



THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP

session three

The Mission of Our Church

Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.

PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION

This session is designed to be highly customized by you in order to introduce your congregation to the participants in this membership process. The PowerPoint presentation serves as a guide that suggests topics you may wish to cover, and you can edit each slide to adapt to your context.

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SESSION

Acquaint the group with your church:

- History
- Vision and mission
- Structure and resources

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

MATERIALS FOR THIS SESSION

- Leader's guide
- Participant's guides (one per person)
- Pens or pencils
- Dry erase board or chart paper and markers
- PowerPoint presentation and equipment for display

SESSION OUTLINE

Gather

1. Beginning Points
2. Discussion starter

Instruct & Interact

1. Biblical images for the local church
2. Who we are—history and structure of our congregation
 - Our history
 - Our mission and values
 - Our mission and ministry

Integrate

1. Distinctives of the ECC
2. Questions and Comments
3. Closing

Going Deeper

Gather

#1 | BEGINNING POINTS

Introduction

- **Welcome participants back** to *The Meaning of Membership: Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.*
- **Explain:** The objectives for this session are to:
 - Acquaint the group with the mission of *[insert your church name]*:
 - History
 - Vision and mission
 - Structure and resources
- **Pray**

Consider a deeper involvement in the mission and ministry of *[insert your church name]*.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Choose from one of the following options:

- **Option 1 — Have you ever taken a behind-the-scenes tour** of a place that has always fascinated you? Perhaps it was a stadium tour, a tour of a movie set, a factory tour, or a tour of a mammoth structure like a dam or skyscraper. What was it like to go behind the scenes? *(Allow time for discussion.)*
- **Option 2 — Have you ever learned the inside scoop** about a business or organization? Perhaps it was in training for a new job, beginning as a volunteer, or perhaps through a conversation with a friend or family member. Describe what it was like to learn more about that business or organization. *(Allow time for discussion.)*

EXPLAIN: Taking a tour or learning the inside scoop can provide a whole new appreciation for what that enterprise is all about and what it takes to make it run effectively. Today we are going on a behind-the-scenes tour of our congregation. Our goal is to help you understand something of our history, our values, how ministry is organized, and where we are going

Have you ever taken a behind-the-scenes tour of a place?

Instruct and Interact

BIBLICAL IMAGES FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

Ask the following discussion question:

What images or metaphors come to mind when you think about the local church? *(Allow time for discussion.)*

Looking at Scripture

EXPLAIN: 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)

EXPLAIN: These images indicate that a local church is to be:

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

Reflection: Allow participants time to think about the following question and share their answers with the group:

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

EXPLAIN: Even though our church is far from perfect, these four elements help guide who we are and what we are trying to accomplish.

Discussion Question

Ask the following discussion question:

What attracted you initially to *[insert your church name]* and what has encouraged you to stay here?

Stories have
the power to
connect hearts.

WHO WE ARE—HISTORY AND STRUCTURE OF OUR CONGREGATION

Our History

You may wish to sketch out a brief history of your church, using no more than four key stories or events including how you were originally founded. Stories have the power to connect hearts and help people visualize who the church is and what the church believes. Especially note the stories of faith, commitment, and sacrifice that were present in the founding and at other key points along the way. If possible, show pictures from your church archives in the PowerPoint presentation, or consider a brief handout or timeline of significant events.

Our Mission and Values

If you have a mission and values statement, state it and explain it here.

LEADER NOTE: You may have additional Scripture that shapes the identity and direction of your church. We encourage to speak to that in this section.

[LEADER TIP: *Consider emphasizing how each of the following will help fulfill the mission and values of your church.*]

Our Mission and Ministry

Highlight the key ministries that you offer in your context. A handout may be useful here to allow people to gain an overview and ask questions. Be sure to highlight areas of mission that are specifically important to your church, and clarify how your ministries are connected to the mission of the church.

Ask this discussion question:

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

[LEADER TIP: *if the group is larger than 8-12 people, ask the group break into smaller groups to respond to this question, so everyone has an opportunity to share.*]

Our Staff and Leaders

Offer a brief introduction to your staff members and/or church leaders.

If the staff is large, consider pulling up your church website to show who is on staff and highlight who serves at the senior leadership level.

LEADER TIP: *Getting to know the key leaders is a significant benefit of this class. If possible, invite key staff to attend this session to introduce themselves and their ministry to the group.*

Our Structure

Review the role of the congregation in decision-making. Explain key governing structures of your polity and how members fit into this structure. You may choose to create a diagram as part of the PowerPoint material in this section. Have copies of your constitution and bylaws available for anyone interested.

Our Facility

If you have your own facility, many newcomers may be familiar with the seating area of the sanctuary and perhaps the children and youth areas but have not had a thorough tour of the facilities. **Such a tour could make them feel more like “insiders.”** If the class is meeting at the church, consider taking a few minutes to lead them on a “behind the scenes” tour of the entire facility, especially those parts that do not get much traffic, such as offices, set-up areas, kitchens, etc.. If your class is off-site, you may choose to consider a virtual tour.

WHERE WE’RE GOING—PREVIEW OF THE FUTURE

Review any future initiatives and directions, as well as any hopes and prayers of the congregation moving forward.

Integrate

GET CONNECTED—PATHWAYS TO DEEPER INVOLVEMENT

Identify how people can become more connected to the church in addition to becoming members. Examples include small groups, serving in and outside the walls of the church, and more.

LEADER TIP: *This is a good time to identify any helpful pathways your church has created to make involvement more accessible so that new people aren’t left to figure out how to do that on their own.*

CLOSING

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

EXPLAIN: Now that we have learned more about the mission of our church, let's take a moment to reflect and dream. Complete this sentence: **"At our best, our church is a community that..."**

Remind your group of the additional questions available in the "Going Deeper" section at the end of this session for those who want to reflect further on their role in the working out of the mission of the church.

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 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