Church are:

- **The Sacrament of Baptism.** The ECC celebrates the sacrament of baptism as commanded by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20, and we affirm both infant and believer baptism. While the denomination has traditionally practiced the baptism of infants, in conformity with our affirmation of freedom in Christ, we also recognize the practice of believer baptism and do not consider mode of baptism a cause for division.

- **Multiethnic Commitment.** The ECC strives to be an intentionally multiethnic church, taking seriously both the mission of Christ and the unity of Christ's Church. These two convictions converge at the point of pressing forward in ethnic ministry and diversity. Currently, the ECC is one of the most multiethnic denominations in North America. A six-fold multi-dimensional test has therefore been adopted to intentionally foster the advancement of our multiethnic mosaic throughout our movement. Together, the ECC strives to make multiethnic progress in the six dimensions of: 1) Population, 2) Participation, 3) Power, 4) Pacesetting, 5) Purposeful Narrative, and 6) Practicing Solidarity. Learn more at CovChurch.org/SixFoldTest.
- **Women in Ministry Leadership.** The ECC has long affirmed the full participation of women in all ministries of the church, and in 1976 delegates to the Annual Meeting voted to begin ordaining women in the Covenant Church. Since that time, women have served in all levels of ministry and leadership positions within the church. The ECC upholds that the biblical basis for service in the body of Christ is giftedness, a call from God, and godly character—not gender. Our position on women in ministry flows from our high view of Scripture and is not derived from cultural or societal trends. We believe women ought to minister not because culture or society says so, but because the Bible leads the Church to such a conclusion. Learn more at CovChurch.org/CalledandGifted.
- **Marriage Practice and Human Sexuality.** We recognize that God's love meets us without preconditions, God's grace leads us into newness of life, and God's ongoing work in our lives empowers us for costly discipleship toward holiness and service. We affirm that God's boundaries, whatever the dimension of life, are meant for our flourishing. With regard to marital practice and human sexuality, the biblically derived core of the Covenant position is: "Faithfulness in heterosexual marriage, celibacy in singleness—these constitute the Christian standard."* Therefore, in ECC churches, marriages are performed between one man and one woman. The ECC offers pastoral care to anyone regardless of race, gender, creed, ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation. The ECC is also committed to equipping people to flourish in love for LGBTQ+/SSA/sexual minority individuals and communities.

LEARN MORE:

*"ECC Guidelines for Covenant Pastors and Congregations Regarding Human Sexuality" (<https://covchurch.org/resources/human-sexuality-guidelines/>)

Embrace: human sexuality discipleship resources and learning experiences (CovChurch.org/Embrace)

Going Deeper

The Covenant has five mission priorities.

Which of these areas interests you most and why?

- Start and Strengthen Churches
- Make and Deepen Disciples
- Love Mercy Do Justice
- Develop Leaders
- Serve Globally

Set apart 15 minutes this week to learn more at covchurch.org about the mission priority and ways you can engage with the Covenant in going deeper in Christ, further in mission, together.

Ask God what is a practical way you can engage in the mission priority?

Some ideas:

- **Start and Strengthen Churches.** Pray for new and existing churches. Watch stories of church planters and/or existing churches who are becoming healthy and missional. covchurch.org/what-we-do/strengthen-churches
- **Make and Deepen Disciples.** Read through the Bible with your community group or church with Immerse: The Covenant Bible Experience. To learn more and to purchase books, go to immerse.covchurch.org. Or to learn more about BLESS, an intentional pathway for persons of all ages who follow Jesus to become like Jesus and join the mission of Jesus, at covchurch.org/bless.
- **Love Mercy Do Justice.** Read a resource from this list: covchurch.org/justice/resources/. Learn more about racial righteousness and sign up for Sankofa or Journey to Mosaic at covchurch.org/justice/racial-righteousness.

- **Develop Leaders.** Pray for the pastoral leadership of your local church and the Covenant denomination. Learn more about Project Deborah, which identifies and encourages women pastoral leaders, at covchurch.org/vocational-ministry/women/project-deborah/.
- **Serve Globally.** Join Covenanters in praying for missionaries and national partners for the transformation of the world through God's power. Sign up for daily prayer emails, order the Serve Globally prayer calendar, or access other resources here: covchurch.org/sg/resources/. Give financially to extend the whole mission of God through Serve Globally partners, ministries, and missionaries around the world at covchurch.org/sg/get-involved/#give.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional resources can be found in the appendix on the next page.

We encourage you to go to covchurch.org to explore more of who the Covenant is and what the Covenant does.

APPENDIX: THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP SESSION TWO RESOURCES

Denominational tree diagram from *One Body, Many Members*

covchurch.org/One-Body-Many-Members-Diagram.pdf

Historical Influences of the Covenant

covchurch.org/Historical-Influences.pdf

What Does the Covenant Church Believe? A Brief Look at Covenant Affirmations

covchurch.org/Covenant-Affirmations-Brief-Form.pdf

Covenant Affirmations booklet

covbooks.com/products/covenant-affirmations-booklet

Called and Gifted (Women in Ministry)

covchurch.org/resources/called-and-gifted-material/

Policy on Baptism

covchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2011/02/2-Policy-on-Baptism.pdf

What Does It Mean to Receive a Child into the Church?

covchurch.org/Infant-Baptism.pdf

Six-Fold Test

covchurch.org/resources/six-fold-test

Embrace (human sexuality)

covchurch.org/embrace



THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP

session three

The Mission of Our Church

Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.



ECC THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP — SESSION THREE

**Membership is a commitment
to grow deeper in Christ
and go further in mission
together as the church.**

Gather

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SESSION

Acquaint the group with the mission of our church

- History
- Vision and mission
- Structure and resources

Consider deeper involvement in the mission and ministry of our church.

Discussion Starter

Interact

BIBLICAL IMAGES FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

Discussion Question

What images or metaphors come to mind when you think about the local church?

Looking at Scripture

The Bible uses many images to depict the local church.

Here's a partial list:

- **Family** (GALATIANS 3:26, 4:6-7; ROMANS 8:29; HEBREWS 2:10-18)
- **Bride of Christ** (MARK 2: 18-20; JOHN 3:29; ROMANS 7:1-4; 2 CORINTHIANS 11:2; EPHESIANS 5:22-33; REVELATION 19:7)
- **Temple** (2 CORINTHIANS 5:1; 1 PETER 2:4-8)
- **Priesthood of All Believers** (1 PETER 2:4-9)
- **The Flock** (LUKE 12:32; JOHN 10:1-16, 27-28; ACTS 20:28-29; 1 PETER 5:2-4)
- **The Body** (EPHESIANS 4:4-13; ROMANS 12:1-31)

These images indicate that a church is to be:

- A place of loving devotion to God
- A relationship place of protection and encouragement
- A place for developing our gifts for service to God
- A place that pursues God's priorities in the world

Reflection:

How do you see these elements being lived out in this church?

Discussion Question

What attracted you initially to our church and what has encouraged you to stay here?

WHO WE ARE—HISTORY AND STRUCTURE OF OUR CONGREGATION

Our History

Our Mission and Values

Our Mission and Ministry

REFLECTION QUESTION: What ministries have you been involved with or have impacted you or your family?

Our Staff and Leaders

Our Structure

Our Facility

Where We're Going—Preview of the Future

Integrate

GET CONNECTED—PATHWAYS TO DEEPER INVOLVEMENT

Closing

What is something new you learned today? Do you have a question about our church that hasn't yet been addressed?

Complete this sentence: "At our best, our church is a community that..."

Going Deeper

PATHWAYS TO DEEPER INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHURCH'S LIFE

In Session Two, we learned about the Covenant's five mission priorities, and in the Going Deeper section you asked God to show you a practical way to engage in one of those areas. That exercise may have led you to engage in the mission of the Covenant. Now take time to reflect on the mission and ministries of this church. Where might God be calling you to serve?

As you consider the five mission priorities, what ministries of this church do you see associated with each priority?

- Start and Strengthen Churches
- Make and Deepen Disciples
- Love Mercy Do Justice
- Develop Leaders
- Serve Globally

Which ministry or ministries are you most passionate about? Are you already serving in that area? How would you like to be serving in that area?

Talk further with a leader in your church about these reflections.



THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP

session four

The Mission of a Member

Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.



ECC THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP – SESSION FOUR

**Membership is a commitment
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Gather

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SESSION

Acquaint the group with their role as potential members of our church.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Why Join a Church?

What are some reasons to join a local church?

Interact

REASONS FOR JOINING THE CHURCH

Commitment and rootedness to a local church can radically transform us as we go deeper in Christ and further in mission together. In Scripture we see several reasons to join the church:

- **Joining the church honors Christ.**
(MARK 10:45; LUKE 24:46-47; HEBREWS 10:25; COLOSSIANS 2:19)
- **Joining the church is missional.**
(MATTHEW 28:18-20; ROMANS 12:5-8; ACTS 11:19-26; EPHESIANS 2:10)
- **Joining the church fosters spiritual growth.**
(JOHN 13:34-35, 1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-22, EPHESIANS 4:15-16)
- **Joining the church is ethical.**
(ACTS 2:44-47; EPHESIANS 4:11-13; EPHESIANS 5:19-20)
- **Joining the church is counter-cultural.**
(1 CORINTHIANS 12:22-26; GALATIANS 6:2; PHILIPPIANS 1:29-30)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MEMBER?

Growing as Christ's disciples

Our commitment is to help you go deeper in Christ and further in mission together as a member of our church family.

- **As a biblical family,** we seek to help you understand the Bible so you can apply it as the frame of reference for all of life.
- **As a devotional family,** we seek to help you go deeper in Christ—not just when we are physically together, but also by empowering you to become attentive and responsive to God's presence in all areas of life.
- **As a connective family,** we seek to help you find your way into meaningful relationships that will both encourage you and challenge you.
- **As a missional family,** we seek to help you discover God's purposes for your life and equip you to utilize your unique gifts for significant service with God for the world.

Reflection questions:

- How have you already experienced growth in these four areas during your time in this church community?
- How can we best empower you to grow further in each of these areas?

Being a Part of God's Kingdom

- Jesus spoke of God's kingdom.
- God's kingdom is not like any earthly kingdom.
- As disciples of Jesus Christ we are ambassadors of God's kingdom.

Reflection question:

How can being a member of the church help us live into the kingdom together and help us to be the kind of disciples Christ calls us to be?

Seeking to fulfill the will of God

Together we:

1. Strive for spiritual health as a congregation by:

- a. being committed to grow deeper in Christ personally
- b. reflecting the character and holiness of Christ
(COLOSSIANS 3:1-17)
- c. praying for the church regularly
- d. faithfully participating in the life of the church
- e. promoting unity
- f. supporting the spiritual growth and personal care of others
- g. worshipping together

2. Serve together in ministry as a congregation by:

- a. discovering and using our spiritual gifts
- b. engaging in discipleship opportunities that help us be more faithful and fruitful in our service to God
- c. caring for one another

3. Support the mission of our congregation by:

- a. giving regularly of our finances, time, and talent
- b. actively participating in congregational decision-making
- c. inviting non-churched friends to church
- d. being externally focused in seeking opportunities for evangelism and compassion, mercy, and justice to the lost and hurting in our community and beyond

Integrate

GROUP REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- 1) There are many ways that we seek to fulfill God's will. Which are you most drawn to?
- 2) What are your thoughts about this lifelong journey and the ways in which we minister together to fulfill God's will?
- 3) Does today's session raise any particular questions, concerns, or other feelings for you?

DECISION TO BECOME A MEMBER

- Next steps toward becoming a member
- If you decide not to become a member

CLOSING

- 1) What are your closing thoughts as we end this discussion?
- 2) Would any of you be willing to share about what this church has meant to you so far and what you hope to experience in the future?

Going Deeper

NEXT STEPS

During this session, we discussed the mission of a member. Set aside time this week to review your church's membership process, and ask God to help you discern your next steps.

For example:

- Pursue membership by taking the next step in the membership process.
- Talk with a church leader about questions or concerns you have.
- Research the Evangelical Covenant Church further.
- Discern new ways to go deeper in Christ and further in mission with our community.
- Join a small group.
- Serve in a ministry.



The Evangelical Covenant Church

MAKE & DEEPEN DISCIPLES

The purpose of *The Meaning of Membership: Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.* resource is to identify what it means for individuals to become members of an Evangelical Covenant Church. Membership is a commitment to grow deeper in Christ and further in mission together.

***The Meaning of Membership* covers:**

SESSION ONE: The Mission of God

SESSION TWO: The Mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church

SESSION THREE: The Mission of Our Church

SESSION FOUR: The Mission of a Member

It is our prayer that together we will grow deeper in Christ and further in mission. Thank you for taking the time to explore what it means to be a part of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

CovChurch.org/Membership